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Language, Literature, and Interdisciplinary Studies

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Deeksha Suri & Md. Faizan Moquim

The Volume 5 of *LLIDS* broadly explores the area of Life Narratives through its four Issues—5.1: *Life Narratives: Prismatic World of the Author and Beyond*, 5.2: *Legacies of Trauma: The Tragedy of Before and After*, 5.3: *Poetics of Travelling Self: Discursive Formations and Purposiveness of Travel*, and the present Issue, 5.4: *Telling Life Stories: Ethos, Positionality, and Structures of Narrative*. In understanding ethos and positionality as intricately interconnected with Life Narratives, the thematics of this Issue concentrates on the aspect of narrative construction from the position of the subject who is/becomes a site for expression, contestation, and constitution of perspectives. Fashioning of the subject through any kind of discourse thereby is perceived as an exercise in understanding ethos and positionality, that is, *from where does one speak?*

Ethos is argued to be carried through in multiple forms, from individual embodiment, the use of language, the nature of narrative voice, to the style of narrativization. The discourse on ethos then can be seen as wide enough to examine how different entities involved in narrative production and interpretation gain a position of responsibility and create a meaning that is the basis of their identity construction. The 'presence' of the speaker and the receiver in this dynamic is the foundation for understanding ethos as an in-between space that is relevant for the interpretation of narratives. How writing participates in the production of ethos has to do with conceptualizing subjectivity as part of the process. Embedded in differing positionalities, life stories attempt to bring out a flavour of existential 'authenticity' of one's time and place. Historical and social situatedness of narratives contextualize a text, simultaneously eliciting modes of cognition and representation. Integration of subjectivity, the cultural, and the political within life writing, thereby, provides a self-critical/reflexive cultivation of ethos.

The transitioning nature of ethos influences and is influenced by ethical, epistemological, and technological shifts through the ages. It is definitive of an age; deployed within cultural space as a nodal point of this socially, ideologically, and discursively shaped realm. Ethos appropriates its legitimacy from culturally fostered inferences and, also in turn weaves the fabric of culture through which subjectivities evolve. Ethos is the cultural 'habitus' that allows a character to be seen through its embeddedness in and negotiation with discursive formations of an age. In narrative construction, authorial posturing is an aspect of the author's locatedness in a particular geographical, socio-cultural, and historico-political space that is affectively relative to personal connectedness to events, sense of perception, and respective intellectual position. In this respect, ethos is determinant in theorising the personal and cultural dimensions of narrative construction; it establishes author's responses, representations,

and perspectives via narrative's lifeworld. Writing, through imaginative and affective involvement, thus, becomes the source and framework for understanding our encounters and experiences, and enacts our motivations and instincts. Reading and interpretation, in this regard, bring together the world projected by the text and the lifeworld of the reader.

As individuals narrativize their life stories, a shared ethos is established that gives meaning to lives. The author and the narrative voice they adopt propose a certain ethos that engages the discursive and aesthetic aspects. As a cultural mediator, the author places the text in a social milieu that structures the reading; it introduces not a theory or dictum on how to lead lives but rather how the culturally, politically, and historically situated systems can be re-negotiated. The porosity between text and reality suggests an exchange of experiences, development of ideologies, as well as shaping of culturally responsive art. Such posturing of the author is reflective of the commitment that is based on the immediacy of his/her experiences. As the author projects a particular self-image, it cultivates an ethos that works as an interface between the self that is constructed and the one in becoming. The 'encounter' between different experiential domains—that is, that of the author and the readers—allows a heterogeneity and autonomy of meaning-making through the process of evolvement of differing perspectives. In this way, the projection of ethos evokes self-reflexivity as well as forms of enquiry in the social space.

This Issue explores how the approach towards life narratives situates the practices of writing within the imperative of thematization of the self and new perspectives on narrative construction. The Forum introduced in this Issue by our Guest Editors, James S. Baumlin and Craig A. Meyer, investigates the experimental forms of textual representation and critical practices in academic scholarship vis-à-vis life narratives. With this aim in view, the Forum includes individual musings on ways of seeing and ways of knowing to reinterpret the precepts of narratorial posturing and voice in academic writing and pedagogy. Authors of the Forum pieces have presented their ways-of-being through critical interventions in pedagogical strategies, place-based thinking, theories of reading, academic writing, authorial voice, and ethics of narrative construction.

In reflecting on the problematic assumptions that undergird truth claims in fiction and non-fiction, George H. Jensen in his Forum piece argues to move beyond "the ethics producing writing that corresponds to facts," and brings out the importance of what Bakhtin calls answerability. Patrocinio Schweickart's Forum piece draws upon the sub-genre of literacy autobiography to ruminate on how "[l]earning to read different kinds of stories carefully and with pleasure is one important way to develop and strengthen a culture of care." While Schweickart argues for fostering an ethic of care in academic and pedagogical practices, Cathie English underlines the importance of ecological consciousness and realising one's connectedness with their natural surroundings in her work. English shows how her pedagogy on place-conscious writing is geared towards developing intimate bonds with nature and the place one inhabits. Craig A. Meyer, in his piece, ruminates upon his experience with stuttering to provide insight on how authorial voice becomes bound by personal dysfluencies and stereotypical perceptions. Aimee

Morrison in her Forum piece pushes readers to rethink existing standards of academic conventions, and argues for the personal and academic to coexist in writing. Taking issue with the reigning agreement that the use of first-person pronouns "ought" to be avoided in academic writing, she argues in favour of "writ[ing] in our own voices, from our acknowledged subject positions." Taking a panoramic view of human species, James S. Baumlin characterizes human as *homo narrans* in his work and discusses the emergence of new models of ethos in the face of scientific technoculture, transhumanism, and posthumanism.

Engaging with the theme of "Telling Life Stories: Ethos, Positionality, and Structures of Narrative" the papers published in this Issue enter the discourse around ethos and life narratives from differing vantage points and tease out ways in which reading and writing of life narratives bear on contemporary concerns. In the article titled "Complete Truth and Fuzzy Genres: Reading Karl Ove Knausgaard's *My Struggle*" George H. Jensen problematizes the received notions on truth claims in the genre of nonfiction. His reading of Knausgaard's *My Struggle* extends the ways in which one makes sense of life narratives and invites the reader to see how truth claims in nonfiction are neither self-evident nor transparent but part of a complex process where answerability and community play a significant role. Drawing upon Aja Martinez's approach to counterstory and Walter D. Mignolo's decolonial thinking, Charles McMartin's work, "Teaching a Decolonial Counterstory: 1551 Valladolid Debate and Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*," reads a particular scene from Silko's novel as a 'decolonial counterstory,' with a view "to illustrate how colonial epistemologies set up 'linguistic frames' that silence coexisting epistemologies." Underscoring certain fault lines in rhetoric and composition studies, McMartin's reading brings out pedagogical imperatives of incorporating and teaching foundational decolonial concepts of pluriversality, delinking, biopolitics, and geopolitics. James S. Baumlin's two-part paper—"Empathy and Abjection after Burke (1): On the Rise and Fall of 'Listening-Rhetorics,' 1936–2023" and "Empathy and Abjection after Burke (2): Embodied Narrative and the Resistance against Persuasion"—traces the history of rhetorics since Kenneth Burke's agonistic model to arrive at the contemporary advances in embodied narrative, cognitive science, and neurorhetorics. Putting them in conversation with an understanding of how empathy, abjection, and persuasion work, Baumlin teases out implications of neuroscience for the discipline of rhetoric in twenty-first century and argues that now "we must learn to speak of persuasion, not as a change of mind, but as a change of brain chemistry." While doing so, his articles interlace a timely meditation on the state of public discourse in the United States in contemporary times. Naveen John Panicker's paper "To Tell or Not to Tell: Nature and Objectives of Mental Illness Narratives/Autopathographies" explores the reliability and difficulty of representing the experiences of mental illnesses due to the ambiguous nature of memory and the struggle for "finding suitable vocabulary to express the seemingly inexpressible."

We would like to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to the guest editors, James S. Baumlin and Craig A. Meyer, for making this Issue possible. The entire team

of *LLIDS* deeply enjoyed the experience, and we thank you for your support throughout the process of this publication—from its conception, extension of the discourse herein to the writing of life narratives, to editorial feedback on the submissions. We would also like to thank James for the extensive discussions we have had with him. We have developed a more nuanced understanding of rhetoric and research through these interactions, and we look forward to continuing this exploration with you!

This Issue completes the publication of Volume 5 of *LLIDS*. The focus of the upcoming Volume 6 is on Body Studies. In addition to inviting critical deliberations pertaining to body in relation to embodiment, sexuality, gender, biopolitics, disability, and identity, the volume through its four Issues seeks to bring together focused inquiries on themes as varied as carnal hermeneutics, somatophobia, ageing body, corporeal narratology, virtual bodies, among others. Looking back at our journey, we have come a long way from where we started. Last year alone saw the journal transformed by the Continuous Publication Model and the website user interface redesigned through the searchable publication format. This research venture would not have been possible without the consistent support of our authors and the salient contribution of our peer reviewers and advisory board. No publication is complete without its readers, and we are most grateful to you for your continued support and engagement with *LLIDS*.

Aimée Morrison (ahm@uwaterloo.ca) is Associate Professor of English at the University of Waterloo, Canada. Her research focuses on autobiographical expression in social media, academic writing, and disability discourse. She is particularly interested in the links between standpoint epistemology and the development of "voice" in academic writing as it relates to equity and social justice in the modern university. Also memes. Her work has been published in Biography, New Media Studies, Feminist Media Studies, Composition Studies, and elsewhere.

Cathie English (cathieenglish@missouristate.edu) is Professor of English at Missouri State University, USA. She teaches undergraduate and graduate English education courses after a twenty-two year career in secondary English education. Her research focuses upon place conscious education with an emphasis on ecology, indigenous myth and spirituality, community literacy, teacher leadership, and composition theory and practice.

Charles McMartin (cmcmartin@email.arizona.edu) is a doctoral candidate in Rhetoric Composition and the Teaching of English at the University of Arizona, USA. His research interests are focused on local histories, community engagement in Arizona, culturally sustaining pedagogies, and archival studies. He currently serves as the graduate coordinator of the writing pathways program Wildcat Writers and Co-chair of the Graduate Student Standing Group for the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC).

Craig A. Meyer (craig.a.meyer@jsums.edu) is Associate Professor of English and Director of the Writing Program at Jackson State University, USA. His scholarship focuses on Rhetoric and Composition, Popular Culture Rhetorics, Creative Writing, Histories of Rhetoric, Social Justice, as well as Disability Studies. His current research furthers our understanding of ethos from western and non-western perspectives.

George H. Jensen (ghjensen@ualr.edu) is retired from the Department of Rhetoric and Writing at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, USA, where he served as Professor and Department Chair. A pioneer in the development of personality theories of writing, he has written extensively on the application of Jungian personality types to the teaching of composition. A published memoirist, his most recent publications explore the genres and ethics of nonfiction.

James S. Baumlin (jbaumlin@missouristate.edu) is Distinguished Professor of English at Missouri State University, USA, where he teaches coursework in early-modern English literature (Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton), critical theories, and the history of rhetoric, having published extensively in these fields. He has also widely published in rhetorical theory and composition pedagogy. His current research focuses on the history of Western ethos from antiquity to the present day.

Naveen John Panicker (naveenpanicker.92@gmail.com) is currently teaching as an Assistant Professor at Department of English, St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi, India. His research interests fall broadly under the rubric of Medical Humanities. He did his M.Phil. from Department of English, University of Delhi, wherein he explored questions about the self, agency, and how experiences of illnesses and suicidality are articulated and made intelligible through memoirs.

Patrocinio Schweickart (pschweic@purdue.edu) is Professor Emerita at Purdue University, USA, where she taught English and Women's Studies. Her main research interests are gender and reading, and feminist revisions of Habermas's theory of communicative action from the perspective of an ethic of care. She, along with Elizabeth Flynn, is the editor of *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts* (Johns Hopkins UP, 1986) and *Reading Sites: Social Difference and Reader Response* (MLA, 2004). Her essay "Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading" won the 1984 Florence Howe Award.

Forum on Narrative:

Current Practices and Possible Futures

Contributions by George H. Jensen, Patrocinio Schweickart, Cathie English, Craig A. Meyer, Aimée Morrison, and James S. Baumlin

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Introduction: "Assaying" the (Post-)Modern Essay

James S. Baumlin and Craig A. Meyer
http://ellids.com/archives/2023/09/5.4-Forum-Baumlin-Meyer.pdf

> For a faculty of wise interrogating is half a knowledge.
> —Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning* (1605)

Dating back to Plato (and surviving in several versions), the above aphorism can guide us still: "Right questioning"—to put it in more modern parlance—"is half an answer." In his *Advancement of Learning* (1605),[1] Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1626) divides scholarly discourse into two "method[s] of tradition" or transmission, "whereof the one may be termed magistral, and the other of probation." Reforming scholarly invention and communication, Bacon treats the latter as antidote to the former:

> For as knowledges are now delivered, there is a kind of contract of error between the deliverer and the receiver. For he that delivereth knowledge desireth to deliver it *in such form as may be best believed, and not as may be best examined*; and he that receiveth knowledge desireth rather present satisfaction than expectant inquiry; and so rather not to doubt, than not to err: glory making the author not to lay open his weakness, and sloth making the disciple not to know his strength. (*Advancement*; emphasis added)

Whereas the magistral method "is designed to teach what one already knows and get the belief of audience," the probative "seeks to stimulate further inquiry and to advance knowledge" (Stephens 70). At the heart of Bacon's reform of scholarly-scientific communication stands the essay genre and its predominant rhetorical scheme, the aphorism.[2] "[F]or aphorisms," writes Bacon,

> cannot be made but of the pith and heart of sciences; for discourse of illustration is cut off; recitals of examples are cut off; discourse of connection and order is cut off; descriptions of practice are cut off. So there remaineth nothing to fill the

---

[1] Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning* and *Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall*, along with his other prominent works, were republished in 1996 within a larger anthology, titled *Francis Bacon: The Major Works*, edited by Brian Vickers. All references to Bacon's works within this piece have been taken from this anthology.

[2] In its general, "literary" use, an aphorism is "any principle or precept expressed in few words; a short pithy sentence containing a truth of general import; a maxim" ("Aphorism," n.2). As a scheme of rhetoric, an aphorism resembles both the maxim and axiom in being "a general observation from experience" ("Axiom," n.1b).

aphorisms but some good quantity of observation; and therefore no man can suffice, nor in reason will attempt, to write aphorisms, but he that is sound and grounded. […] And lastly, aphorisms, representing a knowledge broken, *do invite men to inquire further*; whereas [magistral] methods, carrying the show of a total, do secure men, as if they were at furthest. (*Advancement*; emphasis added)

Thus "knowledge, while […] in aphorisms and observations […] is in growth" (*Advancement*).

In genre, the English philosopher of rhetoric is influenced by the French Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), whose *Essais* (1580) offered an innovative, distinctively *modern* way of exploratory writing, one aiming not to educate or persuade, but rather to reveal a mind at work: "I am myself the subject matter of my book," writes Montaigne. Translated as "attempts" or "tests," Montaigne's French title suggested Bacon's own *Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall* (1597, 1625), though the cognate term "assay" might have served Bacon as well (or perhaps better, given the subsequent genealogy of "essay" in English). To assay—to try, to test or attempt, "to put to the proof" ("Assay," v.1a)—was Bacon's probative aim in writing. In scholarship today, paradoxically, the essay genre has turned largely magistral, if not in aim (that is, in teaching "what one already knows") then in its striving for certainty. ("In conclusion": might that be the modern scholarly essayist's favorite phrase?) In pursuing its fullness of analysis and argument, the contemporary essay seeks "closure," whereas an aphoristic style seeks "openness" and tentativeness, inviting readers to join in the inquiry.

Returning to that original, probative meaning of essay/assay, the brief texts that follow stand as supplement to this present special issue, "Telling Life Stories: Ethos, Positionality, and Structures of Narrative." While offering considerable flexibility in rhetoric and structure, the contemporary scholarly essay cannot easily accommodate the full range of thought and expression regarding life-writing and narrative scholarship. The relative impersonality of academic discourse leaves us silent regarding the personal commitments, aims, and aspirations—in a word, the motives—of our writing. (Focusing on the impersonal "what" of scholarship, we often neglect the "how" and, even more so, the personal "why.") Often, our ideas remain half-formed, needing others to help think them. The rigors of academic writing curtail speculation; an author's "perhaps" seems to lack cogency or conviction, and questions without answers are only rarely deemed publishable. Academic publishing has long sought to police the boundaries between scholarly and creative writing, favoring some structures and styles while suspecting others. But the nature of life stories—the broad subject of this special issue—invites us to reconsider the ways that authors inscribe themselves into their texts. This ethotic insight holds for all writing, whether scholarly, literary, or speculative.

Presenting "fragments of knowledge," Bacon's aphoristic method "invites receivers to contribute" (Stephens 70) to their expansion and completion. Several of the following forum contributors pursue this same Baconian project, offering starting points for others' work. Several take a stand on topics relating to narrative and cultural ethos; their texts offer mission statements, as it were, for the sorts of projects that they pursue. Several take this forum to position themselves within their research and teaching, as if their own ethos were "under assay." Several take this forum to experiment in style and

structure. They (re)consider narratives, stories, theories, and writings in ways that go beyond the boundaries of "the formal and scholarly." Yet, they *are* scholarly; they are curious; they are engaging; they are thoughtful. Many ask questions, acknowledging (in Baconian manner) that "right questioning is half an answer." At the same time, we know that questions of intellectual or existential import are rarely definitively "answered" but are always, rather, infinitely "answerable." Above all, the contributors to this forum show their commitment to scholarship as a community with its own unfolding stories.

Life stories make us who we are, help us understand our positionality, and help us appreciate our journey. Discussions about our respective narratives help us better understand each other and the paths and patterns of our uniqueness. These discussions are not happening enough, however, and we need to immerse ourselves in empathetic and ethotic engagement with other people's narratives. It is through mutual understanding and recognition of our ethotic experiences that we more deeply connect to the things that make us human. Learning to listen, we celebrate commonalities and honor differences. We learn *to know* the "other" as an extension of self, not "apart *from*" us but "a part *of*" us. Arguably, our collective future depends on this sharing.

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Rethinking the Whole "Truth" Thing (Or, Assaying "Answerability" and the Reader/Writer Contract)

George H. Jensen | University of Arkansas at Little Rock
http://ellids.com/archives/2023/09/5.4-Forum-Jensen.pdf

> To tell nothing *but* the truth—must, in all cases, be an unconditional moral law: to tell the *whole* truth is not equally so.
>
> —Thomas De Quincey, Letter to the Editor, *London Magazine*, November 27, 1821

Dear reader. Yes, I am going to adopt the outmoded form of direct address to *the reader*—which was probably already quaint and artificial even to readers of eighteenth-century novels—to discuss terminology related to issues of identity. Some of you have, no doubt, already started to position yourselves for or against certain terms and phrases: authenticity, the true self, self-knowledge, free will, the search for identity, the social construction of identity, inner vs. outer, introversion vs. extraversion, private selves vs. social selves, modernism vs. postmodernism, the individual vs. culture, and so on. Such terms as these recur time and again in discussions of narrative. In narrative generally (and life-writing in particular), you might argue for the phrase "the social construction of identity" over the term "authenticity," or vice versa. "It has to be one over the other," you might say. Or, "I need definitions." Readers have critiqued and problematized. You have used terms imprecisely, as if pointing to an object on the horizon. You have found them inadequate. All of them. The terms should have disappeared long ago, but you continue to use them, or at least some of them. This is probably because, as David Graeber and David Wengrow, who have studied cultures across the globe and through history, say, identity historically "came to be seen as a value in itself" (504). So, the terms linger.

The least problematic terms or phrases, I imagine, are "sense of self" or "project of self," because they hint at something without any pretense of certainty. The most problematic, I also imagine, are "the search for the true self" and "the social construction of identity." They seem to force a choice upon us. They are mutually exclusive, circles that do not overlap. But maybe the concepts are less pure and more complex than my readers might first expect. While you might think of authenticity as the search for and expression of the "true self," it might be viewed as emerging interpersonally and socially, as a negotiation between self and social norms. The authentic self might come to be in a private space, but any private space, no matter how separate, is never entirely apart from

the social. If you accept this, *then nonfiction becomes a site for the negotiation among these terms and phrases* as we struggle with the project of self. All of these terms and phrases fail us, as does pointing to a distant object, but it is hard to avoid pointing.

I am going, here, to shift from addressing the reader as some vague and distant *you* to the more dialogic *we.* We often explore the private self and the public self. It seems intuitively evident to most people that we have both, but the boundary between the two is always fuzzy, especially if we think about different cultures and historical periods, different forms of media. One of the seldom acknowledged effects of social media is its damage to private space with both saccharine praise and brutal blame. While private space was never apart from the social in any absolute sense, it is less so now. It is less safe. If the private is affected by the social (C.S. Peirce says that individuals are a "we" before they are an "I"), in what sense does privacy serve authenticity? While pure isolation does not exist, we can still find spaces where we feel less pushed by the social. In such spaces, deep reflection—a critique of social norms—is more possible. In a safe private space, we are more able to assess the effects of the social on our bodies. We might think of this as exploring our emotions, but this experience is ultimately rooted in the human body.

It is more typical to think of the social construction of the self as interpersonal or social, but we should ask who is behind the wheel of this drive toward a construction of self. There must be some "I" there. And it is hard to imagine this construction of self as happening without the same kind of negotiation with social norms that happens with the expression of an authentic self. Once we have constructed a self, isn't that self also authentic, especially if it fights against an assortment of social norms? What makes "authenticity" and "the social construction of self" seem so different is the term "true self," which is not a particularly useful concept. What makes "authenticity" and "the social construction of self" seem more like parts of the same process—which we might call "the project of self"—is "freedom" or "agency." Certainly, the social and how power works within our society are also part of the process. The project of self is complicated, but that's what makes writing and reading nonfiction interesting.

To begin an exploration of the project of self, we should begin with the simple statement that nonfiction makes a certain kind of truth claim: *This is what actually happened*. This truth claim defines the broad genre of nonfiction, and this is where we begin the search for its ethics. In "Living to Tell the Tale," Lynn Z. Bloom writes of what might be called the categorical imperative of nonfiction:

> Writers of creative nonfiction live—and die—by a single ethical standard, to render faithfully, as Joan Didion says in "On Keeping a Notebook," "*how it felt to me*," their understanding of both the literal and the larger Truth. That standard, and that alone, is the writer's ethic of creative nonfiction. (278)

Bloom is even against changing names, which she feels is the first move toward fiction. But, does the genre itself embody this kind of absolute fidelity to facts?

Writers of nonfiction create a certain kind of contract with their reader. The author says, "Everything I have written actually happened." This seems to mean the facts of the story correlate with the facts of memory, history, and biography. The contract might be

announced by a subtitle like "A Memoir" or the label "Nonfiction" on the back cover. It is easy to problematize this view of the genre. The assignment of a work to a genre is, at some level, arbitrary, more related to marketing, the cataloging system for the Library of Congress, and the layout of brick-and-mortar bookstores. Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* was labeled nonfiction, fiction, sociology, anthropology, biography, woman's literature, Chinese literature, and Asian literature (Hsu 35). Without being too legalistic, let's explore this already fuzzy contract. It all seems to come down to a simple transaction: When this contract is violated, when the facts don't correlate, readers are offended. Thus, when a truth claim is made, it is obviously important to many readers. James Frey first tried to sell *A Million Little Pieces* as fiction, without success. He later sold it as a memoir, and it became a national best-seller. Oprah read it and recommended it to her viewers. Frey appeared on her show. Then, she learned large sections of the book were fabricated. In other words, Frey violated the contract with his readers. She demanded that Frey come back on her show so that she could vent her rage. It was pretty ugly—for Frey, at least. Oprah did not appreciate being lied to, nor did other readers (Crouser 16–17).

Similarly, when nonfiction authors are accused of breaking this contract, they are also often offended. In "The Singular First Person," a personal essay about writing personal essays, Scott Russell Sanders admits: "What the essay tells us may not be true in any sense that would satisfy a court of law." Yet, he and other writers of nonfiction often recoil when their work is described as fiction—as untrue. He continues:

> [N]ot long ago I was bemused and then vexed to find one of my own essays treated in a scholarly article as a work of fiction. […] To be sure, in writing the piece I had used dialogue, scenes, settings, character descriptions, the whole fictional bag of tricks; sure, I picked and chose among a thousand beckoning details; sure, I downplayed some facts and highlighted others; but I was writing about the actual, not the invented. I shaped the matter, but I did not make it up. (10)

Writers of nonfiction acknowledge that they must shape the story, as Sanders does. But how much shaping is permitted without violating that implied contract? Is the Hollywood claim "based on a true story" enough? In shaping the matter, if the author goes too far, does the work cross over from the true (nonfiction) to the invented (fiction), or outright lies? Should authors protect themselves by labelling their works of nonfiction as fiction, as Dave Eggers does with *Zeitoun* and *What Is the What*? Or, is it more important that authors own that their works are true stories, even though some details have been added to enhance the narration? Should we view all truth claims as equal? In Eggers's *What Is the What* is the claim that what happened to the Lost Boys of the Sudan is true, that it happened, is it the same as the claim that the layout of a refugee camp, as imagined by the author, is true? Is it ethical to make both kinds of truth claims in the same work of nonfiction?

In the implied contract, the author is at least claiming to tell as true a story as possible. Does this mean that the author cannot craft the story, as Sanders indicated when he wrote about "using the whole bag of fictional tricks"? When Michael Herr was asked about whether or not he created composite characters in *Dispatches*, he replied, "Oh yeah.

A lot of *Dispatches* is fictional. I've said this a lot of times. I have told people over the years that there are fictional aspects to *Dispatches*, and they look betrayed. They look heartbroken, as if it isn't true anymore. I never thought of *Dispatches* as journalism. In France, they published it as a novel" (Ciotti). In many parts of Europe, narratives may be described as "novels" or "stories," rarely with a distinction between nonfiction and fiction. In the United States, however, *Dispatches* was published as nonfiction. Americans expected it to be true. Some of them felt betrayed. The need to certify nonfiction as fully true, the "single ethical standard," may be particularly American.

But not all Americans view the divide so purely. Pam Houston says her fiction is about 82 percent her—as in things that actually happened to her, that is, are 82 percent true. She claims her nonfiction, with a schmear of irony, is also about 82 percent her. What do we do with that 18 percent? Do we call it craft? Does even one percent of "not me" mean the work is fiction? Should even works that are mostly nonfiction, say 93 percent true, be called fiction to protect the author against claims of fabrication? Or, is this just a copout? Given that there are at least bits of factual reality in most works of fiction, should parts of fiction be viewed with the same standards for truth as nonfiction?

While acknowledging that some gray areas will always exist between genres, we should still try to understand the nature of the implied contract between author and reader. Embedded within it is a definition of the genre of nonfiction: Unlike fiction, which strives to tell "the larger Truth," nonfiction, no matter how creative, must also tell the "literal" truth. Bloom's discussion of what it means to tell the truth—her single "standard" or foundation for the ethics of nonfiction—is admittedly complex: Is it okay to change the names of "characters," should the author resist urges to self-censor, should the "real" people who form "characters" in nonfiction be allowed to read drafts, and should secrets be revealed, even when it might harm others? However, this focus on "literal" truth— facts—ignores other aspects of telling a story. If an author sticks to the facts but shapes the narrative, like a good comedian structuring a joke, does the work cross over into fiction? If an author sticks to the facts but alters the emotional frame of the facts, is that enough to move the work into the territory of fiction?

We, you and I, need a new way of thinking about telling true stories, which carries with it a responsibility, a contract with the reader, but maybe not the contract we might expect. We can, I would like to argue, tell the truth unethically—or, safely. We can miss opportunities to act ethically within nonfiction; in other words, we need to go beyond the ethics producing writing that corresponds to facts. If Freudianism and postmodernism and everything that followed problematizes the whole project of knowing the self, the task of writing the truth about the self is not so simple. Is identity discovered or constructed? Postmodernism has questioned the very nature of "the Real," a term that Lacan used to point to something beyond language, the Symbolic Order (Mansfield 44–45). I will use "the actual," a less majestic term borrowed from Scott Russell Sanders, to indicate a truth less certain than "reality" or "what actually happened," a truth that has enough of a material reality to push back against any urge to distort and question the limits of memory.

If nonfiction is to play a role in the project of self, we need to move beyond the ethical implications of what we, as a community, have already written. While discussing

breaches of ethics in the history of nonfiction is important, we need also to explore opportunities for ethical action; in other words, we need to move beyond "not doing harm" to seeking out the means of doing good or working on the "project of self." When we are too focused on "not doing harm," we can sometimes become paralyzed. Not writing, like not acting, does not ensure an ethical stance within the world. The most unethical pieces of writing are the ones that were never written. As Morson and Emerson write of Bakhtin's ethics, "Dishonesty may result not from a motive, but, quite often, from the failure to undertake the project of responsibility" (31).

We should also think about the truth claims we make. It will be more useful to think of nonfiction as related less to some simple correspondence between the facts of a story and the facts of some conception of reality and move to the relationship between the author and the text—how the author does research, how the author seeks a story, questions memory, and contextualizes documents. If authors are doing all this, aren't they trying to figure out what actually happened? Isn't this different than fiction? Nonfiction will also relate to how authors answer or respond to their texts. Do authors claim their texts by saying "this is what happened"?

When attempting to differentiate fiction and nonfiction, it is not adequate to talk about how one is made up and the other is true. We need to think about what Bakhtin calls *answerability*, how authors answer to their texts. As related to nonfiction and writing about the self, we cannot answer to our texts without understanding the appeals we make about our relationship to the truth:

- This is the truth.
- This is who I am.
- This is my world, at least, as I understand it.
- This is the meaning I have made of my life.
- I know how hard it is to find the truth, but let me show you how hard I am trying to figure it out.
- Let me show you the damage that lies and secrets have done to me and my family.

Fiction writers don't make these claims, especially *This is who I am*. Once we make even one of these claims, we are creating a different kind of relationship between author and text. The author answers in a different way. This is a kind of truth that is open to its own process, even in a world where truth is constantly shifting and texts are a kind of erosion.

With the Internet, with massive networks, truth is not established through authority or science; it is established through circulation. The more a claim moves through interlocking networks, ever present at the same moment, the truer it becomes. It doesn't need a foundation or ground. In fact, the statement seems more true because it doesn't seem to have a source. In this grey world, we can admit defeat, become lost in what Baudrillard calls "the ecstasy of communication," or we can assert a reality and an ethics that comes from a different time—the truth of our physical bodies living in a particular time and place. This kind of truth, the truth we seek in nonfiction, is at odds with the truth of circulation, which is often reduced to soundbites or tweets. The truth of nonfiction is complex and situated and grounded. Said another way, it is human. It is part

of a dialogue. While it might be entirely appropriate for an author to make these claims, we should not assume they are self-evident or transparent. Readers will likely contest some or all of them, especially readers who are also mentioned in the text. This, too, is part of the process, part of answerability.

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The Ethos of Narrative: Telling/Writing, Listening/ Reading, Communication, and Caring

Patrocinio Schweickart | Purdue University
http://ellids.com/archives/2023/09/5.4-Forum-Schweickart.pdf

My main research interest lies in the field of theories of reading and reader-response. Being a feminist scholar, I am also interested in research in all fields that show how the perspectives and experiences of women can bring to light important aspects that have been obscured or underestimated by prevailing androcentric theories. Specifically, I argue that there is a connection between reading and the ethic of care which feminist scholars have found in the moral deliberations of women, and that this connection has important implications for the social and cultural work done by narratives.

I was born in Manila in August 1942, a few months before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and the Japanese invasion of the Philippines. My parents were middle class professionals. I was the eldest of six children. I studied chemical engineering at the University of the Philippines, and after a brief stint at the Philippine Atomic Research Center, I left for graduate study at the University of Virginia (UVa), USA. I belong to a generation of young educated Filipinos who left the Philippines in the 1960s and 70s to pursue educational or professional goals in the USA. At UVa, I received master's degrees in Chemical Engineering (1965) and in Mathematics (1969). I worked briefly at a General Motors plant in Columbus, Ohio, before returning in 1972 to academia to pursue graduate studies in English. I received my Ph.D. in English at Ohio State University in 1980, taught at the University of New Hampshire from 1979 to 1997, and then at Purdue University from 1997 until my retirement in 2014.

My personal life developed apace with my professional life. David Schweickart and I met at UVa, and we married in 1966. It is an interracial marriage. David is white, I am Asian. Neither of us knew at the time that we were committing a crime in the state of Virginia (the landmark supreme court decision in the Loving case came in June 1967). My daughters were born in 1968 and 1972. Both have their own stories to tell about growing up Asian-American in the United States. My own immigrant experience gave me a first-hand lived understanding of the concepts of hybridity and dual subjectivity.

Two factors led me to specialize in the new field of criticism and theory. The first was my training in engineering and mathematics, which gave me a penchant for puzzle solving. The second was my involvement in the women's movement, which had captured the hearts and minds of many women students and faculty at Ohio State. The women's movement and the nascent discipline of Women's Studies raised many compelling issues and thus, opportunities for groundbreaking research. I had an inkling that working in that area would be a good career path. In the summer of 1981, I met Elizabeth Flynn at the School of Criticism and Theory at Northwestern University. She invited me to work with her on a collection of essays that was

eventually published as *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts* (Johns Hopkins UP, 1986). At the time, studies of reading and reader-response as well as studies of gender were beginning to make an impact on the academy. It was exciting to work at the intersection of these two fields.

Feminist criticism was initially focused on canonical texts written by male authors. I was particularly impressed by Judith Fetterley's account of the damaging effects of the androcentric American literary canon on women readers (*The Resisting Reader*, 1978). According to W.E.B. Du Bois, African Americans experience a split between their racial identity and their identity as Americans. This double consciousness is oppressive because the culture of racism makes the two identities incompatible. Judith Fetterley applies the same idea to the experience of women reading androcentric literature:

> To be excluded from a literature that claims to define one's identity is to experience a peculiar form of powerlessness—not simply the powerlessness which derives from not seeing one's experience articulated, clarified, and legitimized in art, but more significantly the powerlessness which results from the endless division of self against self, the consequence of the invocation to identify as male while being reminded that to be male—to be universal, to be American—is to be *not female*. (xiii)

It occurred to me as I read Fetterley that as a Filipino-American woman trained in reading and teaching literature written by British or American men and women, married to a white American man, and mother to Asian-American daughters, double-consciousness is a fact of my personal and professional life. Double consciousness can be (often is) problematic, but I could not bring myself to think of it as necessarily oppressive. Let me be clear: I understand the oppressive double-consciousness Du Bois and Fetterley describe. Once in a while, I become acutely aware that in the eyes of the dominant culture, I am other. But most of the time, I enjoy and value the cognitive and moral insights made available to me by the duality of consciousness that is part of my lived experience.

In the summer of 1975, I had the good fortune to attend Fredric Jameson's seminar at the Institute of Marxism and Culture, at the University of Minnesota in St. Cloud. One of the themes of this seminar was the concept of dialectical thinking. Jameson made the distinction between antinomies and dialectical contradictions. Antinomies are abstract binaries, like mathematical contradictions, not amenable to resolution; for e.g., an integer is either odd or even. Dialectical contradictions are real and concrete, signaling problematic situations that need to be worked out theoretically and practically. Thinking dialectically, for example, of the self/other opposition, one would see that neither pole is fixed. In the specific case of reading, the self/other opposition is central to the problem of meaning: is meaning objectively in the text, or did I make it up from my own subjective resources and experiences? Thinking dialectically, one would see that it does not pay to strive for a reading that is uncontaminated by the reader's predilections, nor is it fair to say that the reader can make up meaning as she pleases. Instead, one should think of meaning as the product of the dialectical interaction between self and text, where self and text pass into each other, making and remaking each other. The difference between self and other persists and motivates every interpretation.[1] The method of dialectical thinking I got from Jameson bolstered my intuition that being able to maintain a duality of consciousness is a good thing, and encouraged me to recognize this as a feature of the reading practices that I admire.

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[1]Jameson offers a comprehensive treatment of dialectical thinking in *Valences of the Dialectic* (2009).

Eventually feminist scholars turned their energies to the vast but understudied literature written by women. My essay, "Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading" (in *Gender and Reading*, 1986), uses Adrienne Rich's reading of Emily Dickinson as a model for a practice that portrays meaning as the product of the dialectical interaction between Rich and the Dickinson she reads into/out of the poems (31–62). Rich's reading is double-voiced. She devotes half of her intellectual and imaginative resources to the work of giving voice to Dickinson's poems, and the other half to maintaining her own voice. Eventually, I will argue that this model is applicable to reading in general. While I was working on *Gender and Reading*, I was captivated by two other research areas: the first was Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action (*Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, 1995).[2] The second was Carol Gilligan's elaboration of the ethic of care discernible in women's moral deliberations (*In a Different Voice*, 1982) and Nel Noddings's structural analysis of the caring relation (*Caring*, 1984).

According to Habermas, when we speak we implicitly make three validity claims: an intelligibility claim, a truth claim, and a normative claim. For example, when I say that "Women and men are equal," I am implicitly claiming that this statement is intelligible to speakers of English, that it is true, and that it is morally right to say so. Habermas is concerned primarily with truth and normative claims. He argues that such claims cannot be decided by monologic reflection. This means that on my own, I cannot determine whether a truth or moral claim is valid. Validity claims can only be vindicated through discussion with others under conditions of domination-free discourse where no force operates except the "unforced force of the better argument," or what Habermas calls an "ideal speech situation." In other words, truth and moral validity are neither subjective nor objective—they are intersubjective.

In the cognitive dimension, Habermas's theory is consistent with the principle underlining the peer review process for scientific and academic research. In the moral dimension, he presents his "discourse ethics" as a revision of Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of the five stages of moral development (Habermas 116–171). Kohlberg associates the highest stage with the ability to think of moral issues in terms of universal principles of justice. Discourse ethics incorporates a dialogic component at each stage, and at the highest "postconventional" stage, which Kohlberg identifies with the ability to think of morality in terms of universal principles of justice, Habermas adds the ability to evaluate normative claims in domination-free discussions with all others who have a stake in the issue. Habermas's theory is persuasive because it appears to fold familiar ideas of free speech, democracy, truth, and justice into a neat cogent package. Unfortunately, women scored significantly lower than men in empirical tests of Kohlberg's model. For Carol Gilligan, this anomalous result is proof of gender bias—Kohlberg's model may give a good account of the moral consciousness of men, but it is at odds with the way women reason about moral issues. The finding of gender bias applies by extension to Habermas's discourse ethics.

Habermas is aware of the criticism of Gilligan and her colleagues.[3] He attributes their argument in favor of a different ethic of care more fitting to the moral consciousness of women to two problems. The first is the failure of his critics to distinguish between justification of norms and their application to concrete lifeworld situations. Of course, according to Habermas, the

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[2] See also, Habermas, Jürgen. *A Theory of Communicative Action. Vol. 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Translated by Thomas McCarthy, Beacon Press, 1984.

[3] Habermas says in a footnote that Gilligan's book was published after he had finished his own book. His response to Gilligan is based on her earlier articles, "In a Different Voice: Women's Conception of Self and Morality" in *Harvard Educational Review*, and "Development from Adolescence to Adulthood: The Philosopher and the Dilemma of Fact," with J. M. Murphy, in *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*.

proper application of discourse ethics requires a careful, prudent, context-sensitive "hermeneutic effort," but not additional forms of moral reasoning (181–182). The second problem has to do with the failure to "distinguish clearly between moral development and ego development," between the ability to reason about norms and the ability to translate these norms into action. Again, studies of the personality traits that would enable people to behave in accordance with their moral principles are certainly necessary, but not a morality of care different from a morality of justice (182–184).

Other feminist scholars have written critically about Habermas's model of discourse ethics.[4] My own contribution to the discussion draws from Nel Noddings's structural analysis of the caring relation and from studies of reading. Studies of reading led me to see a fundamental error in Habermas's definition of communication. Habermas makes the mistake (a common one) of defining communicative action as speaking. When voice is taken to be the sign of action, then silence becomes the sign of non-action, and listening becomes indistinguishable from doing nothing. It makes sense in a speech-centered model to specify the equal distribution of free speech rights as the condition for fair and reasonable discussion. But since communication cannot happen unless someone is listening, the equal distribution of free speech rights is a necessary but insufficient condition for ideal discourse. One must also stipulate the obligation of discourse participants to give each other a fair hearing. It becomes clear, when we consider written discourse, that there are two modes of communicative action, the expressive mode of writing (or speaking) and the receptive mode of reading (or listening). Studies of reading foreground the intricacies of the receptive mode of communicative action that are often obscured by speech-centered models.

In Habermas's model, communication is a symmetrical relationship between two speakers. I speak, you speak. While I speak, you must be silent; and I will do the same when you speak. The reciprocity of speakers fits in with (dominant, androcentric) ethical theories built on the symmetrical relationship between two equivalent individuals (e.g., two consenting adults), each with equal right to the same role, that of speaker. This, of course, overlooks many asymmetrical relationships—between parents and children, between someone needing help and someone able to give it, and as it turns out, between writers and readers, as well as speakers and listeners. In fact, the symmetrical reciprocity of the speech model of communication covers two asymmetrical intervals of communication—I speak, you listen; you speak, I listen. To understand communication and, by extension, all human interaction, we need to understand the asymmetric interactions on which all equality and reciprocity are built.

I was especially drawn to Nel Noddings's analysis of caring because I recognized the analogy with reading. Noddings's defines caring as an inherently asymmetrical relationship between two people in different roles, the role of one caring, and the role of one cared-for. I am one-caring; you are one cared-for. Eventually, you may be one-caring, and me one cared-for. But every interval of care is asymmetrical. Noddings attributes three elements to the role of one-caring. The first is "engrossment," or concerted attention to the cared-for. By using the word "engrossment," Noddings resists the usual idea of "empathy," or identification as the basis of understanding and caring for another. "Engrossment" strives for an intersubjective connection that preserves difference. It is not conditioned on seeing the other as essentially like oneself. The

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[4]See, *Feminists Read Habermas*, edited by Johanna Meehan, especially "From Communicative Rationality to Communicative Thinking: A Basis for Feminist Theory and Practice" by Jane Braaten (139–161), "Feminist Discourse/Practical Discourse" by Simone Chambers (179), "The Debate over Women and Moral Theory Revisited" by Seyla Benhabib (203), and "Discourse in Different Voices" by Jodi Dean (229).

second element is "motivational displacement": one-caring deploys her cognitive, emotional, and moral resources in the service of the completion of the projects of the one-cared for. The third element is a duality of consciousness that enables the one-caring to preserve an independent perspective (30–37).

The similarity between the role of the reader to the role of one caring is obvious in the situation of a teacher reading a student paper. In submitting her paper to me, the student is implicitly asking me to make the effort to advance her communicative project. My job is to understand what the student is trying to say—to give her paper a careful, fair reading, and to offer ideas for how she can improve her work or develop her ideas further. The first element of my role is "engrossment." I need to focus on what the student is trying to say, not on what I would say if I were in her shoes. The second, "motivational displacement," refers to the work—cognitive, moral, and psychological—that I must do in the service of the student's communicative project. Finally, I must maintain a dual perspective—one devoted to the student's project, and the other to a critical perspective that allows me to assess her work and to make useful suggestions for improvement. Obviously, things could go wrong. I could be too self-involved, incompetent, lazy, dismissive, inattentive, unresponsive, overbearing, unjust. But because the interests of another person are involved, it matters that I try to read ethically. The above argument can be extended to reading in general.

The asymmetry of the caring relation requires a redefinition of reciprocity. According to Noddings, reciprocity does not require "the identity of gifts given and received" (74). For caring to work, the cared-for must accept and acknowledge care, then he "must turn freely toward his own projects, pursue them vigorously, and share accounts of them spontaneously. This is what one-genuinely caring wants but never demands" (75). "The one-caring for a fully participating cared-for is sustained and invigorated, and her caring is unlikely to deteriorate to 'cares and burdens'" (72). Of course, it is good for caring to be mutual: I care for you, and at another time, under the right circumstances, hopefully you will care for me. But this mutuality is not always necessary. A could care for B: B could care for C; C could care for D, and so on (in other words, caring is something that is paid forward). In a culture of care, there is a good chance that someone will care for A. In the case of reading, a writer I read (e.g., Noddings) does not need to reciprocate by reading my work. It would be fantastic if she could write me a personal note expressing her appreciation for my careful reading of her book (Noddings passed away in 2022), but it is enough for my work to advance the conversation on the ethic of care. More generally: if A reads B carefully, B does not have to read A, but she could read C, C could read D, and so on. In a culture of careful reading there is a good chance, that A will get a careful reading of her work.

Both Gilligan and Noddings associate the ethic of care to the moral consciousness of women. However, it does not follow that women care and men don't or are not able to. In fact, all of us can, do, and have to care. I think the ethic of care is basic to everyone's moral sense. The problem is that, unlike the ethic of rights, the ethic of care is currently not backed by extensive and authoritative studies and research, nor by legal and political theory and practice. As a result the ethic of care appears largely inchoate, indecisive, emotional, and morally unreliable in discourses dominated by rhetorical authority of the ethic of rights. (For example, the complicated ethic of care Carol Gilligan found in the moral deliberations of women contemplating abortion have been largely marginal to the public discourse on abortion in the US, where the debate is framed as a contest of rights—the right to life of the unborn versus women's reproductive rights. People on both sides of the debate take advantage of the political and legal force of the rhetoric or rights. They may make emotional appeals to care, but they know that winning arguments need to be based on rights.)

Let me conclude with some comments about the ethos of narrative. We know that telling stories is important, and that justice requires that everyone have equal opportunity to tell their own stories. Telling my story is a way to realize my personal, cultural, and social identity, a way of talking about what matters to me. But telling is only one half of the equation. In telling my story, I address others, who I hope are willing and able to give my story a good hearing—to understand and care for what matters to me. But why should I expend the effort of listening or reading stories that may not have any immediate relevance to me? What do I get from taking the trouble and the risk of putting my subjective resources in the service of someone else's communicative project? The answer, following my argument above, is that reading stories is like being one-caring. Reading gives me the opportunity to exercise the cognitive, moral, and emotional abilities of being one-caring to another. It helps me maintain my fitness to care.

When I was teaching, like many others, I made an effort to include a diversity of texts in my reading list because I was persuaded by the arguments that the literary curriculum should be inclusive and diverse. At the end of each semester, I felt that my effort in undergraduate courses had been mostly unsuccessful. Often I had to contend with the resistance of my mostly white students. Even when they were being dutiful, they rarely got beyond deciding that discrimination is bad, expressing sympathy for the victims, and appreciating the good things in their own lives that they had previously taken for granted. My research on reading and the ethic of care gave me another way to think of the results of my efforts, and additional reasons to persevere. True, a diverse reading broadens the educational horizon—it offers students the opportunity to learn about and interact with experiences and perspectives different from their own. But more than this, reading sets them up in a caring relation with diverse communicative projects. It offers them the opportunity to exercise and strengthen the cognitive, moral, and emotional skills needed to act as one-caring for others across social and cultural categories of difference. Even when they were only going through the motions, my students were still exercising their care muscles. Learning to read different kinds of stories carefully and with pleasure is one important way to develop and strengthen a culture of care.

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Place-conscious Practices: Understanding Ecological Consciousness through Lakota *Wakan*

Cathie English | Missouri State University
http://ellids.com/archives/2023/10/5.4-Forum-English.pdf

For thirty years, I have studied place and what it means to live in a specific locale. I have learned that to sustain a locale economically, culturally, and spiritually, I also needed to work toward understanding an ecological sustainability. I have to understand an ecosystem; I have to become ecologically conscious. Human beings cannot live consciously or conscientiously in a place without understanding the impact our lives have upon other species in a delicate ecosystem. Without fully understanding why, I began by first investigating a spiritual connection to the land, something poet and writer, Kathleen Norris described as a "spiritual geography." Conceptualizing a spiritual geography led me to Lakota mythology.

The first story in James R. Walker's literary cycle, *Lakota Myth*, depicts a living being in the creation story of *Inyan*: "As blood flows from *Inyan*, Sky (*Škan*) and Earth (*Maka*) are created" (194). *Inyan* refers both to rock and to a superior being from whose blood the earth and sky was created. The spirit *Inyan* literally bleeds dry and hardens into stone in creating the earth (Sundstrom 189). For the Lakota, all creation was born out of the earth—the earth itself, sky, sun, moon, and the four directions. The creation myths of the Lakota present images implicit in the Great Plains of America—creation of the gods who correlate to sky, water, and earth, creation of the four directions, and creation of the *Pte* or buffalo people directly from the earth; these stories are an integral part of their religion. In Ella Deloria's *Dakota Texts*, the stories personify buffalo, deer, elk, eagle, and other companion species. The stories entertain and teach valuable lessons, but also convey the idea of *wakan*; the buffalo is *wakan*, the deer is *wakan*. For the Lakota, according to Good Seat, "*Wakan* was anything that was hard to understand. Anything might be *wakan*. In old times, the Indians did not know of a Great Spirit" (Walker, *Lakota Belief* 70). *Wakan* was multi-faceted; it included many gods and animal spirits.

An integral part of the landscape is conveyed in the adult names given to Lakotan people—Black Elk, Sitting Bull, Brave Eagle—which have special significance because they are given in naming ceremonies. All are given names at birth but, at any time in their lives, they may have a naming ceremony, when a new name is given based upon a spiritual vision, heroic act, or a family name, e.g., Crazy Horse, the great Lakota warrior, was given the name Among the Trees, and as a child his nicknames were Curly or Light Hair because of his curly light hair. He was given his father's name in adulthood after

bravery in battle. The names of these various warriors and holy men depict that each had some aspect of their human character displayed in traits of other species, i.e., elk, bull (bison), eagle, or horse. They acknowledge other species as family members.

In Lakota spiritual practice, the vision quest for a young male (*hanblec'eya*) includes things from his immediate surroundings. Vegetation from the landscape is used as a part of the *hanblec'eya*, acknowledging a connectedness to the land. A Lakota would have a pipe, *cansasa*, and tobacco, but he must also have sweetgrass and sage to burn in the pipe and offer it to the sky. During the *hanblec'eya* the vision seeker could receive a communication and it would be given through some form of Lakota's natural surroundings. He might "see something […] like a man […] an animal or a bird or an insect or anything that breathes, or it may be like a light of some kind or a cloud. It may speak to him, or it may not speak. He should remember what it says and how it speaks" (Walker, *Lakota Belief* 86). Lee Irwin notes that in "the Native American context, there is no separation between the world-as-dreamed and the world-as-lived […] dreaming is given a strong ontological priority and is regarded as a primary source of knowledge and power" (236).

For Lakota, the dream world and conscious world are intertwined. Both Crazy Horse (the Lakota Warrior) and Black Elk (the Holy Man of the Lakota and whom John Neihardt interviewed for the book he would write, *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*) had prophetic dreams as children. Black Elk speaks of the power of his vision, which led him his whole life. The same is true for Crazy Horse. He had a specific dream that guided him through battle. Unlike *hanblec'eya* though— that is, the vision quest or what Lakota call "seeking a vision" (*hanblec'eya*) which takes place in a specific geographical location holy to the Lakota—their prophetic dreams didn't come through the traditional ceremony. Both were very ill as small boys when they had their powerful visions (dreams).[1]

Black Elk was nine years old when he received his vision. Neihardt writes, "We stopped to get a drink from a creek, and when I got off my horse, my legs crumpled under me and I could not walk. […] I rode in a pony drag, for I was very sick. Both my legs and both my arms were swollen badly and my face was all puffed up" (18). Black Elk speaks of being in the tepee with his parents when he could see two men coming from the clouds. The two birdlike men called out to him and guided him in his dream.

Crazy Horse's power vision came several days after seeing the mortally wounded Lakota Chief, Conquering Bear. At age twelve, Crazy Horse went off alone to seek a vison upon a butte, and became ill and received no message. In *Crazy Horse: The Strange Man of the Oglalas*, Mari Sandoz writes that he gave up on his vision quest after three days and went to get his horse. Weak and exhausted, he rested upon a cottonwood tree. Sandoz writes, "the sickness and the turning in the boy's head made him sit with his back against a tree, the wind singing a cool little song" (42). Crazy Horse received his power vision while asleep under that tree. He was awakened by his father and another warrior

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[1]My thesis for my Master of Arts in English, titled *Twin Paths to Spirit: Landscape and the Quest for Spiritual Vision in Some Lakota and Benedictine Reflections*, is focused upon landscape and the spiritual power it has. The twin path I investigated included Benedictine monasticism and the idea of seeking a vision through a hermitage or going off to the desert or mountains to contemplate God or the divine.

and reprimanded for disappearing for three days. When Crazy Horse told them he had gone seeking a vision, they were angry with him because he sought a vision "without making his preparations, without the sweat [lodge] or the consulting with the wise ones for guidance, or even telling his people where he had gone!" (43). It was many months later that Crazy Horse spoke to his father about his dream after building a sweat lodge, fasting, and consulting his father for an interpretation of the dream (103–104).

Robin Wall Kimmerer, a member of the Potawatomi Nation, whose people dwelt in southern Michigan in the 17th century, acknowledges an ecological consciousness through a grammar of animacy, echoing the Lakota concept of *wakan.* She writes,

> So it is that in Potawatomi and most Indigenous languages, we use the same words to address the living world as we use for our family. Because they are our family. To whom does our language extend the grammar of animacy? Naturally, plants and animals are animate […] rocks are animate, as are mountains and water and fire and places. Beings that are imbued with spirit, our sacred medicines, our songs, drums, and even our stories are animate. (53–54)

My understanding of Kimmerer's grammar of animacy and Lakota myth, belief, and ritual embodied in the concept of *wakan* has had a profound impact upon the ongoing formation of my own ecological consciousness, which informs my ethos as a teacher and scholar. These native American nations' worldview has also influenced my understanding of the power of narrative, conceptualizing and theorizing an ecological consciousness through story. *Wakan* teaches us how we must understand our planet, other species, ourselves, and our cultures if we are to become ecologically conscious. It is a gift to the entire world, and not something to appropriate but embrace with humility and gratitude, awakening a sense of awe.

Others have intuited the native American *wakan,* though they have needed to invent their vocabulary and "grammar of animacy." The American transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau both attempt to capture the essence of our relationship with our natural world by recognizing this sense of awe, through a spiritual and philosophical understanding of nature. Emerson conveys an ecological consciousness in his relationship to plant species in *Nature* (1838):

> The greatest delight which the fields and woods minister, is the suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowledged. They nod to me, and I to them. The waving of the boughs in the storm, is new to me and old. It takes me by surprise, and yet is not unknown. (13)

Thoreau understood how simplifying one's life led to less consumption, a principle of ecological consciousness and sustainable living; and like Emerson, he conveys an understanding of interrelated living species in an ecosystem. In "Spring" in *Walden* (1854), he writes, "The earth is not a mere fragment of dead history, stratum upon stratum like the leaves of a book, to be studied by geologists and antiquaries chiefly, but living poetry like the leaves of a tree, which precede flowers and fruit,—not a fossil earth, but a living earth" (298).

Both Emerson and Thoreau wrote poetically. Though trained as a scientist, the great American conservationist, Aldo Leopold, also saw the land as a living earth. In *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), Leopold includes his essay, "The Land Ethic," which introduces the biotic land pyramid: a concept from ecology, the pyramid begins with plants absorbing energy from the sun and that energy flowing through a circuit he names biota. For Leopold, a land ethic "simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land" (239). He writes,

> Land, then, is not merely soil; it is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals. Food chains are the living channels which conduct energy upward; death and decay return it to the soil. The circuit is not closed; some energy is dissipated in decay, some is added by absorption from the air, some is stored in soils, peats, and long-lived forests; but it is a sustained circuit, like a slowly augmented revolving fund of life. (253)

As a teacher of place-conscious writing, I follow humbly in the footsteps of Leopold, Thoreau, Emerson, and the native American forebears of this awe-inspiring land. Sustaining this fund of life keeps me up at night. In the 21st Century, the ravages of climate change are already upon us. A rise in Earth's temperature by "0.14° F (0.08° C) per decade since 1880" (Lindsay and Dalman) is causing weather extremes inducing hurricanes, floods, and drought. Human practices have led to a loss of species (which creates a chain reaction in the biotic land pyramid and food cycle). We cannot develop an ecological consciousness if we are ignorant of this revolving fund of life, the way in which our planet's ecosystem functions. And we must acknowledge how we got to this level of ignorance through industrialization, modernization, and a consumer economy. In the United States, we go about our daily lives seemingly oblivious to the repercussions of climate change. Even if we personally experience a traumatic event associated with climate change (such as the loss of health, a loved one, a home or business), we lack the will to change our hyper-consumerist behaviors. We lack the initiative to take political action to elicit policy changes. And we lack an intense sense of care of this place because we are displaced. Unlike Indigenous people, most Americans don't know the land in an intimate way.

II.

In a rural Nebraska home where thirteen separate individuals clamored and clanged about in tight quarters, I escaped outdoors. From mid-March to late October, many of my childhood hours were spent outside playing in the yard, climbing trees, building forts, walking the mile to the Platte River, and working in the vegetable garden with my maternal grandmother. I noticed things: I could echo the song of the phoebe, minnows move away from you when you step into their shallow pools, radishes take one week to come up in the garden, Nebraska soil is black and full of worms, and if you see a wall cloud on the southwest horizon—signs of a tornado brewing—you had better take shelter in the basement. Since childhood, I have felt this thrum of life, experiencing a string of ecological epiphanies in nature, unarticulated "ah ha!" moments—to know a thing without speaking. I was learning how to "be" in a place. I have continued seeking this consciousness and have discovered these "ah ha" moments are best articulated through story, and that ecological consciousness is an ancient story.

My maternal great-great grandparents emigrated to the Great Plains in the mid-nineteenth century. They were peasant farmers from southern Poland who came to stake a claim in the Platte River valley in central Nebraska. My paternal grandmother emigrated from Austria in 1905. My paternal grandfather's family name first appeared in the United States in 1634 in Virginia. Even though I have felt a sense of connectedness to the soil, water, flora, and fauna of the plains, I am not a native American, but I have committed to becoming naturalized to this North American locale. Robin Wall Kimmerer notes this important distinction:

> Being naturalized to place means to live as if this is the land that feeds you, as if these are the streams from which you drink, that build your body and fill your spirit. To become naturalized is to know that your ancestors lie in this ground. Here you will give your gifts and meet your responsibilities. To become naturalized is to live as if your children's future matters, to take care of the land as if our lives and the lives of all our relatives depend on it. Because they do. (208)

Kimmerer asks us to become naturalized to a place in order to become ecologically conscious, while David Greenwood asks us to understand the history of the North American continent and colonization to fully develop an ecological consciousness. Greenwood emphasizes the need for "decolonization soul work" or a cosmological homecoming, something he believes is crucial in an understanding of place *as land* and as a necessary critique of settler colonialism (371).

Tim Lilburn writes that we must begin a reconciliation conversation about colonization, and the harm done to Indigenous people. He cites Taiaike Alfred who writes, "The problem has been framed in many complicated ways, but really, what is colonization if not separation of the people from the land; the severance of the bond of trust and love that held our people together so tightly in the not-so-distant past and the abandonment of our spiritual connection to the natural world?" (x). Lilburn notes that people of European descent living in North America are even more removed from the land and that a contemplative practice might instill connectedness, or a sense of spiritual geography. He cites French phenomenologist Emmanuel Levinas' concepts of Totality and Infinity to illustrate colonization over connectedness:

> With totality, exercised between lovers, within a family, a state, among peoples, between humans and the environment, the impulse is to "make the same," to homogenize all difference under a single paradigm, to colonize in other words. "Infinity" is quite different, the roots, he argues, of ethics itself […] This behavior, disarmed, tentative, occasionally toppling, keen, grows from what he describes as an experience of the "Face," the deep recognition of the indissoluble individuality of another and a subsequent decorum and attentiveness toward the other growing out of this arresting experience. (11)

We must have *wakan*-like "ah ha" moments of deep recognition of all species—humans of all races, ethnicities, and genders, and all other species who are companions, inhabitants dwelling in this locale, the Earth. To become ecologically conscious, we must acknowledge the other in *homo sapiens* but also in the cockroach, the slug, the fungi, and the algae.

In the 1980s, David Orr created Meadowcreek Project, an environmental education center in the Arkansas Ozarks, where he "opened the door to the different possibility that education ought, somehow, to be more of a dialogue requiring the capacity to listen to the wind, water, animals, sky, nighttime sounds, and what [indigenous people] once described as earthsong" (104). Greenwood advises us to discover our own earthsong, "never live someone else's story […] live as well as we can, our own story of being and becoming, and [...] learn to give this story voice, in the presence of others, wherever we find ourselves" (375).

For several summer semesters, I taught a college-level writing/pedagogy course centered upon the Ecology of the Ozarks. This course includes immersive activities in nature such as field trips including hikes in the Ozark Mountains and nearby lakes. We participate in writing marathons at each site. A writing marathon asks students to form groups of 3 or 4 and agree upon several spots where they'd like to sit, observe, and write. After writing, students in each group read aloud their snippets of writing to each other with no responses allowed beyond, "Thank you." The groups move to several other agreed upon spots over several hours and repeat the process. At the end of the writing marathon, all small groups of writers come together at a selected site to read aloud one piece of writing, typically, a selection their group members encouraged them to read aloud because of its beauty or insight. Most of us nod our heads in approval. Some students snap their fingers.

I've conducted marathons in many cities, campuses, and small towns, but I prefer natural places. When writers are in nature, they have a predilection to write poetry or short prose that highlight a discovery of something new, or what it means "to be" in a place— what it means to be ecologically aware of other species. Lilburn describes this kind of writing as epiphanic apostrophes. He argues the essay and lyric poem are "perfect instruments in [a] psychopolitical undertaking of a contemplative return to being in the form of one's place," since "each rests on the sense of the fragment as sufficient—at the heart of one is the non-comprehensive confession, a shard; the epiphanic apostrophe lies at the center of the other" (xii). In Lilburn's own contemplative quest to understand an ecological consciousness, he has written these epiphanies, just as my students have.

In the past, I have called this the phenomenon of poetry, but that is a misnomer. It's the phenomenon of nature. Through lived experiences in nature, students have their own "ah ha" moments of ecological consciousness—they become conscious of the earthsongs—the language of the lake, the crag, the creek, and the cave. It's an experience of *wakan*, and it's foundational to the soul work underlying ecological consciousness.

Soul work is a quotidian process. It's not a one-time transformation. St. Benedict calls it conversion of life. An ecological consciousness requires turning toward Levinas' "Face" daily as a continual process of growth in attentiveness to the other. One act of my own soul work is inviting students to begin the process, too. When we go out into nature, whether it's our own backyard, a city park, a lake, a river, or a pond, we are moved to write in fragments and shards because the meadowlark sings for only a minute, flaps its wings for mere seconds. I'll continue to encourage others to seek their own understanding of an ecological consciousness, and I'll continue the soul work necessary for me in the naturalization process on this land by simplifying, by writing a bit, a sliver of a poem:

A woodpecker echos across the lake,
while a Carolina wren's loud voice
reminds us, she's here too!
Fish flop in the overflow of flood waters,
murky brown standing water,
a West Nile virus paradise.
A tufted tit-mouse sings
a soft song,
greeting the early morning.
Vines climb the locust tree
twenty feet in the air,
reaching toward the cirrus clouds and
the vibrant blue sky.

—Written June 4, 2019, at 10:10 a.m. from the scenic view at Bull Shoals
Lake nearly Kirbyville, Missouri.

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Stutter Voice in Writing: Rethinking Dysfluency

Craig A. Meyer | Jackson State University
http://ellids.com/archives/2023/10/5.4-Forum-Meyer.pdf

One's voice is partly a marker of one's authorial personality. Voice is both metaphorical and rhetorical. Further, the concept of voice embodies one's cognitive *and* auditory representation of oneself. Voice articulates an ethotic narrative, of sorts, that offers insight into the storyteller. I stutter. I have for as long as I can remember. My internal dialogue has to accommodate my outward voice, which can be dysfluent and haphazard. My voice, and yours too, carries with it personality and experience. The latter can be a burden. However, it is true to who we are. Our voice carries hopes and dreams, fears and ambitions. It can freeze us or free us.

As a writer, I recognize some level of liberation from my dysfluency when I write. So, *in theory*, I can write anything I want without dysfluency. But my thoughts are constructed by my experience as a dysfluent speaker, so my thoughts are driven by how I might "say" it, *even though it is written*. In other words, the proverbial baggage of being a dysfluent speaker is never far from my writing, and as such, dysfluency informs my writing. While I may not actually "stutter" when I write or think, both of those activities are affected by my dysfluency. When writing, I ponder how to phrase a sentence and that, more often than not, forces me to consider how I would verbalize it, which in turn makes me reconsider the phrasing. It becomes a rhetorical cycle of specificity, clarity, and ability. Specificity is needed to connect concepts and ideas in the usual academic ways to other concepts and to the realities we engage with daily. In similar fashion, clarity focuses me to convey meaning in productive and understandable ways, which is balanced by the specificity of the idea.[1] However, the most complex part of this triad is my ability.

Regardless of the precision and understandability of my thoughts, *I am bound by my body's ability (or lack thereof) to speak them*. This next observation, to my knowledge, has yet to be made regarding the impact of dysfluent speech upon writing. It reflects my personal experience, obviously, but it is worth asking whether other writers with "stutter voice" have experienced the same. As to my ability, I have to choose my words with the understanding that I may need to speak to others or read aloud portions of my written word. In this sense, I am bound (literally and figuratively) by the biomechanical nature of creating voice/sound, because I might need to produce the sounds of my written words. To be even more pointed, stuttering is part of who I am; I

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[1] In some respects, dysfluency has added concision, clarity, and simplicity to my writing style—qualities valued by the classical rhetoricians, the Stoics especially.

carry my baggage wherever I go (as do we all). As part of that, I feel as if I'm revising my thoughts, my words, and my prose, and reworking them all the time. This ongoing and continuous process is exhausting.

Of course, my perspective may not be understood or shared by others. Many people who have heard stuttering recognize it as a repetition of a word or a block where the speaker is unable to produce sound. People who stutter have a stigma stuck to them. It is thick and unrelenting, much like the stutter itself. In my dissertation, I noted comments in various academic journals (1917–1960s) related to stuttering or similar speech dysfluencies:

> [People who stutter] are described as diseased (Mones 20), egoists (Mones 21), nervously deranged (Mones 23), defective (Martin 23), weak hearted (Poley 491), basket cases (Mauk 291), grotesque (Fielder 4), and independent scholar, Miriam Brody (165) suggests that even Fred Newton Scott refers to those, like me, who speak with occasional dysfluency, as possibly "of primitive races" (2). And it gets worse; Clarence Stratton admits that it is a "terrible affliction to make stutterers speak" but he doesn't end there; he writes, it's "especially terrible to the listeners" (466). Perhaps the most damning is speech educator Clarence T. Simon's suggestion that "The most intelligent comments made by students *lose their value* when they are uttered with a painful stutter [emphasis added]" (142). He explains, "the content of their recitations is obscured in *our* amusement, annoyance, or shock at the manner of their speaking [emphasis added]" (142). Simon views comments made with dysfluency as invalid because he and other students cannot overcome the dysfluency of the speaker. Simon continues and contends that the goal of speech training should be to make those that are dysfluent "normal individuals" (143). (Meyer 18–19)

Through this brief overview, the listeners of people who happen to stutter are burdened by our speech and, more importantly, our speech is discounted before it is even complete. Even today, stuttering is treated as a condition that requires treatment, therapy, or some kind of technological intervention. More precisely, we are told it *needs* to be treated, because it's not normal, nor is it seen as normal, or at least not normal enough. Yet, no one is perfectly fluent. As children, dysfluent speakers are often relentlessly teased by others (as many children are for any number of nonsensical reasons). But our means of communication, our speech, is the focus of critique. This burden of being misunderstood and marginalized can be debilitating, fatiguing, even paralyzing. Most people who stutter, I believe, recognize these feelings and these burdens.

While the above contains typical comments about speech dysfluency, Robert Zoellner is not so entirely dismissive of us; he writes, "the vocal non-fluencies which comprise stuttering may […] conceivably have some functional, diagnostic, or remedial connection to the scribal non-fluencies that the English teacher encounters in the classroom" (290). Zoellner suggests that we need to study stuttering because it may provide insight into writing and ways to help students improve it. However, this comment is more a digression than an idea to explore, being but one phrase in a fifty-page article.

It's only in the last ten or so years that stuttering or verbal dysfluency has been taken up in disability studies and other related journals.[2]

While Zoellner never seems to have followed up on his digression, more recent scholars have, such as Joshua St. Pierre and Chris Eagle.[3] Both have positioned their work as questioning the notion that we must all speak fluently or what's understood as "normally." Of course the idea that we can all speak fluently (or should) is impossible, and even possibly offensive. Very little consideration has been given to the possibilities of dysfluency. Too few have asked such questions like, "In what ways might stuttering be seen as positive or have potential?" So much has been written about it as a problem to solve (i.e., the medical model), but so little has been written about what it offers. If I were to apply "vocal non-fluencies" to "scribal non-fluencies" (as Zoellner suggests), I might look to the teaching of writing and, more specifically, underprepared writers. Some writing teachers focus on grammatical error as "the problem to fix," whereas writing theory reminds us that students' grammatical competence rises or falls in accordance with their command of the subject matter. When a student is struggling to master a subject—that is, is struggling to master *the discourse* of a subject, learning the vocabulary and its methodologies—the grammar reflects that struggle. Until students learn to think within their subjects, *how can they write within them fluently?* Surely "writer's block," where one gets stuck (often in mid-sentence, uncertain how to finish) is itself a sort of dysfluency, perhaps better termed "thinker's block." This is a topic worth further exploring.

Regardless, in a response to an AAUP report entitled, *Accommodating Faculty Members Who Have Disabilities*, I participated in a forum with several scholars. The AAUP report provided for increased recognition of faculty with disabilities. I, along with several other disability scholars, wrote a response cheering the awareness but critical of several aspects of it. My concluding remarks there allow for some additional mileage here: "My point is that the report focuses on what faculty members must do to be considered equal instead of on what they are able to do. The result is that disabled faculty members are confined by and often must defend their disability instead of being free to utilize it." In other words, the narratives created about me confine me in other people's eyes. *Their* narratives and perceptions affect *me*.

Now, let me turn it around to you.

Unless one stutters, one probably does not (really) understand stuttering. Imagine beginning to speak: your thoughts and the words become sound and others turn their attention to you. Then, one of (at least) two things happens.

On one hand, you start a word and one of the syllables gets carried away, overly excited and repeats itself over and over and over. Like you're on a roller coaster and you just went past a high point and you're charging down a slope repeating yourself over and over, and you can't stop it. You have no control over it. The repetition has control over

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[2]Much discussion and scholarship in the field of communication science and disorders has been done, partly driven by Charles Van Riper's extensive and foundational work, most notably *The Nature of Stuttering* (1971) and *The Treatment of Stuttering* (1973).

[3]For example, see St. Pierre's recent book, *Cheap Talk* (2022) and Eagle's *Dysfluencies: On Speech Disorders in Modern Literature* (2013).

you; it's dictating what sounds you're making, what speed they are being produced at, and the elongation of them. You are locked into a feedback loop and it could be aching seconds before it eases. Your stomach pushing on your lungs only deepens the repetition, until finally the roller coaster is forced back up, clicking past the safety locks as you think it's over, but then the next steep slope, and it's out of control again. Each breath, like another steep slope, may (or may not) bring another repetition. You don't know if you'll spin into the loop or slip through it.

On the other hand, without warning, your voice and sound stop and the mechanical features (mouth, throat, vocal cords, etc.) of your voice stop working. You cannot move; they cannot move, but your mind is racing, asking what is happening and how do you get out of this thick mud. Maybe your eyes bulge, your mouth freezes, your fist clenches, or even your breathing stops. A momentary inability to breathe forces your mind to instinctively panic. People are looking away, uncertain of how to react to you. Their eyes widen; they are frozen too. Your voice has been snatched away from you; you know what you are saying and what you're planning to say. But you can't. The mud surrounds you and you feel like you're suffocating. Then just as quickly as these feelings came on, they are gone. But they are always there, and you know they are always there. And they can (and will) return at any time with limited, if any, warning.

That is what stuttering is like for me. My speech dysfluency is part of my voice. My voice is part of my dysfluency. We dance. We step on each other's feet a lot. I'm not a good dancer. But we dance because speaking is one vital way I communicate to the outside world. The biomechanical aspects of my voice have more control over my voice compared to other people. My own body can stop me. This uncontrolled repetition or blocking is not like your talking. I assume most people think words and say them with little consideration as to *how* to say them or how they might sound as they leave your body. I have no choice *but* to think of how to say them, or even *if* I *can* say them. Do I say a word fast to give the impression of a casual tone? Do I say it slowly, focusing on every syllable to make sure I articulate each one fully in hopes of wrestling it into submission? Do I speak softly and hope for a tacit understanding of my words? Do I add an accent to fool my brain for a minute in order to get the word out? Do I say another word in place of the word I want to use, which is often shorter, less complex, or just not quite right? Do I spell the word out or say a condensed version when I know I cannot say it? Do I start the word and hope some brave soul steps up and says the word I'm stuck on, so we can continue our dance of communication? None of these questions can be answered now. They are in the moment and transitory. As you can see, giving myself voice is a complex endeavor.

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Positionality of Self in Writing and God Trick Fallacy

Aimée Morrison | University of Waterloo
http://ellids.com/archives/2023/10/5.4-Forum-Morrison.pdf

> This essay emerged from my desire to examine closely moments of personal challenge that seem to have import for cross-boundary discourse. These types of moments have constituted an ongoing source of curiosity for me in terms of my own need to understand human difference as a complex reality, a reality that I have found most intriguing within the context of the academic world. From a collectivity of such moments over the years, I have concluded that the most salient point to acknowledge is that "subject" position really is everything.
>
> —Jaqueline Royster, "When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own"

A Confession and a Conundrum

I don't write unless I get invited to. It's not that I'm so important or famous or in demand. It's that I tend to have a comically bad time getting through blind peer review, to the extent that it takes me years sometimes to get an article accepted. In at least one instance, I had a conference paper proposal rejected by a reviewer acting on behalf of the same program committee that, simultaneously and on the basis of the same research, had invited me to deliver the keynote address. An editor at a flagship new media journal very strongly pushed me, in the first piece I had written as a new professor, to take out all the things that had made the article fun for me to write, things that made it more readable, vivid, and effective. It was a paper *about* rhetoric and metaphor that was *forbidden from employing* rhetoric and metaphor to make its argument. The fate of the following sentence was the subject of a surprisingly long email chain: "Language may shift our view of the world, but a popular consensus on vocabulary and metaphor does not necessarily alter the material operation of that world: tucking a flower into a gun barrel creates a powerful visual symbol, but does not preclude the florist being shot" (Morrison 74). These editors, and others since, operationalize the idea that scholarly writing has a specific voice in which its arguments must be expressed, which seems to be much flatter, less spiky or silly,[1] literal rather than figurative, impersonal, distinguished from my own style of writing by its formality and earnestness.

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[1]For a glimmer of hope, a good laugh, an astonishing precision of thought, and a metaphor involving throwing one's body across the muck so that Brad Pitt might be spared the indignity of soiling his shoes,

My reference to 60s peaceniks' anti-war agitprop produced an objectively great sentence—and it's the crux of the argument of the piece, which is about the hyperbolic and misleading metaphors by which the internet was mischaracterized in popular writing in the early to mid 1990s. The metaphorist I had particularly lined up within my (floral) sights was John Perry Barlow, lyricist for the Grateful Dead who traded on his 60s counterculture cred for his 90s guise as internet guru. Ultimately, the sentence stayed in my paper. IT'S CALLED STRUCTURAL IRONY AND I DID IT ON PURPOSE. But I have had this experience repeatedly; my work and my words and my metaphors carved and chastened and sanitized and re-sourced and re-contextualized until nothing of me remains in it, and what I wanted to say can no longer be expressed. The first voice I speak may be my own, but in order to enter the scholarly conversation, I have to change it.

Thanks, I hate it.

Provocation: Two Propositions and Two Trick Questions

Proposition 1

I am trained as a scholar in English (Honours BA, York University; MA, University of Guelph; PhD, University of Alberta). I am employed as an academic (Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Waterloo). My research on Twitter activism, mommy blogging, the early personal-computer era, the rhetoric of the selfie, romantic comedy, and critical disability studies has been and is supported by competitive national grants that are double-blind peer-reviewed. I disseminate my research findings by means of written articles and chapters in high-impact-factor academic publications. Terry Eagleton once complimented my writing. Therefore, my writing is academic.

Proposition 2

Ambient sexism drove me out of computer science after high school even though I had the best grades. My mom and I watched screwball comedies every Saturday night on our local public television station when I was a kid; I loved it. I was a mommy blogger for four years after my child was born. I have 7000 followers on Twitter. I'm autistic, have ADHD, and am chronically insomniac. I am a skilled amateur photographer and pianist. I post pictures of my outfits on Instagram and write long self-reflexive autobiographical captions, and create elaborate memes about Chopin's Nocturnes that I post to piano forums. Three of my publications examine a network of mommy bloggers I was a member of. Two more of my publications begin from conundrums posed by my own experiences (going massively viral on Twitter; not seeking academic accommodations as a neurodivergent faculty member). Another examines sexism in STEM and racism in higher education through viral Twitter hashtags. I wrote a paper about *You've Got Mail*

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see Eagleton, Terry. "Bodies, Artworks, and Use Values." *New Literary History*, vol. 44, no. 4, 2013, pp. 561–73. https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2013.0040.

as a remediation of the romantic comedy genre. All of my publications use the personal pronoun. A stranger once complimented my facial-injury Instagram series. Listeners of my ADHD podcast describe themselves as "fans." Therefore, my writing is personal.

Questions: Which proposition best captures the relationship between ethos, positionality, and narrative? Which proposition best captures academic writing?

Answer: Both of these are trick questions.

Both propositions are equally valid. Academic writing builds ethos through claims to positionality expressed through narrative. We always write from *somewhere*, as *someone*, and we are thus *partial* and *imperfect*, which is exactly what contemporary academic structures of publication cannot let us be.

Meditations on Academic Rigour

Please remove all identifying details before submission

We might understand academic writing as a discourse built on self-erasure. There is no narrating "I." Even as we rush to acknowledge the power of self-identification, acceptance, and inclusion by sprinkling our pronouns over our syllabi, email signatures, Zoom avatars, and Twitter bios, we continue to excise them just as thoroughly from our research writing.[2] Along with the personal pronouns, academic training aims to sever one's life from one's work: Even in subjective and interpretive fields such as literary studies, fannish motivations or personal connections to the research are derided. Writing in your PhD application that you "have always loved reading, even as a small child," is deemed naive and juvenile; explaining your focus on a given historical period as deriving from the feelings of pleasure you get from consuming texts and culture from that period is embarrassing, irrelevant, and unserious; liking a text or not liking is irrelevant and expressing such opinions in seminars deeply cringe. Why?

Unpopular opinion[3]

> Submissions must conform to journal style, please see guide on submission page. Submissions longer than 8000 words, inclusive of references, will be rejected outright. Submissions must use: American spelling; Arial 12pt. font, double-spaced and with first line indent of 1.25cm; no images; numbers between zero and ten written (e.g., "eight"), otherwise numerals (e.g., "42"). Please remove all identifying details before submission. List four possible peer reviewers for your

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[2]One notable exception, in the sense that I noted it because I happened to be reading deeply in queer theory, occurs in research on gender identity and pronouns, which refreshingly employs "we" instead of the generally used "the present research," even in work that does not employ auto-ethnography (see, Bradley et al.; McEntarfer and Iovannone; Huffman et al.). I see you, gender scholars.

[3]See, "Unpopular Opinion Puffin." *Know Your Meme*, www.knowyourmeme.com/memes/unpopular-opinion-puffin.

submission along with a rationale and contact information for each. Consult prior issues for a sense of what types of submissions are in line with the journal and consider how your work fits within these bounds. We receive many more submissions than we are able to publish, and estimate a minimum of four months between submission and review. You agree that your submission is not under consideration at any other publication. It is the author's responsibility to ensure adherence to these requirements; failure to do so may result in a desk rejection without review.

As academic institutions and participation in the enterprise of higher education expand, a certain standardization and bureaucratization of processes develops to manage the scale-up.[4] A side effect has been to conflate success at conforming to the standards and fitting within bureaucratic processes with academic excellence: "This essay is a desk reject because it arrived with end notes rather than in-text citations, and exceeded the maximum number of allowable keywords."

As academic institutions stopped barring entrance to applicants who are not male, WASP,[5] and from professional or upper class backgrounds, a certain standardization and bureaucratization of topic, method, and orientation to research has been gathered under the sign of "scholarly norms" to maintain the status quo as it existed prior to these inclusions. A posture of detached and objective expertise is enforced: "This essay is a desk reject because the researcher has listed ten of the research subjects as co-authors of the study, and is a member of the community being examined and cannot be objective."

As academic institutions became more demographically diverse, historically excluded groups began to push for their own knowledges, perspectives, discourses, and cultures to be reflected not just in material studied in the classroom but also in the structures of academic discourse itself. In 1974, the Conference on College Composition and Communication thus asserted that "students have a right to their own language," and the pushback has continued ever since. As Vershawn Ashanti Young notes wryly, "people be mo [sic] pluralingual than we wanna recognize" (112): "This essay is a desk reject because the writing deviates substantially from academic standards of correctness, construction, and vocabulary. We suggest the author work with an academic coach or editor to bring the work to the level of discourse required for publication."

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[4]For a rollicking good time, to learn more about bureaucratization and the post-war academy, see Graeber, David. *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy*. Melville House, 2015.

[5] "WASP" is an acronym for "White Anglo Saxon Protestant" originating in popular and sociological discourses alike in the United States to name the upper and upper middle class demographic that has been traditionally dominant in economic, political, educational, and social spheres. E. Digby Baltzell's 1964 book *The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America* outlines in part the mechanisms by which the WASP establishment systematically hoarded opportunities, wealth, and power by means such as educational exclusions.

<u>Procrustean Prose</u>

Academic work that expresses rootedness in identity and cultural location via the interpolation of life narrative into academic writing or of life experience into academic research programs and insists on employing a voice to articulate a perspective that hasn't been stripped of its individuality and idiosyncrasy produces a kind of irritating friction in the scholarly machinery. It disturbs the ostensible efficiency and coherence of academic publishing, whose upholding of the value of "academic rigor" manifests in the policing of writing style, conformity to standard academic English, and the arcana of formatting even at the very outset of review processes. Donald Bartholomae, in a famous and controversial essay from 1986, inadvertently expresses the power game that plays out at this level of form and discourse:

> Writers who can successfully manipulate an audience […] are writers who can both imagine and write from a *position of privilege*. They must, that is, see themselves within a privileged discourse, one that already includes and excludes groups of readers. They must be either *equal to or more powerful* than those they would address. (9; emphasis added)

Bartholomae describes students' acculturation to this discourse as the process of "inventing the university," but it is less an act of invention than a re-entrenchment not just of modes of speech but of a competitive and combative understanding of scholarly communication as rooted in domination. For Bartholomae, student writing succeeds by "assembling and mimicking [academic] language," daring an attempt to "carry off the bluff, since speaking and writing will most certainly be required long before the skill is "learned" (5). Bartholomae, then, explicitly sets form over content: it is better to sound scholarly while not making much sense, than to express a valuable insight in non-scholarly language.

To admit a greater diversity of aspirants to the ivory tower is one thing; to reconceive academic writing to permit this greater demographic diversity to be visible in modes of address, use of personal pronouns, community or experiential knowledge in addition to theoretical or experimental knowledge is still, much of the time, a bridge too far. We're probably not ready to re-invent the university.

"It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me"[6]

Maybe academic writing has always already been anti-autobiographical; our apprenticeship into academic identity secured once we learn to write in the omniscient, universal, passive style of scholarship, a discourse that is no one's natural language. Thus, we assimilate into established forms of thinking and publication, away from the messy particulars of our own locations, identities, and experiences. And so we proceed, we

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[6]See, Swift, Taylor. "Anti-Hero (Official Music Video)." *Youtube*, 21 Oct 2022, https://youtu.be/b1kbLwvqugk. (It must be exhausting always reading through my lengthy footnotes.)

hope, across a tidy, easily parsable, comparable, measurable academic life course, or, if you prefer the Latin, *curriculum vitae*.[7]

But that is not a real life, or a tenable position, even if we fancy it up using Latin words.[8] Authored texts are always in some substantial way personal, regardless of how we twist our sentences to pretend otherwise. I have reason to believe that much of who I am, how I think, how I relate to others, how I respond to novel situations, etc., is determined by the set of material circumstances of my embodiment and lived experiences, by the familial circumstances of my upbringing, by the cultural circumstances of my geographic and historical location. These circumstances equip me in particular ways to move through the world and, in important ways, determine what experiences and opportunities I have, which in turn produce further opportunities or foreclose them. The "Aimée Morrison" who sits at the desk to compose this paragraph is the momentary culmination of a series of random events that somehow cohere into an Associate Professor of English that others recognize as distinct, and who is interpellated by the hail of "Hey, Aimée."[9] But I could have been anything else if anything had been different at any point, and I will be different, surely, next year, tomorrow, or when I'm 80. Two weeks ago, I practiced Nocturnes at the piano for 90 minutes a day, struggling over chromatic polyrhythms and syncopated arpeggiations that seem to presume a human hand with different anatomy than mine. I have been researching the idiosyncratic fingering charts Chopin developed, as much an innovation in music pedagogy and performance as the compositions he is more recognized for. Today, instead of practicing

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[7]This is exactly the kind of clever wordplay, linguistic resonance, and cheap joke to which I am helplessly drawn, moth-like to flame-such. I experienced such a powerful moment of learning when it popped into my head that I dared to think it might resonate with you. This is exactly the kind of clever wordplay which Reviewer 2 demands five peer-reviewed sources to support and which editors attempt to remove as too cute-clever or impressionistic. Current editor sensibly suggests I need a reference right here so I offer this one, Ourobouros-style, to my own forthcoming piece, "Vitae Statistics: The Anti-Autobiographical Imperative of Academic Self-Documentation," included in *In The Spaces Provided: Career Narratives and Academic Womanhood*, a collection edited by Lisa Ortiz-Vilarelle through Routledge.

[8]A neurologist assessing me after a first attack of cluster headaches in my mid-40s, sent me on my way from the consultation with the following very confident assessment: "We can for now say that you have a diagnosis of idiopathic cephalalgia." To which I replied: "Yes, yes, 'head pain of unknown origin,' I also understand Latin," which was the bright spot in my entire run of headaches.

[9]Casting about for someone—anyone—to write me a reference letter for grad school as I was finishing my BA in 1997, I landed on the Marxist Victorian Literature professor, Norman Feltes, teaching an honours seminar I had enrolled in because it fit my schedule. He agreed, but only on the condition that I apply to a specific university. Because Norman made me apply to the University of Guelph (a farm school??) to work with Susan Brown (I'm not a Victorianist???), who hired me to work on the digital humanities Orlando Project because I was "good with computers," and Orlando was housed mainly at the University of Alberta, so that's where I went for my PhD, and in my first week there, a fellow first year PhD student, Lily Cho, loaned me Rosanne Alluquère Stone's book, *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age*, because I was "a computer person," which was what prompted my switch into new media studies. Stone's book opens its first chapter with an autobiographical story which an endnote flags for its rhetorical utility and dodgy veracity. And look at me now, here, doing this footnote. Weirdly, it wasn't in Norman's class that I read Althusser. Oh, and that thing I wrote that Terry Eagleton liked? It was part of an In Memoriam for Norman describing how he stood up and sang "Jerusalem" on his last day of teaching before retirement, which happened to be in that self-same seminar I was enrolled in—it was personal writing (Morrison et al.).

lifting my ring finger over and past my pinkie finger to strike a key note beyond it, I am developing an expertise in the many different kinds of ways fingers can be broken, nail avulsion, wound care, and how to type with three fingers, lifting my right middle and ring fingers up and out of the way, replacing their accustomed actions with my index and pinkie fingers, and marvelling at how difficult it is. I'm focusing my interest on the materiality of artistic creation through a new lens, because I crushed my fingers in the garage door. I'm rereading some critical disability studies, this time through the lens of physical debility rather than mental disability.

Chaos theory suggests that distal[10] trivia can unexpectedly have high salience and deterministic effect: this is Edward Lorenz's butterfly (or, originally, seagull) flapping its wings and altering the strength and path of a tornado thousands of miles and many weeks away. The butterfly/seagull tale is a narrative account of a mathematical fact Lorenz discovered in the new field of computational weather modelling: a fractional rounding error difference in input data, at the third decimal, produced massive changes in a model's output, seemingly out of all proportion (Gleick 16–17). As pathetic fallacy would suggest, this meteorological fact mirrors an important plot point in the current essay: we ourselves are but the distant effects of innumerable variables too complex to control. The self is temporary and contingent, relational and contextual: the "I" we recognize as "me" is the unpredicted and unpredictable outcome of innumerable unrelated variables. We are the bodies we occupy; we are the relationships we have with others; we are the things that have happened to us.[11] How on earth could I ever imagine writing from any other position than "I"? How could I ever be so bold as to think that I could scrub out the subjective bits, the material flotsam and jetsam of my biography, to presume to be able to pronounce anything at all with perfect objectivity, free from preference, bias, or even the undue influence of my own rumbling stomach (Danziger et al.)? I can't, of course: that's why Haraway calls it the "god trick," a term that ought to be impossible to understand as anything other than naming a cognitive error, but which we continue to mistake for a scholarly goal (Haraway).

My insistence on acknowledging my own partiality and positionality, then, like Haraway's, is an "argument for situated and embodied knowledges" that is simultaneously "an argument against various forms of unlocatable, and so irresponsible, knowledge claims" (181). The irresponsibility Haraway refers to is of published work that mistakes its partiality for universality, an arrogance of claiming too much. However,

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[10]We are all but chance events, truly: the word 'distal' was in this draft before my garage door gifted me a Tuft fracture, which is the name of the kind of finger break that happens on the head of the *distal* phalanges: the tip of your finger. This, according to the orthopedic surgeon, is the "best" kind of breakage for musicians, as even open fractures of this sort heal relatively quickly, and with least risk of deformity or loss of mobility and function. See, Carpenter, Shannon, and Rachel S. Rohde. "Treatment of Phalangeal Fractures." *Hand Clinics*, vol. 29, no. 4, Nov. 2013, pp. 519–34. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hcl.2013.08.006.

[11]See, Barrett, Lisa Feldman. *Seven and a Half Lessons about the Brain*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020. Not for nothing, but Barrett is a Gugenheim Fellowship-winning neuroscientist who writes here as if she is aiming to be understood by readers beyond Reviewer 2, employing anecdote and metaphor to a highly readable effect in a book that is 125 pages of engaging text followed by 35 pages of deeply-sourced notes.

the irresponsibility also inheres in the suppression or erasure of scholarship that does not engage in such tricks: for Young, "The narrow, prescriptive lens be messin writers and readers all the way up, cuz we all been taught to respect the dominant way to write, even if we dont, cant, or wont ever write that one way ourselves. That be hegemony. Internalized oppression. Linguistic self-hate" (112).[12] But how could we write differently—from established standards of academic discourse and, crucially, from one another—and still legibly as academics? How will we know what is good academic work and what is not if we do not hold one another to identical standards? How can we imagine a pluralism that does not devolve into "anything goes," since that is the question the argument for pluralism always seems to invite? For Haraway, "the alternative to relativism is not totalization and single vision, which is always finally the unmarked category whose power depends on systematic narrowing and obscuring" (182). To break from this single vision entails risk, if my own series of rejections and rewrites and snide remarks about "me-search"[13] and "too clever by half" and "that's way too many footnotes" are any indication.

"NEVER HEARD OF YOU!"

Consider the experience of Hannah Gadsby, in their breakout Netflix special, *Nanette*. After twenty conventional minutes of self-deprecating jokes about having trouble with Pride parades as a lesbian who doesn't like loud noises, Gadsby calls a time-out on themself, and expresses their intent to quit comedy. In the dead silence that follows, they articulate the role their own comedy has played in arresting their development, as they transformed traumatic moments of their own life into cheery punchlines to please and entertain others. And they refuse to do so anymore. But the show must go on: *Nanette* continues as a masterclass on both the structures of trauma and the structures of comedy that proceeds by undercutting the practice of professional comedy through the medium of comedy, all the while being blisteringly earnest and deeply personal. It is a virtuosic act of comedy writing and comedy performance. What mesmerized me and others also managed to enrage more than a few people, whose unhinged reaction to *Nanette* Gadsby addresses at some length in their follow-up special, *Douglas*. The "haters," as Gadsby describes them, attacked *Nanette* on several fronts: it wasn't comedy, it wasn't funny, it wasn't standup. They were so enraged by Gadsby's fame that they sought Gadsby out on social media to tell the comedian that they were a nobody and that the haters, in fact, "never heard of you." Collectively, these responses denied Gadsby ethos, and thus delegitimized the critique as well as the innovation in comedy enacted in *Nanette*: it wasn't so much that the haters didn't find Gadsby funny, it's that they went to great lengths to *deny Gadsby the status of a comedian*, to expel Gadsby entirely from the genre,

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[12]Chopin's fingering innovations spring from a similar insight: "Contrary to the pedagogues of the time, who sought to equalize the fingers by means of laborious and cramping exercises, Chopin cultivated the fingers' individual characteristics, prizing their natural inequality as a source of variety in sound: 'As many different sounds as there are fingers'" (Eigeldinger et al., 17).
[13]See, Pickles, Matt. "'Mesearch' - When Study Really is all About Me." *BBC News*, 10 May 2017, www.bbc.com/news/business-39856894.

from the discourse. Gadsby understands this reaction: "I've seen this pattern in other art movements. It's that, you know, changing of the guard. People break rules, they get accused of not being actual artists. And I was like, this is old news" (qtd. in Cornish and Hodges). In this view, an "artist" is one who conforms to prior ideas of what "art" is; it is a designation that others grant or deny you. It is a power play.

Life writing and auto/biography studies, of course, have long been attuned to the contingent nature of the self, to its relationality, and to the compromise between readers and writers resulting in the uneasy truce of the autobiographical pact: the narrating "I" on the page is firmly attached to the proper name on the cover of the book, and that the narrated events are true if not the whole complete accounting of a full life (Smith and Watson). Auto/biography studies understands that an objective factual accounting is never possible in life writing, but nor is it desirable; the subjectivity of the life writing text, indeed, is partially what authorizes it and produces value. A first-person account is the account of one person, whose experiences are unique and thus valuable in their particularity and specificity. Can we imagine a kind of academic writing that makes use of this insight? How can we possibly make comprehensible and assessable truth claims— that is, do peer review—if we are not shaping each of ourselves into the standard figure of the Objective Academic Researcher? Are we doomed to solipsistic and relativistic chaos if we abandon the omniscient passive voice of established scholarly discourse for the idiosyncracies that attend writing focused through the personal pronoun?[14] How to earn credibility, legitimacy, authority if not by behaving in the expected ways, using the conventional methods, and crafting recognizable claims? Haraway proposes a scholarly discourse comprised of "partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology" (182).

YMMV

"YMMV" ("Your mileage may vary") is internet slang meant to acknowledge particularity and to limit the universality of claims of all sorts, without diminishing the use value of these claims or their testability.[15] Subjective, but not arbitrary. Say, a YouTube video were to compare three digital tablets from different manufacturers and name one as preferable: the vlogger's envoi might remind users that she is interested in

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[14]Perhaps a reader of similar vintage to myself will recognize in this worry an echo of the panic around postmodernism in the academy, or of feminist calls to expand the literary canon, or of student protest movement demands for courses and departments in what was then called "Ethnic Studies" —namely, that breaking apart academic teleologies, certainties, and metanarratives by increasing diversity of perspectives, goals, values, and methods would render the idea of scholarly judgment, discernment, and coherence impossible.

[15]Formal and informal dictionaries online define "YMMV" in this way, demonstrating the term's wide usage and surprisingly nuanced understanding of standpoint epistemology. See, "Ymmv." *Urban Dictionary*, 19 July 2006, www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=ymmv; "YMMV." *Cambridge Dictionary*, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ymmv; and "YMMV - What Does YMMV Stand For?" *Slang.net*, 6 Jan. 2022, https://slang.net/meaning/ymmv.

a tablet that can be an all-purpose machine, and that "YMMV," which here means that if your needs are different than hers, you might find a different tablet more suitable. At its best, "YMMV" indicates authorial self-reflexivity and humility by acknowledging the particular material circumstances that undergird an interpretation or a recommendation, and by recognizing that the audience is almost certainly comprised of readers, listeners, and watchers whose needs and contexts are different from the author's. The metaphor derives, of course, from the automotive industry: "Your mileage may vary" is a boilerplate hedge located in the fine print at the bottom of mandated, statutory fuel consumption specifications affixed to the windows of new vehicles. "6.1L/100km highway / 9L city" seems to be a manufacturer making a claim of fact about an internal combustion engine, until the footnoted text reminds me that my own habit of jackrabbit starts, or constant use of the air conditioner, or speeding means that my own mileage is determined by my behaviour *in relation to* the design of the vehicle.[16] In between the design of the engine, the climate, and my lead foot, my mileage will vary from the manufacturer label. How could it not? Such an admission does not mean that statutory fuel efficiency declarations are no longer meaningful; it just acknowledges contingency and the impossibility of omniscience or perfect knowledge.

In academic writing, particularly in the subjective and interpretive humanities disciplines, our work involves arriving at subjective conclusions on the topics we have researched, developing claims that we forward through argument, employing pieces of textual or other evidence we link together with sentences we have composed and arranged in order to persuade readers that our interpretation of the evidence, and thus our claim, is plausible and useful. If we're brave enough to abandon the writing practices that produce the god trick, we will both demonstrate and acknowledge that a claim can be both mostly correct and incomplete simultaneously, that it can be particular in its expression, and still offer something of value to *some* readers, but probably not *all* readers: YMMV.

I Quit Academic Writing

Taking cue from Gadsby (who shares with me dual diagnoses of ADHD and autism, and a strong aversion to convention for the sake of convention), I hereby quit academic writing, or at least the kind of academic writing that requires the god trick, standardization of approach and tone, and the enactment of competence through bland prose stripped of all its personality. For me, research writing is always and has always been both personal and academic. Rhetoric, at its most useful, acts to persuade both speaker and audience: ethos is contingent, dialogic, humble, and relational. It is probative rather than magisterial. It requires, I think, that we write in our own voices, from our acknowledged subject positions and claiming our situated and partial knowledges, even as we make claims to the attention of an audience. This requires craft, attention, and

[16]Fuel consumption labeling was devised during the 1973–1974 Oil Crisis in the United States. The familiar "your mileage may vary" phrase does not ever appear exactly as such, but rather as "your actual mileage may vary," in the 2008 revision of the label. The phrasing was much wordier, specific, and detailed in prior iterations. See, US EPA, OAR. "Learn about the Fuel Economy Label." *EPA: United States Environmental Protection Agency*, 3 Sept. 2015, www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/learn-about-fuel-economy-label.

expertise, as Gadsby is regularly required to remind critics who express surprise or rage at the power of their work: "I have skills, people, I know what I am doing, even if you don't like it" (Gadsby 19). Do you think Terry Eagleton and Chopin show up recursively here by accident? Or that the chaotic interplay between the footnotes and the main text is something other than a demonstration of the imbrication of the personal (life) and the scholarly (work)? I readily admit that take as my entry into researching an experience I have had or a curiosity that has gripped me or a problem I have a burning intellectual need to resolve. This does not make my writing solipsistic or self-serving or narcissistic. If anything, to write this way necessarily entails self-reflection: to notice the things I don't know, the things that others don't know, to ask how and why my own judgment of certain topics diverges from others', to assess the means by which this divergence has occurred and what it means, and to bridge that gap with words. Some writers on ethos suggest that this is in fact the first task of the rhetorician. That the tools of rhetoric are a mode of enquiry that we must apply first to *ourselves*, in categorizations, naming, and relationships between things that we test and re-test, and bring into the world, with the aim of persuading a particular audience: *who* that is matters, and *how* we relate to them matters. Writing is an act of connection—it has always been personal.

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"Embodied Narrative" in Transhumanism: Notes on Emerging Models of Ethos

James S. Baumlin | Missouri State University
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> [It is only] with legal ideas about rights, Christian ideas about the soul, and Cartesian ideas about the ego that our modern, categorial self is born.
>
> —Martin Hollis, "Of Masks and Men" (223)

> But should we in turn wish to "look into the future" and form an image of what it will be, there is one childish error we must avoid: to base the man of the future on what we are now, simply granting him a greater quantity of mechanical means and appliances.
>
> —Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life* (246)

It is a Western rhetorical model that Martin Hollis addresses in the epigraph above, and it's from within that version of the "categorial self" that my own comments proceed. I am, by training, an historian of rhetoric whose research has focused on classical models of ethos and their postclassical advancements. Our transit through antiquity to the 21st century is marked, in large part, by a gathering up of rights, roles, and affordances, each pressuring the "category of the person" (Mauss). These have granted (to some people at least, some of the time) rights of self-possession (separating citizens from slaves); rights of class, inheritance, and occupation (establishing medieval castes and aristocratic privilege); rights of privacy and private possession (preconditions both of individualism and early-modern capitalism); rights of citizenship within modern nation-states (a precondition of capitalist expansion and colonialism); and, much later in Western society, rights pertaining to gender (including suffrage and bodily self-possession/control).

If these and other accretions to the "category of the person" carry us from antiquity into modernism, we need to ask what further developments are reshaping us, not simply in social-political practice *but as an embodied species* today. Over the past decade, my sense of the accelerating speed of change—in urban technoculture, in global economy, in transportation and media/communication, in informatics, and in technoscience (the medical sciences particularly)—has turned my gaze forward. It's not where we've come from, but where we're going, that holds my attention. Here's my thesis in a nutshell: In our species' interface with scientific technoculture, new versions

of ethos arise. And, as our habitus evolves, so will our storytelling. For it's within "embodied narrative" that postmodern ethos most forcefully, most fully emerges.[1]

From Logos to Ethos (to Mythos)

In considering the resources of 21st century ethos, we must first observe the model that it seeks to supplant. The discourses of modernism—of social-technological progress, neoliberalism, and science itself—belong to the grand narrative of Enlightenment rationalism. Logos-driven, such discourse posits a "universal subject" premised on the primacy of mind within our shared humanity—and *not* on bodily/cultural difference. Since Jean-François Lyotard's *Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), we've come to question the power of such metanarratives: "Local knowledge" (Geertz), as we have learned, grows out of "local narratives." As a corollary, we've learned to foreground discourse, irrespective of its rhetorical/presentational structures, against the backdrop of some enabling pre-existent or emergent story.[2] Both individually and collectively, the lifeworld as we experience and imagine it is built from within narrative. The diversity of our stories—again, both individually and collectively—grows out of the diversity of our positioning within history as well as within the current lifeworld, with its varied markers of identity: of gender, ethnicity, class, age, ability, and culture generally. In much contemporary discourse, these markers of identity—fashioners of ethos for speakers and audiences alike—describe markers of difference, as well. The agonistic, contentious quality of much social-political debate arises out of the conflict, not simply among speakers, but among their competing narratives, each clamoring to be heard and, in finding an audience, making that speaker (or community, or party, or organization) visible.[3]

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[1] I take Jim W. Corder's definition of ethos—"character as it emerges in language" (2)—as a starting point. Following Erving Goffman, I treat "character" and "personhood" as flip sides of a coin, where character marks the performance of ethos *as observed by/within others*, whereas personhood marks the performance of ethos *as experienced by/within the self*. And I follow Pierre Bourdieu in his use of "habitus," which covers much of the same territory as rhetorical ethos, though from a sociological perspective:

> Habitus is, Bourdieu states, "a socialized subjectivity" and "the social embodied." […] [I]t is, in other words, internalized structure, the objective made subjective. It is also how the personal comes to play a role in the social—the dispositions of the habitus underlie our actions that in turn contribute to social structures. Habitus thereby brings together both objective social structure and subjective personal experiences, expressing, as Bourdieu puts it, "the dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality." (Maton, "Habitus" 52–53)

[2] Focused in literary and film studies, narratology has evolved its own vocabulary, which only occasionally parallels or intersects with classical-Aristotelian and postclassical rhetoric. (For a useful discussion, see Mieke Bal's *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*.)

Through the following, I'm not concerned with the formalist distinctions made among such terms as genre, mode, text, script, story, etc. I'm interested, rather, in the rhetoricity of narrative (and the narrativity of rhetoric), both broadly defined. I'm also interested in the ways audiences respond, physiologically and neurologically, to the linguistic structures of narrative. Language inhabits us; its rhetorical structures give shape to our thoughts, feelings, gestures, attitudes. It is within a rhetoric of embodiment that I shall be situating the models of ethos that follow.

[3] Conforming to traditional humanistic values, the struggle for equal rights has been, for centuries, an ethotic struggle to acknowledge a *common human identity* and destiny. But affirming "the universal human agent" of Enlightenment rationalism has achieved little in correcting inequalities based in gender, color, ethnicity; rather, it allows these "markers of identity" to disappear. That's perhaps the most striking movement within

Elsewhere, I've described ethos as the "cultural dress" of speakers.[4] Here, I'm describing ethos as the *embodied enactment* of the stories that we tell of ourselves and of our world—and, concomitantly, of our response to the stories told elsewhere and otherwise. In our transit from modernism into realms of the postmodern, the Enlightenment *homo rationalis* has evolved into *homo narrans*. Within the vocabulary of classical-Aristotelian rhetoric (specifically, the triple *pisteis* of logos, ethos, and pathos), this transit declares more than the primacy of ethos over logos; more germane to this discussion, it invests mythos—that is, the structures and resources of narrative (and which I take, not from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* but from his *Poetics*)—effectively as a fourth *pistis* or proof, implicated in persuasion.[5]

Before we can say what a postmodern ethos "is," we must pull back the curtain of language to observe the "thing" that it's tasked to represent. For any adequate theory of ethos must begin with a theory of the human—that two-legged animal without feathers whose nature and possibilities have astonished, puzzled, and obsessed philosophers since antiquity. The possession of language is not, in itself, unique to the human species, if the former is defined (reductively) as a species-specific faculty of communication somehow hardwired into the nervous system. As a further *definiens*, we can point to our nature as storytellers: *homo narrans*. That said, it's the neurophysiological triggers of *embodied narrative*—bodily affects tied not to cultural immersion simply, but to evolutionary biology more deeply—that account for the hold ethotic discourse has on our species, to a considerable extent governing our social-political behaviors. The cross-fertilizing of such disciplines as cognitive science and narratology are teaching us ways to observe—and, important for rhetorical theory, to anticipate—the real (if largely unconscious) effects that narrated action, gesture, and affect have on readers and audiences.

It's the claim of cultural authority that binds narrative so strongly to ethos. Energized by "local narrative" (again, see Lyotard), cultural difference has come to dominate in discussions of ethos today. But, increasingly, technology is reshaping our lifeworlds, the human body included. The urban-cosmopolitan habitus is increasingly

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ethos studies today: its shift toward an ethotics of bodily/cultural difference (Baumlin and Meyer, "Positioning Ethos" 6).

[4]As Craig A. Meyer and I write, "Character 'emerges' […] within a distinctive 'cultural dress,' one that presents itself—in effect, 'clothes itself'—within markers of identity/difference (ethnicity, gender, social status, regional accent, etc.)" (Baumlin and Meyer, "Positioning Ethos" 6). In so saying, we take inspiration from the classical Athenian ethos, as described by Michel Foucault:

> "Ethos was the deportment and the way to behave. It was the subject's mode of being and *a certain manner of acting visible to others*. One's ethos was seen by his dress, by his bearing, by his gait, by the poise with which he reacts to events, etc." (Foucault, "Ethic of care," 6; emphasis added). Ethos, in this sense, displays cultural "markers," such that the speaker's task is "to open a space" through language that allows the self to be heard and, saliently, *to be seen*. (Baumlin and Meyer 6)

[5]For readers unfamiliar with the classical vocabulary, Aristotle posits three *pisteis* or "proofs," these being *logos* or rational argument, *pathos* or an appeal to emotion, and *ethos* or the projection of expertise and trust. Through logos, the speaker persuades by adducing "good reasons." Through pathos, the speaker elicits sympathy and a heightened emotional response. Through ethos, the speaker displays an image of "good sense," "good will," and "good moral character." By naming *mythos* a fourth proof, I'm suggesting that narrative contributes uniquely to persuasion. What it adds, I would argue, is a sense of the *worldliness* of argument: Impelling our bodies toward action-in-the world, our stories unfold as so many action-series situated in time and space.

eclectic in its affordances—of workplace, living arrangements, communication, and transportation as well as of cuisines, fashions, and entertainments. In a genuinely globalist setting, our aspirations expand beyond traditional "birthmarks" of local culture and cultural identity. In the U.S., the urban-cosmopolitan ethos is nomadic, almost by definition.[6] To this culturally-eclectic habitus, we can add a range of bodily enhancements (genetic, hormonal, orthotic, prosthetic, and reconstructive) that transform individuals from biological organisms into biotechnical assemblages. (The cyborg, as Donna Haraway described it some decades ago, has been fully realized in daily life.) Within this implicitly transhumanist model, ethos comes to be defined, not by markers of birth or of culture, but by choices of lifestyle (Bostrom).

Emergent Models in Search of Ethos

As I've noted, any adequate theory of postmodern ethos begins with a theory of the human. Without denying the dominance (and necessity) of an ethotics of cultural difference, we must take account of several emerging theories, each interdisciplinary in discourse and informed/enabled by technoscience. Answering Nietzsche's aphoristic "human, all too human," these offer a broadly evolutionary model of human "becoming-" (Braidotti). The hyphen here is deliberate and necessary, since the future/s of ethos rest/s not in an essentialist model of human "being," but rather in modes of "becoming-" suggestive of our species' transit into something more: something more deeply examined and better understood, something capable of healing and enhancement—literally machinable in components—and freed in ways that mere decades ago remained the stuff of science fiction. In sum: Our study of ethos must account for an ever-burgeoning species whose worldly aspirations range from human augmentation through transhumanism to (post)human "becoming-."

Though current within their respective socio-scientific disciplines, the following models remain on the periphery of ethos studies (and of rhetoric generally). Each deserves a separate essay, though I can give mere paragraphs to each, leaving readers to decide which, if any, merit attention. But such is the purpose of this forum contribution: to serve as an entry-point for further research, inviting readers to look more closely for themselves. What unites the following models is their shared interest in embodiment and embodied cognition/action—all of which reinforces the narratological basis of contemporary ethos.

In their recent study, *With Bodies: Narrative Theory and Embodied Cognition* (2021), Marco Caracciolo and Karin Kukkonen outline an approach to cognitive psychology that foregrounds the *embodied*, *enactive*, *embedded*, and *extended* nature of mind—hence the moniker, 4e Cognition. By embodiment, they refer "primarily to the way in which cognitive processes are shaped by the makeup and sensorimotor possibilities of human bodies" (4). Of the emergent models surveyed in this forum, 4e Cognition offers to ground narrative—along with reader/audience response—within evolutionary biology: For "all narratives—including stories as trivial as an account of an ordinary day at work—are deeply embodied in that they tap into a repertoire of embodied

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[6]According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average American moves 11.7 times over their lifetime (United States Census). Also, the average American will change jobs 12 times (List Foundation).

interactions with the world (through situation models, motor resonance, and so on)" (Caracciolo and Kukkonen 15).

At the neurolinguistic core of these "embodied interactions" lies the human brain's mirror neuron system:

> The key concept that [mirror neurons] invoke is "motor resonance": when we observe another individual perform a physical action, our own bodies become attuned to, or resonate with, the movement—as the activation of the mirror neuron system suggests […]. [T]his resonance effect is not limited to the direct perception of other people's actions *but can be triggered by language understanding as well* […]. Put otherwise, reading action sentences of specific body parts *activates the corresponding areas of the brain.* (Caracciolo and Kukkonen 129; emphasis added)

Of its varied applications to rhetorical narratology, 4e Cognition explains our human empathetic response to storytelling: Through the mirror neuron system, readers and audiences reexperience *from within* the lifeworlds of speakers/subjects/actors/actants. Caracciolo and Kukkonen's work also explains why it is that fiction and nonfiction narrative are isomorphic in brain function and effect.[7] Irrespective of genre, audience-response is ethotic—a sharing of experience, attitude, and affect across texts. In later paragraphs, I'll return to the workings of mirror neurons in popular discourse. This next ethotic model—the actant of Latour's actor-network theory (ANT)—adds a further, technosocial, dimension to Caracciolo and Kukkonen's neuropsychological "repertoire of embodied interactions with the world" (15). Both methods focus on embodied narrative but from different orientations: Whereas 4e Cognition looks inward in studying human affect, actor-network theory looks outward in studying human social behavior.

As Bruno Latour argues in "A Collective of Humans and Nonhumans" (1999), the human agent *is expanded* by technology into a "hybrid someone-/something-else" (158): Human agent + technology = actant. "Each artifact has its script," writes Latour, with "its potential to take hold of passersby and force them to play roles in its story" (158): In so noting, he declares the narratological basis of actor-network theory.[8] *A body corporate* "is what we and our artifacts have become" (Latour 168). He continues:

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[7]Here, too, I refer readers to the further analysis given in Part 1 of my double essay, "Empathy and Abjection After Burke," to be published in the ongoing Issue 5.4 of *LLIDS*.

[8]Elsewhere (Baumlin, "From Postmodernism" 46), I've described the ways ANT "scripted" ethos in the early days of pandemic, turning human agents into hybridized actants:

> Responses to COVID-19 are ethotic: people infected become "carriers," their every cough a viral bullet-spray. People are defined by the infection in ways that change their self-image (projected as well as introjected) as "healthy," as "at risk," as "infected" in quarantine, as "infected" in hospital, and as "infected" on ventilator life-support. Latour's actor-network theory provides the equations: An assemblage (person + virus + ventilator) describes an actant in ICU. When out in public, an assemblage (person + mask + social distancing) describes a conscientious citizen following CDC guidelines, whereas (person − mask − social distancing) describes a "risktaker" showing little care for self or others.
>
> Healthcare workers have earned a heroic ethos in putting their own lives at risk. Again, Latour provides the equation: nurse + PPE + safety protocols + coronavirus patient = "caretaker." Remove the PPE—the personal protective equipment of mask, gloves, and gown—and you've

> We are an object-institution. [...] "Of course," one might say, "a piece of technology must be seized and activated by a human subject, a purposeful agent." But the point […] is symmetrical: what is true of the "object" is still truer of the "subject." There is no sense in which humans may be said to exist as humans without entering into commerce with what authorizes and enables them to exist (that is, to act). (168)

For a socially-politically charged example, Latour offers the actant of citizen + gun, whose ethotic identifications range from "good citizen," "soldier," and "cop" to "murderer." Ultimately, it's not the agent or the artifact or the script or the act *per se* that defines the ANT actant-ethos; rather, it's the communicative *network* of interrelated actants—that is, the actant's placement within larger social, occupational, or institutional systems—that completes the ANT model, giving the hybridized agent/technology its distinctive narrative ethos.

Whereas Latour redefines the human actant *by addition* (agent + technology), Donna Haraway defines the human-cybernetic organism *by incorporation*. As described in her influential "Cyborg Manifesto" (1991), Haraway's human cyborg is rebuilt from within, as a machined and assembled biotechnical system. "Late twentieth-century machines," Haraway declares, "have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines" (72). She continues:

> It is not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine […]. In so far as we know ourselves in both formal discourse (for example, biology) and in daily practice […], we find ourselves to be cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras. Biological organisms have become biotic systems, communication devices like others. There is no fundamental, ontological separation in our formal knowledge of machine and organism, of technical and organic. (82)

Against other postclassical models, Haraway's cyborg deprivileges "cultural difference" and all "markers of identity" deriving from the gendered body (Baumlin, "From Postmodernism" 1). Within the cyborg assemblage, rather, "nature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other" (Haraway 71). In making this declaration, Haraway liberates the cyborg from biological essentialism among other (patriarchal) ideological constraints against freedom (Baumlin, "From Postmodernism" 9).[9] Unsurprisingly, the cyborg figures prominently in both transhumanist and posthumanist models of personhood.

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destroyed the healthcare workers' efficacy and safety (and, effectively, their "caretaker" ethos) […].

    Other pandemic-related actants are primarily nonhuman: A test kit, for example, is supposed to provide reliable diagnosis (assuming proper construction, all necessary equipment, proper human administration, and timely interpretation) […]. In sum: Every aspect of the pandemic affects habitus, embodiment, informatics and "expert systems," practices of self-care, and self-image (both introjected and projected).

[9]In its "deliberate confusion of boundaries" (70), Haraway's cyborg resembles Latour's hybridized actant: In the passage just quoted, "nature" (for which, read human/animal biology) cannot be privileged as the

In contrast with Haraway's technocultural cyborg, Rosi Braidotti's humanimal situates our species' worldliness—its habitus—in non-anthropocentric nature. Within her bold vision of "the posthuman subject," ours becomes an interspecies, "planetary" ethos. In *The Posthuman* (2013), Braidotti writes of "this new knowing subject" whose "complex assemblage of human and nonhuman, planetary and cosmic, given and manufactured […] requires major readjustments in our ways of thinking" (193). The posthuman subject, she adds, dwells "within a common life-space that the subject never masters nor possesses but merely inhabits, crosses, always in a community, a pack, a group or a cluster" (193). Being "fully immersed in and immanent to a network of non-human (animal, vegetable, viral) relations" (193), the posthuman subject of necessity rejects biological essentialism, "species supremacy," and individualist ideologies (Baumlin, "From Postmodernism" 9).

If Lyotard describes the grounds of postmodernism, Braidotti gives the outline of a posthumanism in which our species is toppled from its traditional, privileged place above (and, indeed, "outside of") the rest of material/biological nature. As Henri Lefebvre writes, we cannot base "the man of the future on what we are now, simply granting him a greater quantity of mechanical means and appliances." (Indeed, we're not obliged to call this "man" a *man* at all, in whatever traditional senses—grammatical, cultural, biological—we might choose to apply.) But Braidotti's posthumanist, post-anthropocene vision is futuristic—utopian, even—and distant from current social-political realities. In contrast, the transhumanist models of actant and cyborg—*models aimed at enhancing rather than redefining our humanness*—are present in technoculture and operant now. As Nick Bostrom notes,

> It is not our human shape or the details of our current human biology that define what is valuable about us, but rather our aspirations and ideals, our experiences, and the kinds of lives we lead. To a transhumanist, progress occurs when more people become more able to shape themselves, their lives, and the ways they relate to others, in accordance with their own deepest values. Transhumanists place a high value on autonomy: the ability and right of individuals to plan and choose their own lives. (345–46)

On these points, I believe that Bostrom and Braidotti would agree. And I believe that Bostrom would cede the following: that the question most worth asking is not what a human being "is," but rather what our species "is becoming."

So much for emerging theory. The mirror neuron system, the actant of actor-network theory, the cyborg, and transhumanism generally: What can such terms teach us about the contemporary lifeworld? How can they help us interpret and, equally important, help us talk about our evolving modes of being-in-the-world? We shall find that these new ethotic namings explain much popular discourse *even as they problematize our*

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prior organic whole to which "culture" (for which, read technology) is simply added or attached, leaving nature unchanged in its essence. Technoculture, similarly, cannot remain unchanged by its interfusion with biology. As Haraway writes elsewhere, "gender, race, and class cannot provide the basis for belief in 'essential' unity" (73). Rather, "gender, race, and class consciousness is an achievement forced on us by the terrible historical experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism" (73).

understanding of the interrelationships among narrative, personhood, self-identity, technology, language, and politics. Whereas the paragraphs above are grounded in theory, what follows is an exploration of these terms in practice.

The Challenge of Postmodern Ethos: Being Seen, Being Heard (Differently)

Consider the political (and indeed, the potentially legal) implications of actor-network theory in the current debate over gun violence. "Guns kill people" is a slogan of the American political left, to which the political right, energized by the National Rifle Association (NRA), replies, "Guns don't kill people; people kill people." In his ANT analysis, Latour writes:

> The first slogan is materialist: the gun acts by virtue of *material* components irreducible to the social qualities of the gunman. On account of the gun the law-abiding citizen, a good guy, becomes dangerous. The NRA, meanwhile, offers [...] a *sociological* version more often associated with the Left: that the gun does nothing in itself or by virtue of its material components. The gun is a tool, a medium, a neutral carrier of human will. (157; emphasis in original)

"What does the gun add to the shooting?" Latour asks. He responds, "In the materialist account, *everything*: an innocent citizen becomes a criminal by virtue of the gun in her hand. The gun enables, of course, but also instructs, directs, even pulls the trigger" (157–8; emphasis in original). A critical reader might aver, "How can a gun pull its own trigger"? Of course it can't on its own, literally; but its material presence in a person's hand creates a script—a narrative that enlists the human agent within a specific sequence of actions that show the gun and gunowner performing together, as one. Latour explains:

> If the agent is human, is angry, wants to take revenge, and if the accomplishment of the agent's goal is interrupted for whatever reason (perhaps the agent is not strong enough), then the agent makes a detour: [...] Agent 1 falls back on Agent 2, here a gun. Agent 1 enlists the gun or is enlisted by it—it does not matter which—and a third agent emerges from a fusion of the other two. (158–9)

Which of these, then, the gun or the citizen, "is the *actor* in this situation?" Latour's answer, unsurprisingly, is "*someone else*—a hybrid—a citizen-gun, a gun-citizen" (159; emphasis in original). His further explanation is deeply ethotic in implication:

> *You are a different person with the gun in your hand*. Essence is existence and existence is action. If I define you by what you have (the gun), and by the series of associations that you enter into when you use what you have (when you fire the gun), then you are modified by the gun. [...] This translation is wholly symmetrical. *You are different with a gun in your hand; the gun is different with you holding it.* You are another subject because you hold the gun; the gun is another object because it has entered into a relationship with you. (159; emphasis added)

It is at this moment that the actant-ethos is named: This "someone, something else," this "hybrid actor" comprising gun and gunman *needs its own terminology*, since "agents can be human or (like the gun) nonhuman, and each can have goals (or functions, as engineers

prefer to say). Since the word 'agent' in the case of nonhumans is uncommon, a better term […] is actant" (Latour 159).

Though widely studied in academic circles, Latour's actant remains conspicuous in its absence from public social-political debate. To aid in its popular currency, we must hybridize Latour's own vocabulary, translating it from sociology into a strategy of political-legal rhetoric. The same may be said of Haraway's cyborg and Bostrom's transhumanist. Whether any of these retellings of ethos develop popular currency depends, in large part, on the fate of the Enlightenment subject and "his" continuing dominance in discourse. Though caricature, Stephen K. White's version rings true:

> *He* is conceived as *disengaged* from his social background and oriented toward *mastery* of the world that confronts him; nevertheless, he can *discover*, by the light of *reason*, *universally applicable principles of justice*, found in some *foundationalist account* of God, nature, progress, or human communication that can become the basis of political *consensus* with other individuals. (33–34; emphasis in original)

By universalizing human reason and experience, the Enlightenment subject denies racial, cultural, and bodily difference: Subsumed within its "he," all subaltern voices (minorities in power, if not in number) fall silent.

I've quoted Bostrom: "To a transhumanist, progress occurs when more people become more able to shape themselves, their lives, and the ways they relate to others, in accordance with their own deepest values." By these criteria, the biotechnologies of gender reassignment—the surgical and hormonal reshaping of the material body in accordance with one's self-identified gender—are transhumanist to the core. (Indeed, many socially- and religiously-conservative websites have attacked transhumanism through transgenderism.)[10] In claiming their right to be seen and heard, many transgendered speakers reject the old gendered pronouns and their implicit biological essentialism, preferring the gender-neutral "they." And many voices in popular media have followed suit: The growing use of gender-neutral pronouns in academia and journalism demonstrates that rhetorical practice *can* bring change. (If language filters our social reality, then the ways we speak inform our ways of seeing and knowing.) But the transgendered speaker has also met with vehement, indeed virulent abjection. The proliferation of anti-transgender legislation in the U.S. shows the strength of backlash against transhumanism generally.

Ineluctably, the renamings and retellings of postmodern ethos contribute to the "culture wars" roiling America today. Fought largely over bodily/cultural difference, these describe contests *of competing narratives* with ethos as a battleground. Adequate healthcare for the transgendered, equal rights within same-sex marriage, freedom in teaching critical race theory: The socially progressive aim of all such discourse is *to humanize* markers of bodily/cultural difference. In the gender- and color-blindness of

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[10]See, for example, Rob Dreher's article in *The American Conservative* magazine, "Transgenderism as Transhumanism," to which is added the subhead, "At stake? 'The most fundamental aspects of what it means to be human.'" Or, consider the web headline published by *The Catholic World Report*: "From Transgender to Transhuman: The Expanding Culture of Death" (Hendershott).

recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings, such speakers effectively disappear. Submerged within the undifferentiated "universal subject" of Enlightenment rationalism, they lose their distinctive ethos. So, if an aim of postmodern ethos is *to be seen* in order *to be heard*, then we confront a basic question, as yet unanswered within popular culture: Are we ready, as a species, for those "major readjustments in our ways of thinking" (Braidotti 193) that can carry us into a healthfully diverse, caring and accommodating, fully inclusive transhumanist future? The answer, for a not-insignificant portion of the American populace, is "No—at least, not yet."

What might it take to readjust our ways of thinking?

Long known to narrative studies, the Russian formalist notion of *ostranenie* or "defamiliarization"—of making the strange seem familiar, and the familiar strange—is invoked in 4e Cognition: "To truly decenter human notions of consciousness and subjectivity […] narrative has to implement embodied strategies that are capable of destabilizing (or 'defamiliarizing,' to use a more technical term) an anthropocentric understanding of the body" (Caracciolo and Kukkonen 180). Arguably, this defamiliarizing strategy pertains to transhumanist models generally.

As an ethotic trio, the actant, cyborg, and transhumanist emphasize bodily accretions and enhancements, but it's within narrative—storytelling—that their unique lifeworlds emerge. We take our next lesson, then, from 4e Cognition: Even as it charts a reader's empathetic response to fiction, surely the same neuron system reigns over the nonfiction genres of lifewriting. Our "ways of knowing" character/personhood remain the same for fiction and nonfiction alike: It's for this reason that psychologists learn from novels, while literary scholars learn from psychological case studies. We "know" (interpret and respond to) fictional characterizations by their *mirroring* of historical character, in the same way that we "know" (interpret and respond to) historical characters by their *mirroring* within fiction—for both are narratological. This isomorphism is grounded, not simply in the structures of narrative, but in the structures and functioning of "embodied cognition."

Within popular culture, we meet the actant and cyborg in fiction and film—those privileged, popular modes of entertainment wherein readers and audiences learn to exercise their powers of empathy. As consumers of sci-fi and speculative fiction, we dwell imaginatively within possible worlds inhabited by versions of trans-/post-/super-/human beings. When a story is well told, we admire its inventions of worlds and species; attracted by its possibilities, we seek relief from our own quotidian time, place, and personhood. By such vicarious participation, we familiarize ourselves with our own transhumanist future—a future that is emergent in some aspects *while already upon us in others*. We dwell among actants and cyborgs. Their world is our currency, our co-presence; nothing of this is fiction.

So we ask, Is this same "school of empathy" exercised in the "embodied narratives" of contemporary nonfiction? The answer is—or ought to be—"Yes, of course." A substantial portion of the American populace already embraces transhumanism and its diverse stories. Concomitantly, a substantial portion of the populace does not. The empathy elicited from within the former group becomes, in the latter, something else entirely. This refusal of empathy is not a failure of "narrative ethos"

or of rhetoric more broadly; rather, it's a reflection of differing brain functions. Here, too, cognitive theory gives some insight. Within Enlightenment rationalism, persuasion rests in *the capacity to change one's mind.* Within the neuroscientific model, persuasion describes *a change in brain chemistry*—a difficult task to say the least. For cognitive theory records our innate *capacity to resist persuasion*, given the psychophysiology of abjection. Put baldly, the rhetoric of empathy is countered by an equally forceful rhetoric of "moral disgust."[11]

It is in "the discourse of abjection," writes Bradley J. Irish, "that modern critical theory most squarely engages with the issue of disgust" (56). Vomit, feces, rotting flesh: "It is those necessary preconditions of existence that must, in their loathsomeness, be forcefully cast from sight" (Irish 56). And "the latency of such infantile abhorrence," write Maggie Hennefeld and Nicholas Sammond, "has an irresistible political influence" (2), as well. Tracy Dennis-Tiwary elaborates:

> Evolutionary psychology has long argued that we evolved to experience disgust towards things that could make us sick (rotten meat) or harm us (poisonous plants), and that we then transformed this physical disgust into the moral and ethical domain. […] Moral disgust leads us to "expel" the offenders. We want nothing to do with these disgraceful human beings—they are reprehensible, beyond the pale, and beyond our ability to reach an understanding. They are not part of our group, our society, our tribe. They are outsiders or "those people." ("Politics")

Whereas the mirror neuron system anticipates the liberal/progressivist penchant for empathy, equity, and social justice, the conservative reaction against socially progressive issues (in the U.S., these include same-sex marriage and abortion rights) reflects the psychology of abjection. Stories of empathy vs. "moral disgust": This contest, as Peter Hatemi and Rose McDermott suggest, "does not result from different preferences or derive from diverse childhood socialization, but represents a truly inherent difference in psychophysiological experience."[12]

In contemporary popular-political discourse, the transgendered body has become itself a site of contesting narratives. Within transhumanism, it affirms "the ability and right of individuals to plan and choose their own lives" (Bostrom 346). Within postmodernism, it marks the triumphant progress of medical science. Within its own storytelling, its cognitive effects are alternatively empathetic and defamiliarizing. In its ethos, it stands opposed to the universalism, paternalism, biological essentialism, and other -isms of the Enlightenment subject. The transgendered subject demands to be seen and acknowledged in- and for-itself, even by those who respond in abjection.

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[11]Here, too, I refer readers to the further analysis given in Part 2 of my double essay, "Empathy and Abjection After Burke," to be published in the ongoing Issue 5.4 of *LLIDS*.

[12]As the affect associated with abjection, "disgust encompasses the cognitive, emotional, and physical properties that are predictably divergent across ideological positions and infuses evaluations of morality along dimensions of purity and sanctity in conservatives but not in liberals." (Hatemi and McDermott 677). "These issues," Hatemi and McDermott continue, "receive new attention in light of recent research in neuroscience and psychology that highlights the links between moral judgment and emotion in general and concerns about purity and disgust in particular" (677).

By no means is empathy or abjection the sole province of a particular political camp. As a matter of course, LGBTQ+ persons have reacted in disgust when confronted by people, policies, and attitudes that they find offensive personally. (Theirs, it can be argued, is a "righteous indignation.") Concomitantly, socially- and religiously-conservative individuals have shown great compassion when faced by fellow human suffering. Both processes of empathy and abjection are hardwired into the human brain; both have served our biological evolution; and both have their necessity. Still, where one of these processes predominate, an individual's politics tends to follow suit. Does it surprise that brain chemistry is implicated in one's predisposition toward specific social/political/ideological beliefs and behaviors? Regarding abjection specifically, Hatemi and McDermott write, "it is not simply that conservatives are more easily disgusted, but rather [that] people with greater disgust sensitivity, showing greater neurological and physiological activation when confronting disgusting stimuli, tend to be more politically conservative" (681; emphasis added).

Can a dyed-in-the wool conservative be converted to liberalism, or the liberal to conservatism? In today's deep social-political divisions, is such persuasion even possible? Before hazarding an answer, we must note that convictions deeply held are ethotic, bound to private self-reflection and public self-performance: Our beliefs are inscribed in the stories we tell of ourselves and our world, and to change those beliefs in any significant way is to change our storytelling. (Once again, we cycle back to the ethos of narrative and the narrativity of ethos.) How we make ourselves heard and, hence, visible: That, once again, is the ethotic task of contemporary rhetoric. If cognitive science (as described in this forum piece) aids in our reflective self-understanding, can it not also aid in our active self-fashioning?

Having made their way onto recent editorial pages and websites, such terms as empathy and abjection offer starting points for wider discussion of "embodied narrative." Cognitive science may not heal our deeply divided politics, but it can help explain our real, measurable differences in moral attitude, political conviction, and social behavior. And it helps to understand "the other," even when even when withstanding another's attack. But such phrasing as "to understand 'the other'" begs a question: How do we, personally, situate ourselves within the postmodern habitus? A few paragraphs ago, I wrote, "we dwell among actants and cyborgs." In so doing, I seemed to place some distance between the reader and the lifeworld described—as if inviting the readerly "we" to empathize *without identifying with* "the other." (i.e., "They" are the actants and cyborgs, whom "we" "dwell among," acknowledging their worldly co-presence.) Let me now remove that seeming distance and the old binary thinking that underwrites it. A careful reader may already have anticipated this next point: Within the postmodern habitus, *we are all already actants, all already cyborgs*.

Summarizing Latour, David M. Kaplan writes, "I become a motorist when I drive a car; a gardener when I use a rake" (7). Our task, notes Kaplan, is "to understand our lives as social-technical; our lives are composed of actants" (7-8). *What kind* of motorist one is will be reflected in such social-material details as insurance premiums, speeding and parking tickets, and so on. But let there be no doubt that the car changes the driver, and *vice versa*. Instead of Kaplan's rake, let's consider the iPhone. More than a means to communicate, the iPhone stores phone numbers, supplies driving directions, solves math

problems: In these and other applications, the iPhone effectively remembers, plans, and calculates for us. Within a network of "distributed cognition," the iPhone translates individual thought processes—traditionally the province of human consciousness—into a shared (hence, externally "distributed"), hybrid, biotechnic system. As a "cybernetic organism" or cyborg, our species continues to expand in its possibilities, growing in its freedoms, enhancements, and affordances. Despite these affordances, our species' technology-induced speed in evolution poses an unsettling prospect for some; given the transhumanist rejection of gender binaries and biological essentialism, many have reacted violently and will continue to do so, seeking to banish or legislate against aspects of the current technoculture.

And yet, in any modest-sized crowd there will be people whose contact lenses have been removed through vision-correcting laser surgery, people kept alive by pacemaker implants, people with hip and shoulder replacements, people undergoing hormone- and gene-therapy. Are these not newly-machined instances of the human cyborg? We take these and other procedures for granted, even as state legislatures move to deny gender-affirming health care for transgender children and teenagers. What, then, shall we allow to define us: an essentialist model of "being," or an evolutionary model of "becoming-"? Here, restated, is the question that we face both politically and in popular culture: At what point will we acknowledge our transit from biological organisms into biotechnical assemblages?

There's no turning back. Such is our habitus, for which we are learning new terms, new narratives, new *ethoi*. It's not our collective future merely, but our present that belongs to transhumanism.

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Complete Truth and Fuzzy Genres: Reading Karl Ove Knausgaard's *My Struggle*

George H. Jensen | University of Arkansas at Little Rock
http://ellids.com/archives/2023/08/5.4-Jensen.pdf

Abstract | Traditionally, nonfiction is defined as a genre that tells stories which happened; it is a product of memory. In contrast, fiction is, in part or whole, a fabrication, a product of imagination. We seem to accept these distinctions even though, as sophisticated readers, we know the simple dichotomy often dissolves, and we are often skeptical about explicit contracts with the reader. In this essay, I will explore the importance of the truth claims made in nonfiction. While we acknowledge narrative truth and metaphorical truth, there is still something important about 'getting the facts right.' Instead of defining nonfiction as the genre that deals with what is true, we could say that nonfiction is the genre that deals with the difficulty of sorting out what we know from what we don't know and what we thought we knew. If works of nonfiction often point to the difficulty of establishing the truth, then maybe this murkiness of truth should be considered part of the genre, maybe even foundational to it.

If we accept the possibility of a 'nonfictive novel,' might we also accept the possibility of a 'fictive memoir'? Such is my reading of Karl Ove Knausgaard's *My Struggle*, which, if it is a nonfictive novel, might push us to the realization that nonfiction is not a genre at all. Rather, it is an approach to genres. Nonfiction, if fully considered, might encompass more genres than journalism, biography, autobiography, memoir, and the personal essay. It might also be applied to some novels, especially to those referred to as autofiction.

Knausgaard pushes us to a further realization about the writing self: the difficulty of establishing truth reflects back on an author's own participation in a text. What is the relationship between authorship and authenticity? Is the author's relationship responsive, responsible? To use a Bakhtinian term, is the author *answerable*? Within the forms and flow of writing, Knausgaard sought access to the truth not just of the world, but of the self and the other. As I shall argue, we need to "know the self," but we can only come to self-knowledge among others. Indeed, it is only by our active engagement within a community that we can fashion an authentic self.

Keywords | Autofiction, Fictive Memoir, Nonfiction, Nonfictive Novel, Genre, Narrative Truth, Authenticity, Writing, Bakhtin, Knausgaard

> Art and life are not one, but they must become united in myself—in the unity of my answerability.
>
> —Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability* (2)

My work on this project is influenced by my experiences at the NonfictioNOW conference in Reykjavik, Iceland, in 2017.[1] Before attending this conference, I had attended nonfiction talks at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, and the River Teeth Nonfiction Conference in 2016, but the influence of the 2017 NonfictioNOW was more profound. On the first day, I participated in a panel on the ethics of nonfiction and was struck both by how much the discussion grew out of the particular problems that the participants were facing in their own writing and how they did not seem to have a framework for working through their problems. Everyone in the room gave advice, but no one, myself included, seemed to have the terminology they needed to reframe the questions being asked or to shift the ground from advice shared among writers to broader concepts: For example, how do these ethical questions relate to the genre of nonfiction? Or, what does this say about the role of style? Or, how does our writing affect our relationship to others? Or, how does writing nonfiction transform the self?

Another unofficial theme of the NonfictioNOW conference that affected how I thought about writing nonfiction—held in Iceland, the conference was truly international, and unambiguously about nonfiction—was the European scholars' lack of distinction between nonfiction and fiction. Participants from Iceland, Sweden, France, Germany, and Great Britain kept saying, "We don't distinguish between nonfiction and fiction; we just tell stories." I may have imagined it, but there always seemed to be a "you silly Americans" attached to the comment. Since then, I have often reflected on this comment but reaffirmed my initial belief that nonfiction is different: when writing nonfiction, we are writing about our world, our truth, our very particular selves. This makes the ethical questions about writing nonfiction different than those of writing fiction, poetry, or drama. It is not enough to say that nonfiction is about writing true stories. There is, I believe, more to it than that.

My views on the differences between nonfiction and fiction were further reinforced by writing a novel, released serially on a website. It began as an extended memoir about suffering and mourning in the aftermath of my wife's death in 2008, and it was not going well. As I read drafts, the voice in some sections sounded like a pompous

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[1]Beyond this present essay, the project that I'm referring to is a monograph, *Ethics of Nonfiction*, forthcoming from Palgrave Press.

old man offering advice even he couldn't follow—too detached. In other sections, the voice sounded like a lost soul whining about the difficulties of life—too enmeshed. I just couldn't find the right voice. In the midst of my frustration, a friend, a novelist, kept encouraging me to write a novel while I kept saying: "I don't write fiction. I write nonfiction."

One day, as an experiment, I tried shifting to fiction and everything opened up. Within fiction, I could create a character who was, in my mind, clearly not me. It was okay if he preached or wallowed in his misfortune. The distance allowed me to write. In short, writing fiction, in my limited experience, was quite different from writing nonfiction. When I was writing my memoir, I often wrote about some of my feelings and then, either immediately or when revising, thought, "This is not who I am" or, "This is not how I want to think" or, "I need to write myself into another place." I rarely struck out this material but, instead, added reflections that critiqued or redirected the line of thought. As I was writing my novel, I did the opposite. I felt free to keep exploring the implications of thoughts that I didn't think were healthy or that didn't relate to who I was or who I wanted to be.

The novel—in which a Chair of the Department of English at a southern university simultaneously deals with the death of his wife and issues relating to the harassment of female students in another department—seemed to require a preface arguing that it was, indeed, fiction and that the narrator was not me lest those who know me might think of it as autofiction, or maybe even pure nonfiction. Despite this, many friends who read it kept asking me, "Are you okay?" They were seeing the narrator, the character in the novel, as me.[2] In this essay, I will explore the importance of the truth claims made in nonfiction, *This is me* and *This is not me*.

Traditionally, nonfiction as a genre is a product of memory which tells stories that actually happened. In contrast, fiction, in parts or whole, is defined as a fabricated product of imagination. This is a commonly accepted definition even though, as sophisticated readers, we know that such simple dichotomy often dissolves, and are often skeptical about explicit contracts with the reader. On the verso of the dedication page of Hemingway's *In Our Time* is the following note: "In view of a recent tendency to identify characters in fiction with real people, it seems proper to state that there are no real people in this volume: both the characters and their names are fictitious. If the name of any living person has been used, the use was purely accidental." I don't know if the note was written

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[2]In an essay that questions the separateness and stability of genre concepts, I hesitate to supply definitions that, inevitably, fall short. Still, the term autofiction has a history that's worth noting. Coined in 1977 by French novelist Julien Serge Doubrovsky, autofiction stands for the practice of fictionalized autobiography or—approached from the opposite direction—as autobiographical fiction. In a magazine review-essay, "How 'Auto' is 'Autofiction'?" Christian Lorentzen writes, "the term autofiction has been in vogue for the past decade to describe a wave of very good American novels by the likes of Sheila Heti, Ben Lerner, Teju Cole, Jenny Offill, and Tao Lin, among others, as well as the multivolume epic *My Struggle* by the Norwegian Karl Ove Knausgaard." Lorentzen continues:

> The way the term is used tends to be unstable, which makes sense for a genre that blends fiction and what may appear to be fact into an unstable compound. In the past, I've tried to make a distinction in my own use of the term between autobiographical fiction, autobiographical metafiction, and autofiction, arguing that in autofiction there tends to be emphasis on the narrator's or protagonist's or authorial alter ego's status as a writer or artist and that the book's creation is inscribed in the book itself.

by Hemingway, his editor, or his lawyer, but, whoever be the "author," it is as much of an admission as it is a denial. Even with such denials, readers often assume Hemingway is drawing on his own experience, that it is, in the end, his story. Mikhail Bakhtin says that readers naïvely read fiction as autobiography (Morson and Emerson 428–429). This "tendency," as mentioned in the note above, may come from naïve readers, but it also comes, to some degree, from Sherwood Anderson, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Hemingway himself for creating characters that are identifiably close to themselves and their friends, many of whom were known to readers of the day.[3] The "tendency," in short, points to a bleed between fiction and nonfiction.

However problematic truth might be, nonfiction is often a story about an author trying to find out what really happened. The truth of seeking truth, of how this journey validates the importance of truth and even changes the author, is as important as the shards of truth that might coalesce in the narration. Because writing nonfiction often ends with shards of truth, the boundaries between truth and fiction, truth and fact, truth and reality (these pairs are not the same) are often blurred. Karl Ove Knausgaard's *My Struggle*, a "novel" in six volumes, some 3,600 pages, is labeled on the back cover of the English translation as fiction, even though the central character is Karl Ove Knausgaard.[4]

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[3]As Lorentzen notes, the first use of the very term, autofiction, "occurred not in a work of criticism but in a blurb on the back of the French novelist Serge Doubrovsky's book *Fils* in the late 1970s":

> Autobiography? No, that is a privilege reserved for the important people of this world, at the end of their lives, in a refined style. Fiction, of events and facts strictly real; autofiction, if you will, to have entrusted the language of an adventure to the adventure of language, outside of the wisdom and the syntax of the novel, traditional or new. Interactions, threads of words, alliterations, assonances, dissonances, writing before or after literature, concrete, as we say, music. (qtd. in Lorentzen)

"So autofiction came to us," Lorentzen continues, "as part of the language of commercial promotion, a way of marketing as new something almost as old as writing itself: the blending of the real and the invented."

[4]Declared "one of the 21st century's greatest literary sensations" (Fox), Knausgaard's completed, six-volume work has garnered surprisingly little criticism in English. (I cannot speak for publications in German or Norwegian, but a cursory web-survey of titles—drawn primarily from foreign-language newspapers and popular magazines—suggests that scholarly attention lags behind his fan-base popularity, even in his native Norway.) For the more extensive discussions in English, see Autrey; Bawer; Boysen and Rasmussen; Erens; Moi and Lunde; Pierce; and Vanzant. A weakness of several of these, however, is that they write of early volumes (typically volumes 1–4), while the work remained unfinished. Maarit Leskelä-Kärki writes of the impact Knausgaard's full six volumes have had on Finnish readers:

> So far, his book series has already changed the way we think about autobiographical writing and the concepts of authenticity, biofiction, and remembrance. As Finnish writer and psychiatrist Claes Andersson recently stated in an essay for *Heisingin Sanomat* newspaper, Knausgård's book "represents self-confession in a way that extends all the boundaries of autobiography as it turns into an infinite manifest of the power of the Word in an almost biblical sense." (599)

Gunnthorunn Gudmundsdottir writes of its impact in Iceland:

> One possible cause of the rise of the memoir, and nonfiction more generally, is a certain impatience with the genre of the novel in contemporary culture. The Spanish writer Javier Cercas states in the beginning of his nonfiction text on the 1981 attempted coup in Spain, *Anatomia de un instante*, that he had initially intended to write a novel, but then—because he had read in the paper that many Brits believed Winston Churchill to be a fictional character—he changed his course, gave up on the novel, and decided to write a documentary work instead (13). Karl Ove Knausgård was on a similar path when he claimed to have started on his mammoth autobiographical tome, *Min Kamp* 1-6 (2009-2013) when he gave up on writing a novel about his father.

The last volume deals with the reactions of Knausgaard's relatives and friends to what he wrote about them in earlier volumes. At one point, Knausgaard's uncle threatens a lawsuit to prevent publication of the novel/memoir/autobiography. Knausgaard's first wife, Tonje Aursland, also presented her objections in a Norwegian-broadcast radio documentary (Gundersen), while his second wife, Linda Boström Knausgaard, answered with an autobiographical novel of her own, *October Child*.[5] Yet, despite the "realness" of *My Struggle* and everything that surrounds it, many readers wonder about the accuracy of Knausgaard's vast memory. How could anyone remember that much of his life in that much detail? Could this possibly be anything other than fiction?

Knausgaard himself seems rather unconcerned about genre. He doesn't seem to mind calling *My Struggle* a novel, yet he describes his process as what a Freudian analyst might call automatic writing. With the first volume, he said that his editor brought some form to his draft. After the first volume, according to Knausgaard, his editor didn't change much; in other words, his editor did not try to bring the form of a novel to Knausgaard's string of memories ("Keynote address"). But how do we manage a work that seems to blur genre or defy form? Some read the volumes as memoir, even though it doesn't have the features of a memoir. Others read it as a novel that seems to explode the form of the novel and that is probably as true as most memoirs. It has long sections without the overt presence of a narrator interspersed with shorter sections that are more traditionally narrated, as if to jar the reader back to consciousness, to an awareness that this is not a typical novel, maybe not a novel at all. Even the length means that we must read it differently. Most of us have been trained to read a novel with the expectation that every detail is somehow thematically important, but how can we read 3,600 pages like that? How many people can even skim that many pages? So, it is either a novel that redefines the form of the novel or something else. At the 2017 NonfictioNOW conference, Knausgaard was asked about how he categorized it. He said, "It's autobiography." It's not like typical autobiographies. Whatever it is (Bakhtin might call it "pure confessional self-accounting"), it comes across as brutally honest.[6] Part of that honesty is Knausgaard's willingness to share every memory with his reader, and that is a large part of its appeal. But must every author of a memoir, if it is a memoir, be so completely and brutally transparent?

In *Inadvertent* (part of the *Why I Write* series published by Yale University Press), Knausgaard discusses how literary form enables some "interpretations of the world" while shutting down or disabling others.[7] With *My Struggle*, he seems to have begun with

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[5]A renowned author in her own right, Linda Boström Knausgaard was married to Karl from 2007 to 2016. Unlike most others recounted in *My Struggle*, Linda defended her then-husband's inclusion of their personal life-details. In *October Child*, she writes her own autobiographical novel, themed around her periodic hospitalizations (with electroshock therapy) for bipolar depression (Vogel). Published in Sweden in 2019, *October Child* was translated into English by Saskia Vogel in 2021.

[6]See, Bakhtin's "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" (reprinted in *Art and Answerability*). Of course, we can only speculate on Bakhtin's likely responses to Knausgaard's experiments in form. But of all modernist critics, Bakhtin perhaps comes closest to anticipating the formal/generic, social, psychological, and epistemological experimentations of *My Struggle*. Throughout the following, I'll be looking for points of intersection between Bakhtinian theory and Knausgaard's practice. Bakhtin, I believe, can help us read Knausgaard.

[7]Early in his discussion, Knausgaard makes this point succinctly: "As important as what form allows a writer to say is what it doesn't let him say" (*Inadvertant* 32). He explains:

a mashup of genres that he then broke from by establishing some rules for himself, as if he were doing an extended writing experiment:

> I wanted to get close to reality, and the genre with which I felt the greatest affinity at the time was the diary. What would happen if I combined the diary's closeness to the self and urge for reflection with the realist step-by-step novel? The rules I would set for myself now were exceptionally simple. I would write only about things that had actually happened, and I would write about them as I remembered them, without doing research or amending my memory to conform to other versions. I also had to write a certain number of pages every day, first five, later ten, and toward the end up to twenty. In that way I simply wouldn't have time to think, to plan or to calculate. I would have to go with whatever appeared on the screen in front of me. (37)

We could say that genres have rules, but it seems like Knausgaard's rules are more about breaking from genre rather than creating a new one—or about blurring several genres.[8]

Interestingly, some have called *My Struggle* a "nonfictive novel," or a true story in the form of fiction. If we accept the possibility of a "nonfictive novel," might we also accept the possibility of a "fictive memoir"? Lauren Slater's *Lying: A Metaphorical Memoir* wants to map "a new kind of Heideggerian truth, the truth of the liminal"—or so writes Hayward Krieger, Professor of Philosophy, University of Southern California, in his introduction to Slater's volume. One problem here. The professor doesn't exist. A number of reporters have looked for him. If he does exist, he is rather well hidden (Kirkpatrick). This is the entire text of Chapter 1: "I exaggerate." In the Afterword, Slater writes: "*Lying* is a book of narrative truth, a book in which I am more interested in using invention to get to the heart of things than I am in documenting actual life occurrences" (219). In Chapter 7, which takes the form of a letter to Kate Medina, her editor at Random House (a real person), Slater discusses why she wants the book to be marketed as nonfiction: "We have to call it fiction or we have to call it fact, because there's no bookstore term for something in between, gray matter" (156). It seems to me that she dances around the real reason: She wants to question the nature of narrative truth, and whether or not the narrative is factually true only matters in nonfiction. But what is it? It

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> If every chapter of this book is written differently, employing different strategies, for example one in the form of news journalism, another formed as a catechism, a third as a stream of consciousness, the relative nature of the way we understand ourselves and others will be emphasized, at the same time creating a sense that material life is something that goes on irrepressibly regardless of the forms of language, and fundamentally independent of them: the optic may change, but not what it is looking at. […] *All these possible interpretations of the world, all these layers of reality, are made possible through form*, almost independent of what the characters are thinking, feeling, or happen to be doing. (*Inadvertent* 32–33; emphasis added)

[8]Again, it's the con/fusion of genres—of diary-writing and fiction—that enabled *My Struggle*:

> This method came about because I had set out to write about myself, and since we know more about ourselves than about any other subject, it seemed important to avoid the established versions and to seek instead the complexity that lies beneath our self-insight and self-image and which can be accessed only by not thinking about how our thoughts and feelings will seem to others, how it will look, who I am if I think and feel these things. (*Inadvertent* 37–38)

reads like James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces*.[9] It's hard to believe the characters, the dialogue, or the events. In other words, it reads like what Bakhtin would call a monologic novel with metanarrative commentary about the nature of truth.[10] While Slater might want to question the boundary between fiction and nonfiction, she seems to leave most readers perplexed or angry. Slater is right, however, that we are living in an age when truth (or Truth or truths) is not simple.[11]

While we acknowledge narrative truth and metaphorical truth, there is still something important about getting the facts right. It is not, I believe, overreaching to say that democracy depends upon our willingness to try, in an admittedly complex world, to sort fact from fiction. Equally important is an acknowledgment that some areas of nonfiction will remain murky and, beyond this, that absolute certainty is not always a virtue. Instead of defining nonfiction as the genre that deals with what is true, we could say that nonfiction is the genre that deals with the difficulty of sorting out what we know from what we don't know and from what we thought we knew. In short, how do we handle the gray area between fiction and nonfiction? If works of nonfiction often point to the difficulty of establishing the truth, maybe the murkiness of truth should be considered part of the genre, maybe even foundational to it.

Or, Knausgaard's *My Struggle*, if it is a nonfictive novel, might push us to the realization that nonfiction is not a genre at all. It is an approach to genres. Nonfiction, if fully considered, might encompass more genres than journalism, biography, autobiography, memoir, and the personal essay. It might also apply to some novels, especially what is referred to as autofiction and works like Norman Maclean's "A River Runs through It." It might also apply to Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," Sylvia Plath's lyric poems, John Berryman's *Dream Songs*, and William Carlos Williams' *Patterson.* Nonfiction might relate more to how an author answers to their text. Here I'm drawing on Bakhtin's ethical/rhetorical/existential notion of answerability. Bakhtin says we must answer for our texts (*Art* 2); we must claim our texts as part of how we are in the world, which also means assuming responsibility for what we have written. The author of fiction can say, "This is not real; this is not who I am." The author of nonfiction must say, "This

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[9]Frey's semi-biographical novel, *A Million Little Pieces* (2003), initially failed as fiction, though it became a national best-seller when marketed as the memoir of a recovering drug addict; discovery of its fabrications proved scandalous to the author's reputation.

[10]Whereas the modern novel—in effect, fiction after Rabelais (ca. 1494–1553)—dwells in polyvocality and dialogism, the multiple voices of discourse "can be intentionally curtailed," as Maria Shevtsova notes: "When this occurs, one voice predominates. […] This is the monologic novel" (753).

[11]Kevin Vanzant reads Knausgaard within the context of post-truth culture. He quotes Pierre Hedrich's interview of François Busnel, who "identifies many of the same post-truth quandaries noted by Knausgaard" (Vanzant 682): Writers and journalists, Busnel argues, "substitute their vision of reality for reality itself," such that "objectivity" becomes "a sham"— "the truth has become an opinion like any other" (qtd. in Vanzant 682). Vanzant continues:

> From these shared observations though, Busnel and the likes of Knausgaard soon diverge. The novel is actually more important than ever, Busnel contends, because in this world, it "tells us the real better than anything else." As the news has gotten "weirder and faker," the novel has become the "most credible vector of truth" for Busnel, the "antidote of alternative facts." The narrative novel, less a problem, is more like our salvation. We are now in fact living, Busnel asserts, in "a profoundly novelistic age." (682)

I suspect that Knausgaard would agree, though he'd likely shift terms from novelistic to something more akin to autofictive or, broader (and simpler) still, to narrative.

is how I see myself—who I once was, who I am, and who I hope to become." Taking responsibility for one's texts is more than merely making sure that the facts of a piece of writing align with facts in documents or the memories of others. If we view nonfiction as merely facticity or representation as a mirror image of the material world (ignoring the physics of reflections, which reverses the image), we are thinking in one direction. If we instead view nonfiction as an interpretation of who we are and how we are in the world as well as a commitment to a certain path, then nonfiction is as much about a text transforming reality as it is about a text representing reality. Answering to our nonfictive text as if we embody its truth can be part of how its status as nonfiction is established.

What I am suggesting is that we need to find new ways to read nonfiction that go beyond a desire to maintain a simple boundary between fiction and fact. Writing on volumes 1–3 of *My Struggle*, William Pierce points to the chasm between art and life, language and experience:

> Rarely has consciousness been depicted with so little distorting filter. William Deresiewicz writes in *The Nation* that "Knausgaard's honesty is not a literary fact; it is a biographical one—a fact about the author, not the character." But this is an illusion. Beyond the most general details, we don't know Knausgaard's life. The book's directness is on a different register altogether, accessible to readers with no reference to the writer's history. (219)

In Pierce's either/or reading, Knausgaard's achievement is textual, and by no means existential. At best, the text gives us an illusion of reality:

> Knausgaard has gathered the props of his life and produced the play afresh. He has created a persona or consciousness-on-the-page that, I think it's fair to say, taps some recognizable vein of himself, and has sent that character through episodes that resemble the landmarks of his own experience, down to time spent with friends with the same names, even the same hair color. But already we've entered the project's fictional dimension. Knausgaard's reimagining—his restaging—transforms this from a memoir of the author's life to a fiction built on the framework of a life. (220)

Hence, "the book is and isn't his life, the character is and isn't him, Gabriel is and isn't Karl Ove—because he wants us considering the distance between the depicted and the real" (Pierce 222). The text, Pierce concludes, cannot achieve presence: "You, me, Knausgaard, the chair you're sitting on—none of it is made of words. For Knausgaard, the greatest gift art can confer is an awareness, which comes in the form of awe, of that final measure of lifelikeness that art can't reproduce. Art refreshes and refines our sense of the *je ne sais quoi* of reality—because reality is the one thing art cannot be" (222–23). Pierce's reading, needless to say, is traditionalist in seeking to maintain such binaries as fact/fiction, presence/absence, experience/fabulation. Through paragraphs that follow, my disagreements with this sort of reading shall become clear.

In the opening of volume six of *My Struggle*,[12] Karl Ove Knausgaard, the character on the page, is waiting for the publication of volume one, which readers worked through in some distant and extended past, or 2,448 pages ago. Knausgaard has called it a "novel" of "day-to-day life." He also calls it an autobiography, which he wrote relying entirely on his memory without any supplementary research. Now, as publication of the first volume looms, he has sent volume one to some of the relatives and friends who are "characters" on its pages, and he is nervously awaiting their reactions. It is unclear whether he sent a draft or proofs, but it is clear that the work is already in production. There might be time to fictionalize the names of some "characters" and maybe cut or revise some sections, but momentum is building. Knausgaard has invested much in the project. He wants to see it published. Now, the time of the "novel" and the time of the reader seem to merge. Volume six is like a serpent that has begun to eat its own tail, and, as his uncle accuses Knausgaard of distorting the truth, the author is shaken. The first five volumes, a memory dump, an essentially monologic inscription of Knausgaard's emerging identity, begins to shift in volume six toward the dialogic.

In the forthcoming volume one, Knausgaard wrote about the death of his father who had been drinking too much and living with his mother in squalor. After reading it, Gunnar, Knausgaard's uncle, begins to send the author emails, accusing him of "verbal rape," threatening a lawsuit, pointing out what he feels are errors and distortions. The threats send Knausgaard into a downward emotional spiral. In one of his many phases of trying to analyze and justify what he had written, he imagines, as he is in the process of doing laundry, what it would be like to defend himself in a court of law:

> Why not fight back? I straightened my shoulders, and there, in the midst of all of the journalists and inquisitive onlookers, perhaps a hundred in total, I began to speak, vividly and full of insight, about the relationship between truth and the subject, literature's relationship to reality, delving into the nature of social structures, the way a novel of this kind exposed the boundaries to which society adhered but which remained unwritten and were thus invisible insofar as they were melded into us and our self-understanding, and how they for this reason had to be breached before they could be seen. But why did they have to be seen, my defense lawyer asked. There is something all of us experience, which is the same for all human beings, I replied, but which nonetheless is seldom conveyed apart from in the private sphere. All of us encounter difficulties at some point in our lives, all of us know someone with a drinking problem, mental issues, or some other kind of life-threatening affliction, at least this is the case in my experience; every time I meet a new person and get to know them, some narrative like this will eventually come to the surface, a tale of sickness, decline, or sudden death. These things are not represented and thereby seem not to exist, or else to exist as a burden each of us must bear on our own. (184–85)

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[12]The Norwegian volumes appeared between 2009 and 2011. Translated by Don Bartlett, the first two volumes in English appeared in 2013, the third in 2014, the fourth in 2015, the fifth in 2016, and the sixth volume (translated by Bartlett and Martin Aitkin) in 2018—a span of five years total.

This is a small sample of Knausgaard's reflection on why he wrote in such detail about his life; this self-analysis of his project takes many forms and extends across the 1,152 pages of the English translation of volume six.

What we have in volume six might very well be the most extensive reflection of any author on the ethics of his own work. In fact, I know of no other work that covers such an expanse of time that it begins to comment on the reception and impact of the work's publication. At one point in volume six, he extensively analyzes the ethics of Peter Handke's *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams*, a short novel about the death of Handke's mother, and he seems to conclude that his book is different. Bakhtin might agree. He would say that events are singular, and so are books and their contexts. The ethical decisions of the author of one book are not easily transferred to another. Bakhtin, I believe, would also say that in writing, whether fiction or nonfiction, the author is exploring how to live with others, so it makes sense that we would bring others into our process—in effect, to engage in dialogue.[13] While Knausgaard may have written volumes one through five monologically in isolation, he is trying to manage the impact of his writing on others in volume six. He is answering for what he has written in earlier volumes.

Even when he is not directly addressing the impact of his writing on his life, the lives of those around him—including the potential impact on his children—the writing seems to take the controversy, which soon became frontpage news in Norway, and placed it in a new perspective. Shortly after the imagined courtroom scene, Geir, his lifelong friend, visits him. Geir shares a story about how his downstairs neighbor had complained about Geir's loud footsteps so often and so irrationally that he decides to go to "war" with him. He buys a pair of clogs and starts stomping around in his apartment. Is Geir suggesting that Knausgaard needs to quit trying to appease his uncle and go to war?

Knausgaard does not offer simple answers to Geir or himself, and I suspect that readers of *My Struggle* will never tire of arguing about the ethics of the project. Should he have shown earlier drafts to relatives and friends, and invited them into his process much sooner? Should he have done research and checked facts? Should he have changed names? Knausgaard explores all of these issues and more, but what seems central to his reflections in volume six is that he should tell the truth about himself and the world he lives in, which also means telling the truth about others. Yet, he seems to have been entirely unprepared for their reactions. When Knausgaard is discussing Uncle Gunnar's emails with Christina, Geir's wife, she asks: "Weren't you expecting it?" He answers:

> "No," I said. "Not even close. I thought maybe he might be a bit peeved, but I hadn't anticipated anything like this, I've been really naïve, as it turns out. I thought I was writing about stuff that happened, and I hadn't imagined people could object. I realized it might annoy a few people, I was prepared for that, and maybe they'd want their name taken out, but I never envisaged anyone would want to stop it. Or get so ridiculously worked up." (287)

It is interesting that Knausgaard starts to reflect on self and his project once others enter into his process. Certainly, one of the reasons for writing about others is so that they can

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[13]See Bakhtin's essay collection, *The Dialogic Imagination*.

challenge our view of self, our memories, our constructed stories, that is, if we choose to bring them into our writing as early readers. As Bakhtin says, it is others who consummate us and give us, in fragments, an objective view of ourselves (*Art* 15). It would make sense to include their reactions in our process, but Knausgaard seems to have written in isolation, not even sharing drafts with his wife. As mentioned earlier, he set up rules for writing the "novel" and then he wrote rapidly, including all his memories, without research, fact-checking, or judgment. This might be true for volumes one through five, but volume six is different.

In the middle of volume six, sandwiched between Part I and Part II, is a 439 page personal essay titled "The Name and the Number." It is hard to know what to make of the extended essay, which covers a wide range of topics. It almost seems as if Knausgaard took all of the contextualizing comments one finds in a typical novel, cut them from the rest of the book, and then stitched them together into a single place. Or, he is giving the reader a survey of the intellectual work behind his book. Knausgaard begins the essay with a long discussion about the ramifications of changing names in nonfiction works. Even though his uncle wanted him to change the names of all Knausgaards in the work, including that of Knausgaard's father, he decides he cannot change his father's name; instead, he leaves his father unnamed. Then, he begins a discussion of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, in part to explain why he borrowed the title of his work from a book that set the Holocaust in motion. Except for a single sentence where he notes, almost as a throw away, that Hitler's father had changed the family name, the analysis of *Mein Kampf* seems a long digression. But, then, there are moments when Knausgaard seems to be fearing an identification with Hitler, where he strives to make a distinction.

Knausgaard writes, Hitler "turns his problematic social background to his advantage, at the same time as he keeps private that which would ruin his trajectory" (511). In his work, Knausgaard does not seem to keep anything private. According to Knausgaard, "Hitler's I is constrained by its feeble mastery of form, inability to mold the language into any true expression of the I and the emotions by which it is pervaded, all he can do is seek to copy the formal qualities of others, in the simplest of ways, a cliché" (630). In his work, by contrast, Knausgaard breaks with the restrictions of form, writing a work that cannot neatly be placed in a standard genre. Knausgaard critiques the language of the Nazis, which "did not first arise in *Mein Kampf*, but was gathered and concentrated there and through the author of that book disseminated into an entire society with the aim of turning it completely on its head" (634). In his book, Knausgaard executes an extended analysis of Paul Celan's "The Straightening," a poem that he believes counters the language of Nazis. We come to realize that Knausgaard's *My Struggle* and Hitler's *Mein Kampf* are doppelgängers, the product of mimesis, or counter-mimesis. Much of Knausgaard's reflection in this extended personal essay—which breaks into the narration, jarring the reader—comes from the willingness to explore an identification with Hitler and the effort of crafting distinctions.

Writing before the publication of the English translation of volume 6, Pamela Erens interprets Knausgaard's title in existentialist terms: "The struggle the novel's title refers to is Knausgaard's struggle between conflicting impulses, aims, and pressures; or, put another way, it is his struggle to be at one with his life. And this universal struggle he conveys with tremendous power" (205–06). But, surely the sixth volume's discourse

on Hitlerism complicates matters. In an intriguing (if controversial) essay, Benjamin Boysen and Jesper Lundsfryd Rasmussen situate Knausgaard's project within the intellectual context of "new materialism." They read his work not as an existentialist exploration of selfhood, but as a dissolution of the self within a larger lifeworld:

> Knausgård's international breakthrough, his six-volume series of autobiographical novels *My Struggle* (2009–11), subscribes to the same basic tenets of the critique raised by key voices within the "material turn." In novelistic and essayistic form, Knausgård expresses the same intense dismay with (post)modernity. He, too, feels that modernity has replaced reality with fictions (narratives, images, concepts), which both purport a flattening equality with and maintain a firm distance from that which is mediated. [...] He draws attention to a smouldering violence and rage behind the premodern longing to annul or dissolve human subjectivity in the search for an immediate, undifferentiated unity with the world (which is part of Knausgård's literary ambition). (12)

"Knausgård's professed writerly goal," they continue, "is to reinstate an archaic pre-cultural presence untainted by the universal and the social" (12). It is an "unmediated thing-like and sensuous reality" that Knausgaard longs for, one that seeks to "escape the universal, human relations and reality as mediated by human, cultural or social meaning" (Boysen and Rasmussen 13). They quote him directly:

> What I was trying to do was to reintroduce a closeness, trying to get the text to penetrate that whole series of conceptions and ideas and images that hang like a sky above reality, or cling to it like a membrane enclosing the eye, to reach into the reality of the human body and the frailty of the flesh, but not in any general way because generality is a relative of the ideal, it doesn't exist, only the particular exists, and since the particular in this case happens to be me, that was what I wrote about. That's how it is. It was the only goal I had, and that's the reality of the matter. (*My Struggle* 6:178)

It is within this yearning for "an immediate, undifferentiated unity with the world" that Boysen and Rasmussen explain Knausgaard's identification with Hitlerism—certainly not with the latter's violence and antisemitism, but with its call to *Vernichtung*, to an annihilation of the individual within a larger social-material reality. They write: "The presence that Knausgård is pursuing is a presence demanding and boding the absence and even annihilation of human reality, since human reality (the social, the relational, and the universal) is a fictious non-entity obscuring reality as it is in itself" (13). While I, personally, incline toward an existentialist reading, Knausgaard's exploration of self is unafraid of paradoxes—even those that express a negation of self.

Part of that negation is mirrored in the Hitlerian doppelgänger, which comes to reflect the author's shadow-self. After writing about the "I" and the "we," the warring-twins Cain and Able, and René Girard's "scapegoat mechanism" as a means of reducing violence within a community,[14] Knausgaard declares:

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[14]See, Girard, René. "Mimesis and Violence." *The Girard Reader*, edited by James Williams. Crossroad, 1996, p. 12.

But repetition is also tabooed, the emulative and the echoic, imitation, mimesis being likewise associated with peril, and according to Girard this is quite fundamental. In some primitive cultures twins are killed at birth. Mirrors too are often associated with danger; some cultures forbid the imitation of others, whether by gesture or the repetition of utterances, the doppelgänger has always put fear into people; many religions prohibit the depiction of their deity. (*My Struggle* 6:688)

Much of culture and its rituals are unavoidably based on mimesis—that is, on (mirror-)representations of the self and/as other. Hegel says our identity is tied to others. Lacan says we develop an identity as we recognize ourselves in a mirror. And Jung (whose archetypal psychology is invoked in the doppelgänger) says we develop our conscious identity by suppressing the other we do not wish to become, which then forms the shadow-self. The more we run from our opposite, the more that evil other controls us.[15] And so we write. As we write about self, Knausgaard seems to say, we unavoidably encounter our doppelgänger.

One of the lessons we can learn from witnessing Knausgaard's reflection is that the ethical impact of a work of nonfiction is so complex that it can be paralyzing. Knausgaard does more than worry about the present impact on his relationship with his uncle, wife, brother, and friends; he also worries about the future impact on his children. As publication nears, he seems surprisingly vulnerable. Did he so lose himself in his project that he is now unprepared to defend it? Writing honestly about the self, if we provisionally accept that it is possible, involves a dissolution of self.[16] This was, perhaps, even more profound for Knausgaard who avoided established forms like memoir. Should he have done more to put himself back together, in some way return to form, before he began to share volume one?

From Bakhtin, we have learned that literary form cannot be separated from human values. Form is a way of testing and reaffirming values, a way of connecting with tradition and exploring a place in the world that is changing at an accelerating rate. Form might provide order, but the writer also needs to find ways to break from order. Knausgaard does that quite well. What he might have missed is the way that narrative can provide solid ground and a path—or a series of paths. We should think of order and disorder as part of the same process, as a dialectic. We should recognize our connection to others and our independence, as dialogic. In "Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book," Bakhtin writes:

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[15]"The shadow," writes C.G. Jung, "is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real" (9: ii). In terms descriptive of Knausgaard's shadow-self exploration, Daryl Sharp elaborates: "The shadow is composed for the most part of repressed desires and uncivilized impulses, morally inferior motives, childish fantasies and resentments, etc.—all those things about oneself one is not proud of" (Sharp).

[16]In *Inadvertant*, Knausgaard suggests as much:

What I wanted with this book, which was eventually titled *My Struggle* and grew to six volumes, was to erode my own notions about the world, allowing whatever had been kept down by them to rise to the surface. The only way I could accomplish this was to abdicate as king of myself and let the literary, in other words writing and the forms of writing, lead the way. (38–39)

> Not merging with another, but preserving one's own position of *extralocality* and the *surplus* of vision and understanding connected with it. But the real question is Dostoevsky's use of this surplus. Not for materialization and finalization. The most important aspect of this surplus is love (one cannot love oneself, love is a coordinate relationship), and then, confession, forgiveness […] finally simply an active (not duplicating) understanding, a willingness to listen. *This surplus is never used as an ambush, as a chance to sneak up and attack from behind.* This is an open and honest surplus, dialogically revealed to the other person, a surplus expressed by the addressed and not by the secondhand word. Everything essential is dissolved in dialogue, positioned face to face. (299; emphasis added)

Understanding another without "merging with another" means listening, offering our surplus, what we understand about the other, with love, in dialogue. It is the process of learning to live with others and the process of building community *through writing and in writing*. In "The Essay in Dark Times," Jonathan Franzen writes:

> One of the mysteries of literature is that personal substance, as perceived by both the writer and the reader, is situated outside the body of either of them, on some kind of page. How can I feel realer to myself in a thing I'm writing than I do inside my body? How can I feel closer to another person when I'm reading her words than I do when I'm sitting next to her? The answer, in part, is that both writing and reading demand full attentiveness. But it surely also has to do with the kind of *ordering* that is possible only on the page. (7)

For some reason, we feel more open to ourselves and others in genres like the personal essay and memoir. In sum, the truth of nonfiction is complex, situated, and grounded. Said another way, it is human. It is part of a dialogue. While it might be entirely appropriate for an author to make these claims, we should not assume they are self-evident or transparent. Readers will likely contest some or all of them, especially readers who are also mentioned in the text. This, too, is part of the process, part of answerability.

In an interview with Joshua Rothman, Knausgaard said, "Well, you can never read an authentic 'I,' an authentic self. I think it's impossible to free yourself from the social being you are. I remember seeing an interview with Ian McEwan where he used the word 'selflessness,' and I really understood what he meant: that's the dream for a writer. That's a precious place to be—and if you are there then you are authentic" ("Knausgaard's Selflessness"). If being authentic means being free "from the social being" and being "selfless," then *authenticity is nowhere*. How is it possible to be authentic in isolation? Seneca and the Stoics wanted to explore the role of the self within a society. Hegel understood that our identity is always tied to others. Bakhtin founded his ethics on polyphony, the interplay of independent voices. Authenticity and ethics are about learning to live with others within a community. We need to "know the self," but we can only come to self-knowledge among others. This is how we should view authenticity: as something like the process of *Bildung*, exploring the potential of the self, not in isolation, but *within a community*.[17]

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[17]For Hegel, who was once the headmaster of a boys' school, *Bildung* (literally, "education") is the process of developing individuals so that they will be capable of dialectical thought—or, said differently, capable of embodying truth. In *The Spirit and Its Letter*, John H. Smith writes,

Late in *My Struggle*, Knausgaard asks, "What good would all of these feelings and musings do?" (1052). He seems to be asking, "What is the value of care of self?" I will let James Baldwin provide an answer:

> I have always been struck, in America, by an emotional poverty so bottomless, and a terror of human life, of human touch, so deep, that virtually no American appears able to achieve any viable, organic connection between his public stance and his private life. This failure of the private life has always had the most devastating effect on American public conduct, and on black-white relations. If Americans were not so terrified of their private selves, they would never have become so dependent on what they call "the Negro problem." (*I Am Not Your Negro* 56)

If we fail to come to terms with our own subjectivity, how can we relate to others? How can we teach? How can we even raise our children? As Baldwin wrote in *The Fire Next Time*, which was published in 1962 but is even more resonant as I am writing in 2022 in the wake of the 2020 murder of George Floyd, murdered by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota, who kept his knee on Floyd's neck for nine minutes and twenty-nine seconds: "It demands great spiritual resilience not to hate the hater whose foot is on your neck, and an even greater miracle of perception and clarity not to teach your children to hate" (99–100).

Authenticity is not about achieving absolute knowledge of the self. It is about realizing that what we hold inside—guilt, shame, anger, trauma—affects how we live among others.[18] Authenticity is more important than feeling at peace with oneself; our

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> To see why the process of *Bildung* as described by Hegel is best conceived not in vague terms but as taking place in language and leading to a proper form of linguistic expression, one can consider two processes that Hegel opposes to *Bildung*. In the one, "natural consciousness" *remains trapped in its habitual behavior* and does not rise above its inner imaginings or representations (*Vorstellungen*) or recognize itself as a rational agent in an external world. In the other, a consciousness insists on its freedom to act in the world and *to impose itself forcefully on external objects* with the power of its willful reasoning (*Räsonnieren*). In both cases subjectivity dominates, either by lacking abstract knowledge of that which is other than itself or by dominating that Other which it views as its opposite. (17; emphasis added)

The process of *Bildung*, for Hegel, begins with a movement outward toward the world and others followed by a return to the self, with consciousness transformed in the process. This movement, the very flow of consciousness, includes exploring "a model of representation" that "derives from practice of reading, imitating, translating, and writing […] to develop a historically grounded sense of self-expression" (Smith 20–21). We cannot know ourselves apart from others, and expression is never pure. We speak from others to others. As we write in a genre, even if this act is imitative in our early attempts, we experience "the self's loss into and gradual appropriation of the Other of tradition" (Smith 21).

[18]In exploring the theme of shame, Toril Moi and Anders Firing Lunde make similar observations: "Knausgård's project," they write, "is at once literary and existential" (207):

> His artistic mission is to create a work that is "committed to reality," a work in which language grasps reality and makes it visible. Existentially, Knausgård writes to change himself. *My Struggle* is Knausgård's struggle to escape his inauthenticity and become real, a struggle which takes the form of an obsession with the experience of shame, the predominant theme in *My Struggle* […]. In other words: Knausgård writes at once to create something authentic and to become authentic himself. (207)

Here, too, Bakhtin comes to the fore:

> But what guarantees the inner connection of the constituent elements of a person? Only the unity of answerability. I have to answer with my own life for what I have experienced and understood

subjectivity affects others. Reflection and confession are part of our journey. Writing imperfect stories, full of gaps, fissures, and uncertainty, moves us past stories that become self-imposed borders. And so we work within and toward genres—call them fictive memoir or nonfictive novel—that dissolve into narrative and metaphoric truths, bringing us into dialogue, making us answerable.

Much is at stake.

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in art, so that everything I have experienced and understood would not remain ineffectual in my life. But answerability entails guilt, or liability to blame. It is not only mutual answerability that art and life must assume, but also mutual liability to blame. (*Art* 1–2)

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Teaching a Decolonial Counterstory: 1551 Valladolid Debate and Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*

Charles McMartin | University of Arizona
http://ellids.com/archives/2023/10/5.4-McMartin.pdf

Abstract | This article theorizes how educators can draw from Aja Martinez's research on counterstory to teach decolonial theory. It provides a case study of this approach explaining how a particular scene from Leslie Marmon Silko's novel, *Almanac of the Dead*, acts as a 'decolonial counterstory.' The scene details how indigenous revolutionaries in Chiapas, Mexico, convict a Cuban Marxist intellectual named Bartolomeo for crimes against history. The criminal's name is an allusion to Bartolomé de Las Casas, the 16th-century Bishop of Chiapas, the protector of the Indians, and former encomiendista in Cuba. As a counterstory, this scene reimagines colonial accounts of the 1551 Valladolid Debate: one of the earliest debates among colonists on indigenous peoples' human rights and the event where Las Casas famously defends indigenous peoples' humanity. In this way, Silko reframes the Valladolid debate as a trial overseen by indigenous peoples, conducted on indigenous land, and bringing the crimes against history to bear on the present. Teaching this counterstory allows educators to illustrate four foundational decolonial concepts—"delinking," "bio-politics," "geo-politics," and "sedimented history"—in accessible ways for early career college students.

Keywords | Counterstory, Pluriversality, Coloniality, Decolonial Theory, Valladolid Debate, Pedagogy, Delinking, Bio-Politics, Geo-Politics, Sedimented History, Leslie Marmon Silko, Walter Mignolo, Aja Martinez, Bartolomé de las Casas, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda

Conversations among decolonial scholars often overlook the challenges and inherent contradictions of teaching, articulating, and illustrating decolonial concepts to early career college students. Even for disciplines like rhetoric and composition, which have worked to elevate and legitimize the scholarship of teaching and learning, there have been few publications about the actual practice of teaching decolonial concepts. A sample of these publications include syllabi,[1] ethnographic studies of Latinx students' experiences learning decolonial theory,[2] and course descriptions of first year writing classes that implement translingual practices as a form of decolonization.[3]

In addition to these publications, there have been meaningful discussions about decolonial theory's pedagogical implications within the scholarship on how to decolonize research methods and knowledge production in rhetoric and composition.[4] For example, Damián Baca's final chapter in *Mestiz@ Scripts* outlines a model for decolonizing disciplinary histories and curricula of rhetoric and composition. Iris Ruiz's final two chapters in *Reclaiming Composition for Chicano/as and Other Ethnic Minorities* detail the ways first-year writing (FYW) instructors can implement the principles of critical historiography to construct a curriculum that contests 'official histories' (181).[5]

The conceptual and curricular revisions that Baca, Ruiz, and other decolonial scholars offer are meant to create tectonic shifts in traditional approaches to composition pedagogy, and importantly, they do not recommend simply reading decolonial thinkers "at the end of the semester, if there is time" (Baca 3). Implementing decolonial theory in a class is not just about revising a syllabus or assigning the seminal work of decolonial theorists as readings. In fact, for many early career college students in the US, an initial exposure to seminal decolonial texts can be alienating given the new theoretical vocabulary and the challenges posed by unexamined colonial epistemologies. Accordingly, teachers must not only think through the decolonial concepts and texts that

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[1]See, Mukavetz, Andrea Riley. "Decolonial Theory and Methodology." *Composition Studies*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2018, pp. 124–193.

[2]See, De los Ríos, Cati V. "Writing Oneself Into the Curriculum: Photovoice Journaling in a Secondary Ethnic Studies Course." *Written Communication*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2020, pp. 487–511.

[3]Medina, Cruz. "Decolonial Potential in a Multilingual FYC." *Composition Studies*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2019, pp. 73–219.

[4]See Ruiz, Iris D, and Raúl Sánchez. *Decolonizing Rhetoric and Composition Studies*. Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016; Cushman, Ellen, et al. "Decolonizing Projects: Creating Pluriversal Possibilities in Rhetoric." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2019, pp. 1–22; García and Baca, *Rhetorics Elsewhere*; Baca, *Mestiz@ Scripts*; Ruiz, *Reclaiming Composition*.

[5]Ruiz's chapters on applying critical historiography to the FYW outline two full syllabi: one that examines the historiographical case study on the Spanish Conquest and the roots of Manifest Destiny; the other looks at historical accounts of Guatemala in the US (164–165). These courses look first at general discussions of historiography by interrogating who has access to the production of history. Then the class applies those discussions to specific historical case studies.

guide their teaching but also the instructional approaches with which they introduce those concepts and texts to students.

An important model that decolonial scholars can draw from to develop accessible and effective instructional approaches is Aja Martinez's approach to counterstory. Martinez defines counterstory as both a methodology and a method. As a methodology, counterstory is rooted in the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and works to destabilize oppressive narratives by recognizing that the "experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate and critical to understanding racism" (Martinez 3). As a method, counterstory includes a range of techniques aimed at empowering marginalized peoples "through the formation of stories that disrupt the erasures" of marginalized narratives (3). The range of these methods includes allegory, fantasy, narrative dialogues, "family history, biography, autoethnography, cuentos, testimonios" (3). Martinez offers examples of these counterstory methods from the legal scholars that founded CRT: Derrick Bell's allegories in *And We Are Not Saved* and *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, Richard Delgado's narrative dialogues in *The Rodrigo Chronicles*, and Patricia J. Williams's autobiographical writings in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*.

Importantly, Martinez points to these examples to establish that the methodology of counterstory cannot be separated from the methods of counterstory. While many authors and scholars have used allegories, fantasies, narrative dialogues, and/or autoethnography, the specific framework for counterstory as a methodology emerged from the lived experiences of those scholars of color who founded CRT. This intellectual tradition is important to acknowledge and cite as decolonial theorists apply and adapt counterstory methods to their classrooms. Accordingly, using counterstory methods to illustrate decolonial concepts without citing the intellectual tradition that Martinez details can obscure the theoretical distinctions between decolonial theory and CRT.[6]

Decolonial theory, as it has been circulated in rhetoric and composition, is difficult to characterize. However, Walter Mignolo's work has consistently shaped the language and conceptual framework scholars of rhetoric and composition use to challenge settler-colonial histories, research methods, and teaching practices. For example, *Rhetoric Review*'s 2019 symposium, "Decolonizing Projects: Creating Pluriversal Possibilities in Rhetoric" outlined the ways seven scholars used Mignolo's concepts of "delinking" and "pluriversality" in their scholarship and teaching. Additionally, Romeo García and Damián Baca's introduction to their award-winning edited collection, *Rhetorics Elsewhere and Otherwise*, highlights Mignolo's theorization of pluriversality and the decolonial option. Therefore, Mignolo's work is

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[6]In the field of rhetoric and composition, CRT storying and counterstory methods have given rise to a field called cultural rhetorics. The citation politics between decolonial scholars and cultural rhetoricians was recently magnified in a 2021 special issue of *College English*, where prominent decolonial scholars, Ellen Cushman, Damián Baca, and Romeo García, criticized cultural rhetorics because "to publish therein, one must cite those of the appropriate lineage, precisely in order to create its own hierarchy of knowing with reference to its own self-authored intellectual lineage" (13). My point here is that despite these citation politics, "story as a knowledge-making method can contribute to pluriversal understandings and decolonial thinking" in our classrooms, and there is room enough in our works cited for both cultural rhetoricians and decolonial scholars (Cushman et al. 13).

evoked here as a meaningful starting point for teaching decolonial theory to early-career college students.

Mignolo's work aims to reveal how totalizing histories and epistemologies of the Western world are incomplete because they do not account for colonized peoples. One of the major hindrances to revealing the incompleteness of Western Modernity's totalizing history and epistemology is combating what he calls "the rhetoric of modernity" or "the myth of modernity" which promises progress and democracy (higher standards of living, technological advancements, more equitable societies, etc.) ("Delinking" 454). The rhetoric of modernity promises progress, modernization, higher standards of living, technological advancement, and modern systems of government and education. The different versions of progress take on an ethos of salvation, but these promises of salvation obscure the logic of coloniality. The logic of coloniality states that progress and modernization only come when colonizers establish nations and develop global markets. This reasoning is rooted in the epistemological genealogy of Athens and Rome and the geographic boundaries of nation-states and world powers but presents itself as universally applicable to all people, cultures, and geographies.

To combat the universalization of the logic of coloniality, Mignolo's arguments begin by exposing how the totalizing claims of Western thinkers are rooted in those thinkers' local socio-historical contexts. For example, Mignolo discusses the origins of international law in *Darker Side of Modernity* and points out the inherent contradiction of a universal application of law that was born from a specific socio-political context. He exposes this contradiction by simply asking, "Who can trust international law based on the local thinking of Europeans?" (263). He argues that the work of enacting a more intellectually honest international law "cannot be a project from one local history" (273). Instead, Mignolo situates the local history of Western thinkers and their claims to universality within an expansive constellation of local histories—"a world within which many worlds would coexist" (273).

After exposing how the arguments of Western thinkers are born from their localized contexts, Mignolo elevates overlooked decolonial thinkers who, rooted in their local histories and experiences, speak directly against the universal claims of Western European thinkers. For example, Mignolo's study of Guamán Poma de Ayala's *New Chronicles*[7] and Ottabha Cugoano's *Thoughts and Sentiments on Slavery*[8] demonstrates how individual decolonial thinkers have used colonial language and logic to subvert universalized Western ideas. Guamán Poma's *New Chronicles* is a bilingual document that utilizes Mayan and Spanish logics to persuade King Phillip of Spain to reprimand his men for their abuses of Mayans. Cugoano's treatise details a blaring critique of enlightenment thinkers' practice of slavery using enlightenment thinkers' own logic. These rhetors were able to wield the colonizer's language and logic because they had to view themselves through the eyes of the colonizer and colonized, but they spoke back to the colonizer in his own language and framework to show that the terms and concepts of the western world are not universal and would never be universal. Both Guamán Poma and Cugoano's experiences expose the atrocities that come with the logic of coloniality

[7]Guamán Poma de Ayala, et al. *El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno*. 1a ed., Siglo Veintiuno, 1980.
[8]Cugoano, Ottobah. *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species: Humbly Submitted to the Inhabitants of Great Britain*. 1787.

and illustrate the violence of totalizing narratives that silence multiple ways of thinking and being. Importantly, Mignolo points out that "the genealogy of decolonial thinking is planetary and is not limited to individuals" but includes social movements ("Epistemic Disobedience" 53). According to Mignolo, the main end of this planetary genealogy of decolonial thinking is to enact a world system that accounts for the diverse range of local histories and the various ways of thinking and being. Mignolo calls this world system the pluriverse.

The work of enacting a pluriverse as an academic and within the university is an incommensurable contradiction. As Gina Ann Garcia has discussed, institutions of higher education in the US use measures of success that are rooted in white normative standards. Namely, they prioritize national rankings, graduation rates, and retention rates over addressing "the history of oppression and subjugation" their institutions perpetuate (7). Indeed, these white normative standards for success promote an "institutional habitus" that encourages a competitive individualist ethos (byrd 1). For decolonial scholars navigating the demands of promotion and tenure, this academic culture sends a clear message: "Reach conventional levels of productivity or get out" (Plaut 35). In this way, notions of pluriversality are subsumed into a marketplace of ideas where decolonial theory is positioned as a brand or product to be marketed and circulated at conferences and in classrooms. This context forces decolonial scholars to continually work through the contradictions that come with creating a pluriverse in a reward system dictated by competitive individualism. The imperative to publish reifies measures of success that encourage individual competitiveness, thereby devaluing possible partnerships with decolonial thinkers outside of the university.[9] Decolonization is, first and foremost, a political project that began from the colonial wound and grew into political societies vying for liberation from Western modernity ("Delinking" 492). The academy as a whole, and Anglo academics in particular (like myself), have a limited role within that larger project of decolonization. We still work in settler-colonial institutions that reproduce coloniality, yet we still have a responsibility to be intellectually honest about these limitations and the realities of our settler-colonial history. Gloria Anzaldúa articulates this dynamic in respect to Chicano oppression and white allyship:

> We need to say to white society: We need you to accept the fact that Chicanos are different, to acknowledge your rejection and negation of us. We need you to own the fact that you looked upon us as less than human, that you stole our lands, our personhood, our self-respect. We need you to make public restitution: to say that, to compensate for your own sense of defectiveness, you strive for power over us,

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[9]BIPOC faculty in the US are generally more interested in engaged forms of scholarship that center around diversity and community work, but they have to navigate an institutional reward system that privileges publishing and does not recognize engaged forms of scholarship (Baez). This leaves BIPOC faculty working by themselves to create the institutional reforms they hope to see actualized in their contexts, and it results in their senior colleagues actively encouraging them to focus on research rather than work on the community-engaged work they value. In their interview study with 16 BIPOC faculty at an R-1 public-serving institution, Quinteros and Covarrubias found that many BIPOC faculty saw the main focus of their work as "fostering equity and removing barriers for minoritized groups, including colleagues, staff, and students" (12). This focus on equity extended BIPOC faculty's understanding of their work beyond concerns around publishing, teaching, and service. Instead, they prioritized "ground level […] community-based goals" to humanize and center community needs and voices (15).

you erase our history and our experience because it makes you feel guilty. You'd rather forget your brutish acts. (qtd. in "Delinking" 490)

For Anzaldúa, Anglo scholars are not "helping" the decolonial cause; they are "following the lead" of decolonial thinkers both within and outside of the university ("Delinking" 492). This "bottom-up" approach might break the norms of knowledge production for academics rooted in Western modernity. Scholars like to think that their research creates new knowledge that trickles down to the general population, but decolonization, "has to work from bottom up" ("Delinking" 492). Instead, this "bottom-up" approach considers how the ideas of decolonial thinkers trickle up to the academy and challenge the epistemological foundations that constitute it. In this way, we can look to those scholars like Gloria Anzaldúa who come to the university speaking from their experience of colonization in order to center the voices of the communities and histories that shaped them.

Latinx scholars in rhetoric and composition have recently debated how best to decolonize totalizing narratives of our discipline and center the histories and communities that shaped them: provide alternatives to "traditional" histories or expose "traditional" histories as incomplete because they do not account for the rhetorical traditions of minoritized communities. The first option treats decolonial scholarship as disparate from an already coherent disciplinary history. The second option uncovers the limitations of our disciplinary history and seeks to ameliorate those shortcomings. Jose Cortez and Romeo García advocate for affirming the incompleteness of the history of rhetoric and composition and acknowledging that Latin American and indigenous rhetorics have always been a part of that history but never acknowledged. They argue that positioning "decolonial" rhetorical history as separate from "traditional" rhetorical history is to affirm the disciplinary hierarchy that privileges Western, Eurocentric, and logocentric understandings of literacy. For Cortez and García, defining decolonial thinking in opposition to Western thinking legitimates Western thinkers' claims to universality. Instead of playing into this binary, Cortez and García point out the ways Latinx rhetorical practices have always existed and continue to thrive independent of their relation to Western thinking. This reality "bears witness to the structural incompletion of the history of rhetoric" (104). Therefore, decolonial historical methodologies invite rhetorical scholars to interrogate the ways our current understanding of the rhetorical tradition is lacking rather than viewing decolonial research as an alternative to an already coherent tradition.

An important example of a scholar who enacts Cortez and García's decolonial revision of totalizing histories is Damián Baca's work in *Mestiz@ Scripts*. Baca explicitly critiques the notion of a traditional history of rhetoric and composition by explicating the limitations of Bizzell and Herzberg's seminal anthology, *The Rhetorical Tradition*. Baca explains how the temporal and spatial categories that Bizzell and Herzberg use to categorize rhetors make it impossible to account for indigenous and Latinx work. For example, Baca replaces the western historical blocks (classical, medieval, renaissance, enlightenment, nineteenth century, modern, and postmodern) with Antonio Rios-Bustamante's conception of the Indigenista Period "which begins with Native American creation origins" and the Colonial Period "which is divided into three stages spanning from 1521 to 1810" (148–149). Baca also takes issues with seminal histories of rhetoric

and composition that focus on the British colonial universities that drew from the tradition of rhetoric born from Greek and Latin rhetorical ancestry.[10] Baca argues that these narratives of the discipline erase "local regions and localized moments in time across the globe that provide […] crucial knowledge about the materiality of writing and various cultural transformations under colonial situations" (121). This geographic and temporal reorientation of the discipline also invites scholars to move beyond notions of belonging based on nation-states and consider cultural and regional subjectivities.[11]

Baca's work demonstrates how local histories have the potential to pull apart settler colonial histories into hundreds of localized directions. The true enemy of decolonial thinking are the totalizing narratives that disallow any possibility of a pluriverse. Baca provides a framework that emphasizes the need for composition instructors at universities in the US-Mexico Borderlands to realize how their universities have and are coevolving with local indigenous and Latinx communities, but it is up to instructors at those universities to apply that framework to their particular contexts. This line of inquiry begins with the specific local histories of the communities that host our universities.

Given the limited role of university students and teachers in enacting a pluriverse, I begin my college composition courses by acknowledging the local effects of settler colonialism in our city of Tucson, Arizona situated in the US-Mexico borderlands. I partner with students in questioning how local iteration of settler colonialism in our region has shaped the goals and directives of our class. We honestly confront the incommensurable experience of teaching and learning academic English at a university built on the ancestral homelands of the Tohono O'odham and Pascua Yaqui, funded with the profits from stolen land,[12] predicated on the eradication of the Apache,[13] and which "side-stepped a recognition" of its multilingual and multicultural border space (Leahy 61).

In the midst of that questioning and reshaping of the class, we follow Mignolo's model of exposing how the arguments of Western thinkers are born from their localized contexts and elevating overlooked decolonial thinkers that speak directly against the universal claims of Western European thinkers and center their local histories and ways of being. We do this by examining the ways colonists in the Americas responded to indigenous communities. One of the most famous and well-documented discussions

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[10]See, Connors, Robert. *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy*. U of Pittsburgh P, 1997.

[11]Baca recommends that teachers interrogate the "culturally divergent ideas about American citizenship" by comparing "other articulations of national identity such as Zapatista sovereignty, Quebecois separatism, and even neo-Nazi nationalism" (158). Baca also recommends teaching examples of how local and cultural identities are constituted. For example, Baca discusses how Gloria Anzaldúa constituted a new mestiza consciousness in *Borderlands: La Frontera*.

[12]The university benefited from 521 indigenous land parcels that totaled to 143,564 acres (Lee and Ahtone). The US government paid nothing to the eight tribal nations—Pima, Western Apaches, Tohono O'odham, Apaches, Maricopa, Walapai, Navaho, Cocopa—for this land, and the university's returns on this land are incalculable (Lee and Ahtone).

[13]In his inaugural address to the University of Arizona, Pima city councilman, CC Stephans congratulated the Anglo-Saxon civilization for "advancing" west and "successfully disputing" the "relentless" Apache (qtd. in Martin 29).

among colonists about indigenous communities in the Americas is the 1551 Valladolid debate between Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda.

The Valladolid debate was colonists' earliest attempt to discuss the ethics of colonialism. The core issue of the debate was whether indigenous peoples are 'human' and whether they are entitled to 'human rights.' The Holy Roman Emperor Carlos V convened a "specially appointed panel of fourteen learned jurists" and tasked them with articulating the "proper method of colonial conquest" (Saldaña-Portillo 34). The Junta of Valladolid invited, listened to, and judged the arguments of Sepúlveda and Las Casas.

The context leading up to this debate was shrouded in controversy. Spanish colonists had established systems of enslaving indigenous peoples through the encomienda system. This system started as the Spanish government rewarded the efforts of initial Spanish colonists with indigenous land and indigenous slaves. In 1537, Pope Paul III published a condemnation of the enslavement of indigenous peoples that included a defense of indigenous humanity, and in 1542, Carlos V issued laws that abolished the encomienda system (Saldaña-Portillo 37). In response, encomenderos led rebellions against Spanish government officials and threatened Spain's standing in the Americas (37). Ganzalo Pizarro, for instance, led a rebellion against Spanish Viceroy Blacso Nunez Vela in Peru in 1544 after Vela tried to enact Carlos V's abolishment of the encomienda system (37). As a result, Carlos V repealed the laws banning the encomienda system in 1544, leading to encomenderos initiating "a campaign to make their encomiendas perpetual" and continuing their enslavement of indigenous peoples (38).

When Carlos V repealed his ban on the encomienda system, Bartolomé de Las Casas was the bishop of Chiapas. By that time Las Casas had spent most of his adult life advocating for the abolishment of the encomienda system. Las Casas first arrived in the Americas to colonize Cuba in 1512. He was one of those initial Spanish colonists who was rewarded with an encomienda (Abbott 62). However, in 1514, he renounced the encomienda system and began preaching against the atrocities and violence against indigenous peoples. His arguments for the humanity of indigenous people and his condemnation of using violent conversion methods earned him the moniker "official protector of the Indians" (62). In 1547, Carlos V reinstated the encomienda system and Las Casas sailed to Spain to make his case for abolishing the system of slavery.

Las Casas's adversary in the Valladolid debate was Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda. Sepúlveda was known for his defense of the concept of "just war" which allowed Christians to destroy external and internal threats to the church. The basis for his argument came from Aristotle's theory of natural slavery. As a famous translator of Aristotle, Sepúlveda detailed the ways indigenous peoples as "intellectually inferior" beings and arbiters of "inhumane and barbarous customs" embodied Aristotle's definition of "natural slaves" (Saldaña-Portillo 42–43). From this perspective, enslaving indigenous peoples "was a remediation, a virtue imposed on them to rectify their wayward status and their inferior reason" (43). Las Casas responded to Sepúlveda's arguments by nuancing Aristotle's conception of natural slavery. In his argument to the Junta of Valladolid, Las Casas interrogated Sepúlveda's claim that indigenous peoples fit Aristotle's characterization of "natural slaves" due to their inferior intelligence.

Las Casas explains that Sepúlveda incorrectly categorized indigenous peoples as natural slaves. Natural slaves were "sottish, stupid, and strangers to reason" (qtd. in Saldaña-Portillo 45). If indigenous peoples lack reason so severely, they would also lack friendship and community (45). Las Casas details how his experience with indigenous communities contradicted Sepúlveda's characterizations, and he goes on to argue that God would not ordain some humans to be inferior beings and others to be masters. For Las Casas, all humans were ordained with the divine nature of human reason (47). Therefore, indigenous peoples had the right to govern themselves and to utilize their resources and labor as they saw fit. Las Casas's arguments in this debate laid the foundation for his theory of universal humanity. There is no record of the Junta of Valladolid's decision on the debate, and the Spanish government did not change its ambivalent policies on the encomienda system until 1573 when encomiendas were officially banned. The more significant consequence of the debate is the legacy of Las Casas's theory of universal humanity.

In our class reflections on the Valladolid debate, we interrogate and problematize Las Casas's theory of universal humanity. These conversations lead us to wonder about the perspectives and voices that were missing from colonial accounts of the Valladolid debate. Aja Martinez's definitions and examples of counterstories give our class ways to think about and reimagine accounts of this historical argument. Once we have looked at examples and have established a shared definition of counterstories, we read an excerpt from Leslie Marmon Silko's book, *Almanac of the Dead,* through the lens of counterstory.

Almanac of the Dead is an expansive novel that details an intricate hemispheric indigenous revolution which spans all of the Americas. However, we only read a short seven-page excerpt from the novel where an indigenous revolutionary named Angelita tries a Cuban communist named Bartolomeo for betraying the pan-tribal revolutionary society, Army of Justice and Redistribution, and committing crimes against history. The arrogant and well-educated revolutionary left his "freedom school" in Mexico City expecting to begin a serious study of Marxism with the "treacherous tribalists" in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas (Silko 514). As a Cuban ambassador for Marxism, a salvific Western European ideology, the criminal's name is a clear allusion to Bartolomé de Las Casas. Bartolomeo can be conceptualized as a composite character representing the cultural and political ideologies of Western modernity that advocate for indigenous rights from within the colonial epistemological framework.

The indigenous revolutionary that tries Bartolomeo, Angelita, is interested in Marx because "Marx stole his ideas from us, the Native Americans" (311). Marc Priewe's analysis of Angelita's affinity for Marxism reveals that "Angelita understands that Marxism and tribalism are linked by their mutual insistence on storytelling—relating past events as a form of meaning-endowment for the present—which becomes a cross-cultural source for revolution" (227). However, Angelita critiques Marxism's spiritual limitations. She explains that Marx and Engels would never understand anything about "spiritual beings" (Silko 749). For Angelita, Marx had taken indigenous ideals, exported them from their local context into the global arena, adapted them to new locales, reconfigured them to erase indigenous spirituality, and "then returned via the global reach

of European ideas" (Priewe 226). In the end, Angelita rejects Marxism saying "to hell with all Marxists who oppose the return of tribal land!" (Silko 519).

Bartolomeo's condescending and paternal attitude toward Angelita and other indigenous revolutionaries reaffirmed Angelita's criticism of Marxism and other Western salvific ideologies. When Angelita put him on trial for crimes against history, Bartelomeo's defense was: "What right did they, ignorant Indians, have to put educated Cuban citizens on trial?" (526). Angelita answers: "You set foot in our sovereign jurisdiction" (526). In another defense, he says: "Jungle monkeys and savages have no history!" (525). Angelita answers with a list of forty-five indigenous uprisings and revolutions that span from Hateuy's first Native American revolt against European slave hunters in 1510 to the 1945 formation of the National Federation of Peasants in Bolivia (531). As she reads, "voices buzzed with enthusiasm [...] as people began to recall stories of the old days," but they are still wary of executing Bartolomeo because of where his spirit or ghost might go after he is hanged. However, Angelita explains "this was war, the war to retake the Americas and to free all the people still enslaved. You did not fight a war for such a big change without the loss of blood" (532). In the end of the trial, Angelita pronounces:

> All this is only a short list. A beginning. But Comrade Bartolomeo here has no use for indigenous history. Comrade Bartolomeo denies the holocaust of Indigenous Americans! Seventy-two million people in 1500 reduced to ten million people by 1600! Comrade Bartolomeo is guilty! Guilty of crimes against history! (531)

As Bartolomeo is hanged for his crimes, an old woman yells from the crowd, "Next time don't lie about our history!" (532).

As students read, we discuss the significance of four main revisions that Silko makes to the Valladolid Debate: Silko turns the debate into a trial; she replaces the Spanish colonial intellectuals with indigenous revolutionaries, she situates the event on indigenous land (Chiapas), and she sets the event in the present rather than in the past.

The first revision of turning the Valladolid debate into a trial demonstrates the absurdity of two Spanish men using Aristotle's definitions of natural slavery to debate whether or not indigenous peoples are human. Mignolo points to the Valladolid debate to illustrate how colonial epistemologies set up "linguistic frames" that silence coexisting epistemologies (*Darker* 124). In other words, the colonial terms and rules of engagement in this debate represent how the universalization of Western epistemologies ignores and delegitimizes indigenous epistemologies. By reimagining the debate as a trial where indigenous revolutionaries judge Western accounts of indigenous history, Silko "delinks" from the colonial terms that frame the Valladolid debate and interrogates the colonial framework that the debate is based on. Importantly, this is not to say that Angelita or indigenous revolutionaries should be the judges of history. It is to say that they should be the judges of their own history and that Western epistemologies have knowingly ignored and silenced these histories.

Similarly, Silko's counterstory exposes how Western conceptions of human rights ignore indigenous conceptions of their own humanity. The very notion of rights or being a rights-bearing citizen is a Western construct that requires acknowledging Western

sovereignty. Las Casas's theory of universal humanity granted indigenous people the legal right to be free from violent action and seizure of land on the condition that they accept the colonial framework of human rights.[14] Maria Josefina Saldaña-Portillo's analysis of the Valladolid debate outlines the harm that this imposed conception of rights caused indigenous peoples by explicating Francisco de Vitoria's idea of "ius gentium" or the 'law of nation' into international law[15] (47). Saldaña-Portillo concludes that while de Vitoria's notion of international law gave indigenous peoples rights and freedoms as sovereign nations, this system required indigenous peoples to recognize the sovereignty and legitimacy of Spain's colonies (51). Silko caricatured this attitude in the Cuban communist's paternal arrogance and expectations to be welcomed, respected, and admired.

In line with Saldaña-Portillo, Mignolo further exposes how de Vitoria's conception of 'law of nations' assumed a hierarchy between nations and therefore justified the dispossession of indigenous lands. Mignolo explains that while de Vitoria recognized Indians as human, he still assumed a "standard model of humanity" that was based on the European man (*Darker* 276–277). In other words, when European thinkers universalize European frameworks, they become the standard measure for humanity and therefore position themselves as the judges of humanity. Bartolomeo exemplifies this portrayal of Indians as lacking when he screams "ignorant indians" and "savages" (Silko 525–526). Both Mignolo and Saldaña-Portillo look past the linguistic frames of Western modernity and argue that indigenous peoples were included in the colonial system, "only to be disciplined" (*Darker* 279). That disciplining is best articulated in the way that the 'humanitas' (European standard for humanity) imposed epistemological hegemony over the 'anthropos' (the 'lacking' human) (*Darker* 84).

The second revision that Silko makes to the Valladolid Debate is replacing the two Spanish men that participated in the debate with a white Cuban Marxist and a female indigenous revolutionary. Instead of The Junta of Valladolid, a village of indigenous people acts as the jury for the trial. This revision centers the experiences and perspectives of indigenous peoples through their conversations about history. This revision points to a crucial starting point for decolonizing history that subverts the hierarchy of rationality imposed by colonial classifications. Mignolo discusses how colonial thinkers constituted themselves as the 'humanitas,' ones with the "epistemic privilege of hegemonic knowledge," and all people who inhabit exteriority as the 'anthropos' (*Darker* 83). In order for the humanitas to legitimize their settler colonial state, they reproduce their epistemology in "people, institutions, and disciplines where knowledge is managed and

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[14]See, De las Casas, Bartolome. *In Defense of the Indians*. Translated and edited by Stafford Pool. Northern Illinois UP, 1992.
[15]De Vitoria outlines his fundamental arguments for "ius gentium" or law of nations in his three-part lecture "On the Indians Lately Discovered," delivered in 1532. His lectures outline three essential tenets of the law of nations: "1. The inhabitants of the Americas possessed natural legal rights as free and rational people" (R. Williams 97) 2. Pope Alexander VI's signing of the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, which granted Spain "title to the Americas was 'baseless' and could not affect the inherent rights of the Indian inhabitants. 3. Transgressions of the universally binding norms of the Law of Nations by the Indians might serve to justify a Christian nation's conquest and colonial empire in the Americas" (R. Williams 97). Generally, Vitoria's Law of Nations justified the marginalization of indigenous cultures in the Americas based on "'modern,' desacralized, legal basis, but a basis nonetheless possessed of all the missionary, chauvinistic zeal that had attended Christianity's will to empire" (108).

controlled" (*Darker* 85). This epistemological hegemony imposes the exteriority of the anthropos on all threats to its order. Within such a framework, the Anthropos are made to be "as much the barbarian or the primitive as the communist, the terrorist, all those who can be placed in the axis of evil, and those who are friends of the Devil" (*Darker* 85).

Silko's counterstory shifts the telling of history from the perspective of the humanitas to the anthropos. This is not just a shift in perspective; it is also a shift in epistemological frameworks. The humanitas, by definition, believe that their thinking is the only valid form of knowledge and viewed written history as the only valid form of history (*Darker* 81). However, shifting away from the binary, Silko points to a central question that Mignolo asks about the humanitas and anthropos, "Who establishes criteria of classification and who classifies?" (*Darker* 83). The humanitas classify all anthropos as other. This leaves a diverse range of cultures and communities subsumed under the same category thereby flattening the differences between their epistemological frameworks embodied by a diverse range of anthropos, but shifting away from the binary of the humanitas and anthropos allows that pluriverse of epistemologies to classify their own histories and ways of being. As Mignolo explains, this shift moves us closer to "the democratization of epistemology" (81).

Importantly, each epistemological framework of the anthropos stems from what Mignolo calls "the colonial wound" ("Epistemic" 63). Mignolo develops this term based on Gloria Anzaldúa's reflections in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* where she writes: "The U.S. Mexican border es una herida abierta where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds"[16] ("Epistemic" footnote 9). The experience of colonial oppression, of viewing oneself first as a colonial subject and second as a person, is the foundation of "border thinking" ("Delinking" 493). Only those who have experienced the colonial wound and who have had to conceive of themselves as both human and colonized subjects can conceptualize decoloniality. Each anthropos will have their unique type of border thinking depending on their local and individual experiences with the colonial wound. In this way, border thinking is an epistemological framework, that allows for a pluriverse of perspectives and necessitates theorization and praxis on a local level.

Silko's counterstory embodies the inversion of the humanitas and the anthropos by centering the experiences and voices of indigenous peoples rather than the academic arguments of colonial thinkers. The Valladolid debate saw colonists asking themselves, "Is what we are doing right?" Silko's trial shows that the indigenous peoples should have the epistemological sovereignty to classify and judge their own histories. Elevating the experiences and perspectives of indigenous peoples forces colonists to confront the genocide and centuries of oppression they orchestrated. This analogy represents a key historical method for decolonial thinking and the theorization of pluriversal futures: the anthropos are the only ones that can enact the pluriverse. Western conceptions of history are the results of an epistemological hegemony that managed and controlled people and institutions associated with knowledge production to perpetuate totalizing historical narratives that efface the atrocities of settler colonialism.

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[16]'es una herida abierta' can be translated as 'is an open wound.'

The true enemy of decolonial thinking is any totalizing narrative that disallows the possibility of a pluriverse. Instead, the realities of the colonial wound as represented in the long list of indigenous uprisings and revolutions act as the conceptual framework for judging Western histories. When the "hidden" experiences of colonized peoples are brought to light, they shatter Western histories into hundreds of localized directions (*Darker* 80). Where the Western framework creates a binary between dominant and marginalized histories, the decolonial framework recognizes a pluriverse of co-evolutionary histories.

The third major difference between Silko's counterstory and the Valladolid debate is its relocation to Chiapas. This geographical shift demonstrates the decolonial concept of geopolitics, or "thinking where you are" (*Darker* 97). Instead of the Spanish city of Valladolid, Silko centers the trial in one of the largest and most politically storied regions of Mexico. The Cuban communist asks: "What right did they, ignorant Indians, have to put educated Cuban citizens on trial?" (526). Angelita's response highlights the importance of thinking where you are. She says: "You set foot in our sovereign jurisdiction" (Silko 526).

Mignolo calls this place-based thinking "geo-politics" ("Delinking" 485). Geo-politics functions in two ways: it refutes the totalizing claims of Western modernity by unveiling the ways that Western thinking was born out of a specific location, and it affirms a pluriversality of local epistemologies and histories. The first function of geopolitics is to delink from "zero point epistemology" or the idea that all history and knowledge center around Western modernity. Zero-point epistemology is "grounded neither in geo-historical location nor in bio-graphical configurations of bodies" (*Darker* 80). Instead, the zero-point framework of history effaces the local history that produces it, and functions under the pretense of "this is the way things are." For example, Mignolo discusses the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas that "created an imaginary line that divided the Atlantic from North to South and settled the dispute between Spain and Portugal for the possessions of the New World" (78). He also discusses the orientations of East versus West, "East and West are obviously not ontological places on a round planet. They are fictions invented by someone who placed himself in the middle, between East and West [...] Western Christians (located in the territories that will become Europe) located themselves in the West: not to the west of the East, but to the west of Jerusalem" ("Pluriversality" 91).

These colonial imaginings and orientations performed and codified zero-point epistemology. Mignolo equates this zero-point epistemology to the concept of "I think, therefore I am," as opposed to his geopolitics which equates to "I am where I think" (*Darker* 81). Mignolo often turns to Anibal Quijano's article "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality" which criticizes Descartes' famous axiom to expose the epistemological oppression of zero-point thinking. Quijano argues that Descartes' conception of the indifferent subject who can objectively observe other cultures made it impossible for Europeans to engage in epistemological cultural exchange. Instead, Europeans created a false notion of social totality which is incapable of recognizing knowledge systems outside of their own. Quijano's project, then, is to delink from this myth of individual objectivity so that cultural exchange becomes possible.

The move from zero-point epistemology to geo-politics allows historians to see the immense diversities of coexisting/parallel histories that are born from individual local contexts. Working with local contexts and histories is the second decolonial step after delinking from zero-point epistemology (*Darker* 275). Importantly, Mignolo notes that this work with local histories means that "[t]here cannot be a monotopic history of decolonial options" (89). As Linda Tuhiwai Smith notes, colonialism is part of a grander narrative, but it is "part also of a very local, very specific experience" (24).

Silko's final revision to the Valladolid debate is situating colonial oppression in the present rather than in the distant past. Situating colonial events in the present illustrates the decolonial method of denouncing the fiction of progress and delinking from Western periodizations of history. In the way that Western linguistic frames constituted a hierarchy of being that set the Western man as its pinnacle, Western linguistic frames also set a hierarchy of time using "modernity" as its standard (*Darker* 160). Bartolomeo appeals to this hierarchy of time in his trial when he claims that "Jungle monkeys and savages have no history!" (Silko 525). In his discussion of colonial conceptions of time, Mignolo points out that the eighteenth-century philosophies of Hegel and Kant translated "barbarians" into "primitives" and located those "primitives […] in time rather than in space" (*Darker* 153). Mapping this temporal hierarchy onto world geography resulted in the planet suddenly "living in different temporalities, with Europe in the present and the rest in the past" (*Darker* 151). Anthropologist Johannes Fabian calls this colonial temporal hierarchy the "denial of coevalness" (*Darker* 152). This temporal hierarchy "served as the justification of the ideology of progress" (152).

The specific stages of that temporal hierarchy have undergone many transformations. Mignolo explains how Renaissance thinkers invented the Middle Ages "in order to locate themselves in the present of a history that they could trace back to Greece and the Roman Empire" ("Delinking" 470). Mignolo also points out that even though Western historical blocks shifted from Hegel's three stages of history—the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the discovery of the New World— to the three stages of modern history—the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the French Revolution, both taxonomies affirm the destiny of Western Europeans as "guardians of the world" and have inspired and justified missions of conquest—the Crusades, the Age of Exploration, the Age of Imperialism, the crusade against Communism ("Delinking 467"; *Darker* 159). However, it is important to emphasize that these taxonomies do not exist outside of the linguistic frames they come from. Mignolo says, "there is no modernity and tradition beyond the rhetoric of the same modernity that invented itself" (164).

Notice here that Mignolo delinks from the colonial conceptions of time by exposing the static and sedimented nature of colonial history. Indeed, Mignolo accepts and acts on the fact that the colonial conception of history is "a flat narrative of imperial dominium that pretends to capture the flow of reality, while histories, ancestralities, memories are local, marginal, insignificant, narratives" (*Darker* 175). The long list of indigenous revolutions that Bartolomeo's judge recites illustrates Mignolo's characterization of colonial history. Each revolution stacks on top of the other without periodized interruption. The list stands as a unified, sedimented monument to indigenous resilience in the face of colonial atrocities.

Silko's counterstory demonstrates how important it is for scholars to acknowledge how past histories of rhetoric and composition are guilty of crimes against history. They silence the lived experiences of the colonized and refuse to account for the atrocities of settler colonialism. As we move forward as a discipline, scholars should view implementing decolonial methods as a matter of intellectual integrity as much as a moral imperative. A key component of living up to this intellectual integrity is following the lead of past and present decolonial scholars who are speaking from their lived experiences, and shifting understandings of decolonization from the academic arena to the local communities that host our universities. As histories of rhetoric and composition continue to be taught and written, they should attend to a pluriverse of cultures and histories.

While delinking from linguistic frames of coloniality, rooting history in the bodily experience of the anthropos (bio-politics), thinking where you are by recovering the pluriversality of local histories (geo-politics), and understanding history as sedimented and cyclical do not represent the entirety of the work that decolonial thinkers in rhetoric and composition are doing, they offer an important starting point on decolonial theory for early career college students. More importantly, counterstory as a methodology and method offers an effective practice for students to access decolonial terms. Counterstories like Silko's can contribute significantly to furthering decolonial thinking and pluriversal understandings.

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Empathy and Abjection after Burke (1): On the Rise and Fall of "Listening-Rhetorics," 1936–2023

James S. Baumlin | Missouri State University
http://ellids.com/archives/2023/11/5.4-Baumlin-1.pdf

Abstract | What is it that leads rhetoric to succeed, or fail, as an instrument of persuasion? What is it in human psychology that makes individuals susceptible, or resistant, to rhetorical appeals? What are the moments and movements in recent history that have led theorists to revise their understanding of rhetoric in its aims and techniques? These questions underlie the two-part survey that follows.

It was in 1950—at mid-20th century—that Kenneth Burke published his *Rhetoric of Motives*, whose agonistic model of discourse rested in a group psychology of identification bound to a social anthropology of scapegoating. Through subsequent decades, Western rhetorical theory has stayed in touch with Burkean concepts; methods as diverse as Rogerian argument, Corderian expressivism, and Booth's "listening-rhetoric" took Burke's identification as a precursor and starting point. Though their vocabularies diverged, each shared an audience psychology grounded in "empathetic understanding" (Rogers), seeking common ground between opposing factions and the possibility of mutual assent (Booth). For the authors surveyed here wrote in times of war—from World War II and the Cold War to Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and the post-9/11 "war on terror." And each wrote in times of social-political unrest, with protests—often violent—raging across U.S. city streets and college campuses. Their collective aim was salutary: to reduce conflict, induce cooperation, and increase social cohesion.

And yet, with each version of this "new" rhetoric, a criticism arises. Whereas a rhetoric of empathy seeks to overcome divisiveness, the Burkean model remains agonistic at its core: identification entails division, and *vice versa*. So, even as the "new" rhetoric evolved, an alternative was being articulated in fields of feminism, postcolonialism, and cultural studies generally: Theirs became a rhetoric, not of identification, but of cultural/bodily difference. Representing what was largely unassimilable in the voice of the subaltern "Other," their critique of the rhetorics of "empathetic understanding" made these latter seem naïve.

> Rhetoric is the study of misunderstanding and its remedies.
> —I.A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (2–3)

> The progress of human enlightenment can go no further than in picturing people not as *vicious*, but as *mistaken*.
> —Kenneth Burke, *Attitudes Toward History* (41; emphasis in original)

War-weary like so many of his generation, the English philosopher, I.A. Richards (1893–1979) wrote that first epigraph in 1936; having lived through the Great War, he looked to language as a means of avoiding further violence. In making this hopeful claim, the English philosopher joined his American counterpart, Kenneth Burke (1897–1993) in seeking a revival—a renovation, actually—of classical-Aristotelian rhetoric: Reconceived as a social psychology of communication, their "new" rhetoric would aim at reducing conflict, inducing cooperation, and creating greater social cohesion. And, by rigorous pursuit of this renovated rhetoric, an enduring peace could perhaps be fashioned. But war came, nonetheless.

Writing the second epigraph in 1937, Kenneth Burke felt a similar urgency. He, like Richards, was well aware of the reigning state of affairs. The Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) was in full swing, with Hitler's Germany (the generalissimo Franco's fascist ally) honing its skills in aerial bombardment of civilians. There were other wars, as well: between fascist Italy and Ethiopia (1935–1937), between Imperial Japan and the Republic of China (1935–1945). Meanwhile, Joseph Stalin was busy with his "Great Purge" (1936–1938), in which hundreds of thousands of Old Bolsheviks were executed and millions of Russians starved. Hitler, having overseen passage of the racist-antisemitic Nuremberg Laws (1935) two years prior, was building a concentration camp at Buchenwald (1937), with others to follow. Within a year, Austria would succumb to *Anschluss* (1938), absorbed into Nazi Germany; annexation of the Czech Sudetenland would come next (1938), followed by the invasion of Poland (1939)—and then world war.

Grounded in rationalism and an assumption of progress, the "human enlightenment" that Burke invokes above failed to provide the "peace for our time" that Neville Chamberlain, then-British Prime Minister, declared upon signing the Munich Agreement (1938)—a land-for-peace deal with Hitler that led literally to the dismantling and disappearance of the Czech Republic. Then as now, negotiation—the deployment of "good reasons" energized by persuasive, hortatory rhetoric—fails when one or more parties deal in bad faith (or prove, indeed, "vicious"). Burke would respond with an essay, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle'" (1939), which analyzes the tropes of Hitlerian-Nazi fascism, particularly its rhetoric of German unification through "the projective device of

the scapegoat" (99)—an age-old ritual of demonizing the Jew as the German people's common enemy.

By 1945, the gifts of "human enlightenment" would be revealed in Auschwitz and Hiroshima—technologies, respectively, of genocide and mass destruction.[1] Burke would devote much of his magisterial text, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950), to an exploration of the group psychology that leads from competition and logomachy (or war-of-words) to war:

> Insofar as the individual is involved in conflict with other individuals or groups, the study of this same individual would fall under the head of *Rhetoric*. […] *The Rhetoric* must lead us through the Scramble, the Wrangle of the Market Place, the flurries and flare-ups of the Human Barnyard, the Give and Take, the wavering line of pressure and counterpressure, the Logomachy, the onus of ownership, the War of Nerves, the War. (23; emphasis in original)

Some seven decades later, that pretty notion of "human enlightenment" continues to fail us. As I write, "Putin's 'Battle'" dominates much of Western news media, though there are other conflicts in other parts of the globe—Niger, Syria, Yemen, Palestine to name several—where blood is being shed.[2] In the United States today, the Russian invasion/occupation of Ukraine competes with headlines over indictments brought against the nation's 45th President, Donald J. Trump, who continues to command the loyalty of millions despite being twice-impeached and facing criminal charges of conspiracy in insurrection. American democratic process has fallen under threat by what some (to parody Burke) might term "Trump's 'Battle'" to overturn the 2020 election results. As I write, he remains the presumptive Republican Party candidate in 2024, and many of Trump's followers have vowed to fight—legally, politically, and otherwise—on his behalf. The Burkean-dialogic "Give and Take" of party-politics has deserted us, and the intellectual today, particularly the student of communication and the ethics/ethos of rhetoric, is left to explain this desertion. As an American academician and historian of rhetoric whose research focuses on ethos, I look to Burkean theory and its offshoots for help in understanding the nation's current crisis; further, as a cultural critic whose

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[1]In the 2nd edition (1959) of *Attitudes Toward History*, Burke drives this postwar message home: "In the twenty some years between the first edition of this book and its present reprinting, a momentous quantitative difference has entered the world" (Introduction). He continues:

> We refer to the invention of technical devices that would make the rapid obliteration of all human life an easily available possibility. Up to now, human stupidity could go to fantastic lengths of destructiveness, yet always mankind's hopes of recovery could be reborn anew. […] But now presumably a New Situation is with us, making it all the more imperative that we learn to cherish the mildly charitable ways of the comic discount. For by nothing less than such humanistic allowances can we hope to forestall (if it can be forestalled!) the most idiotic tragedy conceivable: the willful ultimate poisoning of this lovely planet, in conformity with a mistaken heroics of war. (Introduction)

"Burke's genius is peculiarly resistant to short citation" (*Modern Dogma* 167), writes Wayne C. Booth. I would say the same for Booth himself, as for I.A. Richards, Carl Rogers, and Jim W. Corder among other theorists cited in this present survey; for which reason, I beg the reader's indulgence (and thank the *LLIDS* editors) in allowing me to quote them at length. My excuse is simple enough: Where their own words matter, I prefer that they speak for themselves.

[2]Is it an irony of history that some media pundits and politicians (both here in the U.S. and abroad) have urged Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to cut a deal with Putin, trading "land for peace"? (*When has that ever worked?*)

intellectual commitments extend to postmodern technoscience, I look to disciplines beyond traditional rhetoric—specifically, to cognitive science and "embodied narrative"—for insights into our collective future. Will the United States remain "one nation, indivisible"? Or will the union fracture, as some on both sides of the political divide have predicted?

I proceed on the assumption that rhetoric, in theory as well as in practice, evolves historically in response to the crises facing each generation (Conley 281). (Here, sadly, I see too little difference between the list of crises Burke faced in 1937 and those we face in 2023.) To this assumption, I would add the role that psychology has played in advancing rhetorical theory: As schools of psychology have evolved, so has our understanding of the processes underlying human communication generally and persuasion specifically. In exploring these twin themes, the following two-part history proceeds roughly decade-by-decade through the 20th century. With our entry into the 21st century, the swiftly-expanding fields of neuropsychology and narratology have brought stunning new insights into rhetoric, teaching us how, when, and why persuasion succeeds—and, concomitantly, how, when, and why it fails. If "the American experiment" in democracy falters,[3] it will be due in no small measure to our inherently human capacity *to resist persuasion*. (In point of fact, Burkean theory anticipates this resistance, to which cognitive science can at last "give the proof.") But, before proceeding further, I return to the Burkean epigraph above and to the hope it seems to express in "human enlightenment."

"Not as *vicious*, but as *mistaken*": The fate of ethics, of communitarian politics, and of public discourse hangs on this sentiment. As a college student enrolled in humanities coursework (literature, history, philosophy, religious studies) in the 1970s, I remember more than a few conversations with fellow students on the subject of heaven and hell. Irrespective of the teachings of my working-class Roman Catholic upbringing, what I desired (for myself and others) is what I chose to believe. I argued against the existence of a hell and of a devil to claim it as his habitation; I saw sin as error and evil as an emotional/psychological/spiritual illness—an insanity. In wartime and in realms of power-politics generally (to which I'd wish to limit this present discussion), people commit crimes, yes: horrifying, outrageous crimes against God and humanity. The discussions turned inevitably to Hitler. "What about him? Isn't he burning in hell?" I hadn't yet read Joseph Conrad's depiction of Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* (1899)—"But *his soul* was mad. […] it had looked within itself and, by heavens I tell you, it had gone mad" (83; emphasis added). Yet such was my youthful intuition: Hitler's was an insanity that infected a nation's people and afflicted the planet. Even as theologians warned of the existence of absolute, metaphysical evil, postwar psychologists of various stripes (Freudian, Jungian, Adlerian) set about psychoanalyzing Hitler the man, his upbringing, and the European political, economic, and cultural setting. They, too, sought the etiology of fascism.

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[3]It's been a point of national pride that the American Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution were literally "experiments" in democratic government, unheard of in 18th c. Europe. That "experiment" continues, though it was challenged during the American Civil War (1860–1865) and is under threat again today—literally.

It's been years—decades—since I've debated questions of Hitler in hell. It's not metaphysics or theology but the practice of discourse that now holds my attention. There are people today—leaders of political factions, leaders of nations—whose words, dispositions, and actions are, by my own observation, vicious. Whether they're evil or soul-sick in their person lies beyond human knowing. What makes Burke's assertion pertinent still—that "human enlightenment can go no further than in picturing people not as *vicious*, but as *mistaken*" (*Attitudes* 410)—is its hope that the "comedy" of human error *can* be corrected and cured without spilling over into that ultimate of tragedies, war.

Identification and the "New" Rhetoric

> Rhetoric is concerned with the state of Babel after the fall.
> —Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (23)

In invoking "Babel after the fall," Burke describes our current fractured discourse. Then as now, the declarations of opposing factions do not align; vocabularies (and their underlying values) crack apart and diverge; speakers address audiences, not with an aim to change minds but to strengthen their belief systems—to increase the divide separating sides in opposition. In describing this fallen state, Burke turns to a group psychology functioning within a binary of identification/division. For "identification," Burke tells us, "is compensatory to division. If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. If men were truly and wholly of one substance, absolute communication would be of man's very essence" (*Rhetoric* 22).[4] (Such, alas, is the consequence of our scattering into nations and languages, as projected mythically in Babel.) Later in his analysis, Burke offers what he calls "perhaps the simplest case of persuasion" (55):

> 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. […] True, the rhetorician may have to change an audience's opinion in one respect; but he can succeed only insofar as he yields to that audience's opinions in other respects. Some of their opinions are needed to support the fulcrum by which he would move other opinions. (Preferably he shares the fixed opinions himself since […] the identifying of himself with his audience will be more effective if it is genuine.) (*Rhetoric* 55–56; emphasis in original)

With this insight, a postclassical, post-Aristotelian "new" rhetoric was born.

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[4]To give Burke's more detailed analysis, rhetoric "considers ways in which individuals are at odds with one another, or become identified with groups more or less at odds with one another" (*Rhetoric* 22). He continues:

> "Why at odds," you may ask, when the titular term is "identification"? Because, to begin with "identification" is, by the same token, though roundabout, to confront the implications of *division*. And so, in the end, men are brought to that most tragically ironic of all divisions, or conflicts, wherein millions of cooperative acts go into preparation for one single destructive act. We refer to that ultimate *disease* of cooperation: *war*. (You will understand war much better if you think of it, not simply as strife come to a head, but rather as a disease, or perversion of communion. Modern war characteristically requires a myriad of constructive acts for each destructive one; before each culminating blast there must be a vast network of interlocking operations, directed communally.) (*Rhetoric* 22; emphasis in original)

Though much of the Aristotelian vocabulary remained, the classical terms would be harnessed to a more complex model of human psychology—particularly in its focus on psychic mechanisms of projection in audience response. In a published lecture, "Rhetoric—Old and New" (1951), Burke offers the following summation:

> If I had to sum up in one word the difference between the "old" rhetoric and a "new" (a rhetoric invigorated by fresh insights which the "new sciences" contributed to the subject), I would reduce it to this: the key term for the old rhetoric was "persuasion" and its stress was upon deliberate design. The key term for the "new" rhetoric would be "identification," which can include a partially "unconscious" factor in appeal. (203)

Burke gives a list of these "new sciences" in anthropology, social psychology, sociology, psychoanalysis, and semantics, adding, "I would also include here psychosomatic medicine, concerned as it is with ways in which our very physiques are led to take on attitudes in keeping with the rhetoric or persuasive aspects of ideas—attitudes of such conviction that they are worked into the very set of nerves, muscles, and organs" ("Old and New" 203).[5] Though his description of "psychosomatic medicine" sounds primitive in comparison with neuroscience today, such a passage peers into our own medicalized, behaviorist present. In passages such as these, Burke announces a seismic shift in rhetorical theory, one reflecting postwar/postmodern discursive practice: The logos-grounded "good reasons" representative of an age of Enlightenment would yield to a range of psycho-physiological pressures, largely irrational and often unconscious in their workings. It's Burke who taught us to speak, not simply of (conscious) rhetorical *performance* or "design," but also of (unconscious) rhetorical *behavior*.

With this shift from persuasion to identification, the 20th century effectively splits in half rhetorically, transiting from the high-modernist "age of reason"—an age, quintessentially, of logos—into our own post-Holocaust, postmodernist age of ethos (Baumlin and Meyer, "Positioning" 21).[6] Still, the range of emerging "sciences" that Burke lists will effectively create their own binary, in that the social sciences come to privilege explanations of culture and the group, while schools of psychology privilege intrapersonal components of self-identity. This intra/interpersonal binary will drive subsequent ethos studies: Seemingly with each subsequent decade, rhetorical theorists

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[5]It's apt that Burke includes psychoanalysis among the "new sciences" impinging upon postmodern rhetoric, since his own system draws heavily on Freudian concepts (see Alcorn; Davis; Baumlin and Baumlin, "Psyche/Logos"). Note that Burke himself is not influenced by Rogers in any direct way; it's his followers—Booth above all—who learn to view Burkean identification through the lens of Rogerian empathy.

Though largely interchangeable and mutually-reinforcing, Richards's "understanding," Burke's "identification," and Rogers's "empathetic listening" have subtly different stresses, as mapped within the Aristotelian *pisteis*: Whereas understanding looks toward logos, identification looks toward ethos and empathy (as the term itself implies) looks toward pathos.

[6]Whereas the classical-Aristotelian model grounds persuasion in logos or conscious rational argument, Burkean identification rests in an audience's largely unconscious projection of trust and authority upon the speaker. Hence, it's not the speech (logos) but rather *the speaker* (ethos) that drives the Burkean model. Again, I quote Burke: "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" (*Rhetoric* 55; emphasis in original). The audience thus sees *its own* face, *its own* values, *its own* fears and desires reflected in the words and projected image of the rhetor. (None of this, needless to say, pertains strictly to logos.)

will discover and apply new models of psychology, which cultural theorists will then set out to adapt and/or critique. The following paragraphs survey these Burke-inspired pendulum-swings in contemporary argument and ethos studies.

From Burke to Rogers (and Back)

> Real communication occurs, […] when we listen with understanding.
> —Carl Rogers, "Communication: Its Blocking and Its Facilitation" (107)

> Everyone who talks about the threat of war faces two conflicting rhetorical temptations: to unite "insiders" for action against an enemy, or to invite "outsiders" to productive discussion. The drive for violent victory now does include a hope for future peace, but the drive for discussion—call it diplomacy, negotiation, genuine listening to the enemy—depends on hope for peace now. Ever since the disaster of September 11, 2001, we have been flooded with the first kind of rhetoric […].
> Though correcting misunderstanding through genuine listening cannot always produce reconciliation, it is the only alternative to violence or cowardly retreat from the scene.
> —Wayne C. Booth, "The Rhetoric of War and Reconciliation" (1, 3)

In "Communication: Its Blocking and Its Facilitation"—a conference paper first published in 1951—Rogers made bold to declare "the whole task of psychotherapy" as a "task of dealing with a failure in communication" (106). He elaborates: "The task of psychotherapy is to help the person achieve, through a special relationship with a therapist, good communication within himself. Once this is achieved he can communicate more freely and effectively with others. We may say then that psychotherapy is good communication, within and between men" (106). "The major barrier to mutual interpersonal communication," Rogers adds, "is our very natural tendency to judge, to evaluate, to approve or disapprove, the statement of the other person, or the other group" (106). "[I]s there any way of solving this problem?" he asks rhetorically (107). His answer follows: "Real communication occurs, and this evaluative tendency is avoided, when we listen with understanding. What does this mean? It *means to see the expressed idea and attitude from the other person's point of view, to sense how it feels to him, to achieve his frame of reference in regard to the thing he is talking about*" (107; emphasis in original). Rogers's success as a therapist rests in this insight. He continues:

> If I can listen to what he can tell me, if I can understand how it seems to him, if I can see its personal meaning for him, if I can sense the emotional flavor which it has for him, then I will be releasing potent forces of change in him. If I can really understand how he hates his father, or hates the university, or hates communists— if I can catch the flavor of his fear of insanity, or his fear of atom bombs, or of Russia—it will be of the greatest help to him in altering those very hatreds and fears […]. We know from our research that such empathetic understanding— understanding *with* a person, not *about* him—is such an effective approach that it can bring about major changes in personality. (107; emphasis in original)

Delivered in 1951, it's Cold War anxieties that this lecture seeks to allay.

However fruitful to psychotherapy, Rogers's paper would have remained largely unknown among discourse theorists, were it not for the 1970 publication of the textbook, *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*, by Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike—a monumental text that would shape rhetorical theory and inform composition pedagogy for the next two decades. As Doug Brent writes in appraising the influence of this text, "the overriding impulse of rhetoric in the 60s, […] was to create a rhetoric of social cooperation. This was not a new goal of rhetoric. It is the goal that Kenneth Burke set in *A Rhetoric of Motives* [43] when he defined rhetoric as 'the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols'" (454).[7] As Brent suggests, Young, Becker, and Pike found in Rogerianism a component of the "new" rhetoric sought by Burke:

> As Young, Becker, and Pike put it, "as a result of rapid and mass means of communication and transportation, our world is becoming smaller, and all of us are learning to become citizens of the world, confronting people whose beliefs are radically different from our own and with whom we must learn to live" (8). Thus the human race has begun to resemble the "state of Babel after the Fall"— an image that Young, Becker, and Pike borrow from Burke to use in their first chapter. It was this increasing awareness that other people have not only different opinions but entirely different *systems* of opinions, different worldviews, that impelled Young, Becker, and Pike to look for new methods of bridging gaps between people.
>
> This, then, was the rhetorical climate in which Young, Becker, and Pike sought to create a new rhetoric designed "to induce changes that will result in greater cooperation among men" [223]. (Brent 454)

To illustrate the troubled public discourse of the 1960s and 70s, we turn next to Wayne C. Booth's writings, particularly his *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent* (1974).[8]

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[7]More than define rhetoric, this same symbol-use lies at the heart of our humanness. In *Language as Symbolic Action* (1968), Burke defines us as follows:

> Man is the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal, inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative), separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making, goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by the sense of order), and rotten with perfection. (16)

As Burke's 1968 book title suggests, language does more than "communicate facts" or states of being; rather, by means of its inherently symbolic nature, language acts upon audiences, serving as an inducement to cooperation. Language "does something," in other words, and what it "does" is move or dispose us collectively toward action-in-the-world. In a nonsocial, nonmoral materialist sense, the world merely "is." As a symbol-using animal, the human creature reshapes (or "reorders") the world, transforming "what is" into (presumably) "what ought to be." (As to our being "moralized by the negative," observe the Judeo-Christian Ten Commandments, with its Thou Shalt Nots.) And if we're "rotten with perfection," as Burke writes, it's because our rage for hierarchy and order reaches beyond "mere" cooperation. Within the realm of the social—which, for Burke, equates with the realm of the symbolic—we become "symbol-misusing" animals when our rhetoric turns moralizingly authoritarian, coercive, antisocial, and ultimately inhumane.

[8]See also Booth's *Now Don't Try to Reason with Me: Essays and Ironies for a Credulous Age* (1970). (For an analysis of Booth's decades-long engagements with Burke, see Rood.) In *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric* (2004), his last major work, Booth offers terms of his own coinage, each affirming his commitment to a rhetoric grounded in mutual, empathetic "understanding":

> Rhetoric: The whole range of arts not only of persuasion but also of producing or reducing misunderstanding.

Committed to a rationalist "philosophy of good reasons," Booth (1921–2005) sought to restore dialogue in a time of political unrest fueled by American military involvement in Vietnam. Redefining persuasion as "mutual inquiry or exploration" (*Modern Dogma* 137), Booth's "rhetoric of assent" aims not at the refutation of opposing views but at the discovery and affirmation of sharable common ground. He writes, "not only do we talk and write and create art and mathematical systems and act as if we shared them: we really do share them, sometimes. Sometimes we understand each other" (113). Though stridently logos-centric in emphasis, still there's a germ of empathy in Booth's system, in that we "infer other human beings' states of mind from symbolic clues" (114).[9] As a community marked by its diversity of values and beliefs, we needed to relearn rhetoric as an art *of listening*, as well as of speech.

Whereas Booth identified the problem, Carl Rogers (1902–1987) provided a systematic solution, his method of client-centered psychology transformed from Rogerian therapy into Rogerian argument. In the Introduction to *Modern Dogma*, Booth acknowledges the influence of Rogers on his system, specifically in supplying a "psychology of assent" (xvi).[10] As to the evolution of Rogerian therapy into Rogerian rhetoric, Booth acknowledges Young, Becker, and Pike's *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*: In a footnote, Booth writes, "Young, Becker, and Pike are, so far as I know, the

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Listening-rhetoric (LR): The whole range of communicative arts for reducing misunderstanding by paying full attention to opposing views.

Rhetrickery: The whole range of shoddy, dishonest communicative arts producing misunderstanding—along with other harmful results. [...]

Rhetorology: The deepest form of LR: the systematic probing for "common ground." (10-11)

[9]Indeed, "the deepest of all human values," writes Booth near the end of his life, is "understanding—sympathetic, serious listening to others" (*My Many Selves* 133).

Marco Caracciolo and Karin Kukkonen offer a brief sociolinguistic history of the two interrelated pathos-terms, empathy and sympathy:

The term "empathy" was coined in 1909 as a translation of the German "Einfühlung," a key notion in the aesthetic theories developed by German philosophers Robert Vischer and Theodor Lipps [...]. In Lipps's account, empathy was "understood as a phenomenon of 'inner imitation,' where my mind mirrors the mental activities or experiences of another person based on the observation of his bodily activities or facial expressions" [...]. In this philosophical usage, empathy is [fundamentally] a "simulation" mechanism. [...] Only later on, in the second half of the twentieth century, did empathy enter the vocabulary of scientific—and particularly social—psychology, but with a significant semantic shift: empathy came to be seen as the underlying cause of altruistic behavior, and it was conflated with "sympathy" or feeling compassion for another human being. (75)

As mapped within the Aristotelian *pisteis*, Booth's (and, before him, I.A. Richards's) "understanding," Burke's "identification," and Roger's "empathy" have subtly different stresses: Whereas understanding looks directly toward logos and identification toward ethos, empathy (as the term itself implies) looks toward pathos.

[10]Quoting from Roger's 1951 essay (106–07), Booth describes Rogerian therapy as a rhetoric in itself:

Rogers tells us in effect that the supreme *ought* is to pass no judgments until we have taken in the point of view of the other man, whether he is a patient or an actual opponent. Rogers sees the "whole task of psychotherapy" as dealing with a failure in communication, a failure both within the patient and between him and the world. And he sees the therapist's essential task as subordinating his own feelings and evaluations in order to listen with understanding. Only when he can prove that he understands the patient's position as well as the patient himself (which includes his capacity to feel with him) can he hope to give real help in "altering the basic personality structure" of the patient—or of the rhetorical opponent. (*Modern Dogma* xvi; emphasis in original)

only writers on rhetoric who have seen the relevance of Rogers to new rhetorical views" (xvii). This would soon change.

In *A Way of Being* (1980), a retrospective on his career and methods, Rogers seeks to distinguish his model of "active" or "empathetic listening" from identification: "Empathy, or being empathetic, is to perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with the components and meanings which pertain thereto as if one were the person, but without ever losing the 'as if' condition" (140). With apparent reference to Burke, he adds: "If this 'as if' quality is lost, then the state is one of identification" (140–41). To the extent that identification functions *as a projective tendency* in audiences, Rogers's point is taken. It's in Burke's notion of consubstantiality that an "'as if' condition" is maintained:

> A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he may *identify himself* with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes they are, or is persuaded to believe so.
>
> Here are ambiguities of substance. If being identified with B, A is "substantially one" with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another. (*Rhetoric* 20–21; emphasis in original)

Dennis A. Lynch is more emphatic on this point: While the term "empathy" is not used by Burke,

> […] its function stands forth clearly in his definitions, as well as in his own motives to rhetoricize the scene of social action. What Burke goes on to call the 'conditions of identification or consubstantiality in general,' for instance, are precisely the conditions of empathy, for they involve, as Burke said above, the bodily effort to enter, through 'speech, gesture, tonality,' into another's ways of being or life-world [*Rhetoric* 55]. (Lynch 6)

By the mid-1970s, the vocabularies of Burkean identification and Rogerian understanding had intermingled with other rhetorical-intellectual movements, including expressivist and existentialist models of communication.[11] The glue, as it were, that held these strands together was a commitment to "empathetic understanding" as an aim of

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[11]For an existentialist model, see Halloran; for a fusion of existentialism and expressivism, see Corder ("Argument"). Throughout this present survey, the question of self-identity—a question foundational to existential phenomenology as well as to psychology—remains a point of contention. As the second part of this double essay demonstrates, both empathy and its abjection-opposite have been described within diverse rhetorical/cultural/social/ psychological/physiological models, some (like Rogerianism) grounded in conscious agency and intentionality, others in unconscious behavioral response. I have no interest in collapsing these many terms and traditions into one "grand narrative" or system; my aim, here, is to explore Burke's continuing presence within several evolving strands of postclassical theory and to show where theory currently stands in explaining/critiquing/directing contemporary discourse.

I should add that this present survey is far from comprehensive. The authors that I cite here and in Part 2—Halloran and Corder, Susan C. Jarratt and Nedra Reynolds, Marco Caracciolo and Karin Kukkonen, Julia Kristeva and Georges Bataille, Maggie Hennefeld and Nicholas Sammond—represent a broad range of disciplines, methods, and commitments. For broader discussions of post-Burkean/postmodern developments in ethotic argument, see Barnet; Brent; Baumlin and Baumlin (*Ethos*); Baumlin and Meyer (*Histories of Ethos*); Condit; Davis; Lynch; Norton; Teich.

rhetoric—a commitment that would impinge on the ethos, ethics, sociology, and psychology of discourse. It would do so by redescribing rhetoric, not as an act of verbal domination, but one of vulnerability—*of the speaker put at risk* in seeking mutual understanding.

S. Michael Halloran's essay, "On the End of Rhetoric, Classical and Modern" (1975), was seminal in this regard. Our time is one "of fragmentation and isolation," Halloran observes, a time when argument can succeed only by the degree to which a speaker "is willing and able to make his world open to the other," thus risking "self and world by a rigorous and open articulation of them in the presence of the other" (627–28). Rather than maintain the speaker's expertise, power, or superiority over an audience, this model grounds ethos in the equal co-presence of self and other. In "Varieties of Ethical Argument" (1978)—an essay of similar influence—Jim W. Corder writes, poignantly, that we are "apart from each other,"

> and it may be, as Burke said, that the only thing we have in common is our separateness. Distances open between us. We keep trying to enter their world or bring them to ours. Often we fail, but we keep trying. The trouble is that our speaking-forth—the primary need and issue of any age—is complex, confused, and messy, and often creates as many problems as it solves. Language is our way of composing ourselves. It is our first and last line of defense, and we are vulnerable in each line. (2)

Thus Corder and Halloran affirm the risk facing speakers and audiences alike, as well as the need for developing a commodious discourse—one whose language opens a space, as it were, for the co-presence of self and other, as "we keep trying to enter their world or bring them into ours." Existentialist at its core, such a model turns ethotic argument into a collaboration, raising the audience up to an equal participant, valuing ethical self-revelation and communication over persuasion, demystifying charismatic authority, and seeking health and welfare above all.[12]

Elaborating on this thesis, Corder published his best known and most influential text, "Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love" (1985):

> Argument is emergence toward the other. That requires a readiness to testify to an identity that is always emerging, a willingness to dramatize one's narrative in progress before the other; it calls for an untiring stretch toward the other, a reach toward enfolding the other. It is a risky revelation of the self, for the arguer is asking for an acknowledgment of his or her identity, is asking for a witness from the other. (26)

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[12]This paragraph has been revised from my previous discussion, "Ethos" (276). If I may be allowed a personal reference, it's in the mid-1980s (with Corder as a colleague, mentor, and occasional co-author) that I joined the Burkean conversation, publishing on the subjects of ethos, the psychology of rhetoric, the rhetoric of empathy, and the "ethic of care." Premised in game theory and a postmodern psychology of the self-in-process—intellectual convictions to which I remain committed—my essay, "Persuasion, Rogerian Rhetoric, and Imaginative Play" (1987) gained modest attention, reprinted in manuals of research and teaching in argument (Teich); it was also critiqued—and understandably so—by Phyllis Lassner (230), whom I quote below.

And yet, perhaps paradoxically, Corder begins his essay by acknowledging a weakness in Rogerian argument. As a species, we resist threats to self-identity (or, as Corder puts it below, to our "narratives"):

> As for the texts that propose patterns of Rogerian arguments, I'd say that the recommended designs are altogether commendable and will sometimes work, so long as the argument isn't crucial to the nature of the narratives involved. Where arguments entail identity, the presentation of "a statement of how the opponent's position would benefit if he were to adopt elements of the writer's position" is about as efficacious as storming Hell with a bucket of water or trying to hide the glories of Heaven with a torn curtain. If I cannot accept the identity of the other, his kindness in offering me benefits will be of no avail. As for offering a "proposal for resolving the issue in a way that injures neither party," I'd say that in the arguments that grip us most tightly, we do injure the other, or the other injures us, or we seem about to injure each other, except we take the tenderest, strongest care. […]
>
> I am suggesting that the arguments most significant to us are just where threat occurs and continues, just where emotions and differences do not get calmly talked away, just where we are plunged into that flushed, feverish, quaky, shaky, angry, scared, hurt, shocked, disappointed, alarmed, outraged, even terrified condition I spoke of a little earlier. Then what do we do? (22)

What do we do, indeed?

A Cultural Critique

> When you are with Athenians, it's easy to praise Athenians, but not when you are with Lacedaemonians.
> —Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (55)

> At its best, serious rhetoric pursues understanding of the kind that results only when there is genuine listening to the opponent's position.
> —Wayne C. Booth, "The Rhetoric of War and Reconciliation" (9)

> I hated it. The Rogerian model is male, masculinist, and denialist. It leaves no space to be righteous with anger. It denies that women have a right to be angry at being left out of most methods of persuasion and that anger is worthwhile listening to, even if it's threatening, because for women to be recognized, everyone needs to know how they feel.
> —A student in a "Women in Writing" course, quoted in Phyllis Lassner, "Feminist Responses to Rogerian Argument" (407)

As the 1980s turned to the 90s, the rhetoric of empathy—grounded in Burkean identification conjoined to Roger's "psychology of assent"—gave way to a rhetoric (and, more specifically, to an ethotics) of cultural difference. In "Rhetorics of Proximity" (1998), Dennis A. Lynch makes note of this shift:

> Rhetoric, we learned from modern theorists, cannot proceed without empathy— or if it does, it is sure to fail. Douglas Walton calls empathy "the basis of all persuasive argumentation" (255) […]. Empathy is both an attitude and a practice: it attunes our minds to the needs of others; it permits people who are arguing to

discover, not just premises, but premises that work (in Walton's terms, "presumptive conclusions concerning your respondent's commitments in a dialogue," [255]); it also generates a social climate that is conducive to the long-term health of rhetorical practices.

Kenneth Burke perhaps most clearly anticipated this turn toward empathy in the new rhetorics when he redefined the aim of rhetoric, persuasion, in terms of identification […].

And yet in recent years empathy has been scrutinized, critiqued, and all but abandoned by many rhetorical theorists, especially by those theorists whose work fits within poststructuralist, postcolonial, or postmodern social theories (Jarratt, Faigley, McKerrow). Starting with the collapse of Rogerian rhetoric—built as it was on the concept of empathy—empathy more and more has seemed weak, epistemologically flawed, and politically suspicious. James Zappen, Lisa Ede, Jim Corder, and, more recently, Phyllis Lassner have argued that Rogerian rhetoric is complicit in a depoliticizing culture of self-realization and fails to acknowledge the "double bind" in which "active listening" puts "marginalized people" [Lassner 230]. (Lynch 6)

Part of the problem stems from the "new" rhetoric's continued, seemingly unreflective complicity in Enlightenment rationalism. As Janice Norton observes, "Burke's 'Definition' [of Man] unwittingly evacuates the body of corporeal substance, replacing it with an abstract universal: man, woman, child—their bodies are all interchangeable" (158). Thus, "Burke's shift of the master term for rhetoric from persuasion to identification ignores morphology and culture, holding onto the notion that fundamentally women's bodies can be understood by comparison to men's bodies and require no further theorizing" (Norton 158).[13]

In their own influential essay, "The Splitting Image: Contemporary Feminisms and the Ethics of *êthos*" (1994), Susan C. Jarratt and Nedra Reynolds critique the disembodied "Enlightenment subject" with reference to positionality, "a place from which values are interpreted and constructed rather than as a locus of an already determined set of values" (47; 50). They add, "It is precisely the concept of *êthos* in rhetoric that theorizes the positionality inherent in rhetoric—the speaker having been created at a particular site within the contingencies of history and geography" (47). By its means, "we acknowledge and take responsibility for our positions in asymmetrical social structures such as gender, class, and race" (50). Indeed, it's the asymmetry within power structures that "puts the question" to Rogerian models. As Lynch writes,

Those who start from positions of privilege seem to have no clear motivation to empathize with others less fortunate, at least motivation that is in line with "their" interests, while those who start from positions of relative disadvantage only stand to lose more ground by giving ground—through empathy—to their opposition. The social field is not even, and, given this critique, the call to empathize can

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[13]"One direction this theorizing can take," Lynch adds, "is to rethink Burke's definition of 'Man' and 'learn to know ourselves as Diverse Bodies That Learn Many Languages' [Condit 279]. New rhetorics—postmodern, postcolonial rhetorics—[…] must keep the body squarely at the center of rhetorical exchange" (Lynch 10). See Celeste Condit's "Post-Burke: Transcending the Sub-stance of Dramatism" (1992). This heightened emphasis upon "embodiment" will drive Part 2 of this double essay.

suddenly seem inadequate, as if hidden in that call were the bound-to-fail message, "Just listen, and in time the dynamics of power will flatten themselves out." (9)

This cultural critique of preceding models proves necessary, inevitable, and salutary, in that notions of positionality bring the *entire* Burkean model—that is, the interrelation and exchanges between identification and division—into play, with "division" supplemented by (or, perhaps, understood as) "cultural difference." Without acknowledging this difference, any rhetoric grounded in "empathetic understanding" proves naïve, largely ineffectual, and potentially abusive.

Embraced by feminist, African American, and postcolonial criticism among other discourses, the rhetorics of positionality and "embodiment" have shaped ethos studies well into the 21st century. "Clothed" and visible in its ethotic "markers of identity" (Baumlin and Meyer, "Positioning" 1), the embodied, culturally-situated speaker has at last replaced the disembodied rational agent as the subject of rhetoric. Empathy remains a focus of contemporary theory.[14] However, its models of psychology have evolved, as has our current understanding of the roles empathy plays in the construction (and performance) of ethos. Indeed, the last two decades having brought even deeper levels of embodiment—specifically, the cognitive-affective functions charted in neuroscience—into consideration. The history that I've charted so far is standard academic fare. In contrast, the insights of neuroscience remain only partially assimilated by theory, and these have strong implications for the study (and teaching) of the ethics, ethotics, and practice of rhetoric. A new field—call it neurorhetoric (Gruber)—is upon us, one that provides a unique map of the post-Burkean model explored thus far. By its means, the Burkean vocabulary will again be reinvented: this time, within the neuropsychological processes separating empathy from abjection.

With the turn of the 21st century, narrative studies have given reason to revisit empathy as a function of rhetoric. It will be a rhetoric grounded, not in logos nor even in ethos entirely, but in the effects of storytelling—in a union of ethos with the pathos-effects of mythos. And it will be a rhetoric grounded, not in humanist models of

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[14]In her latest work, Condit harnesses Burkean rhetoric to a Deleuzian-inspired posthumanism: "'All living things are critics,' Kenneth Burke told us, and he noted that humans, in specific, are *bodies that learn languages*" [Burke, *Permanence* 5] (Condit, "Contemporary" 368; emphasis added). With that insight, Condit articulates a distinctively feminist practice which she terms "empathic listening," one sensitive to the multeity of languages encoded within all life, human and animal: "Within the embodied practice of empathic listening, a biosymbolic critic might seek for better life-scripts for human beings. The choices are all situated, constrained, even overdetermined. They are all rhetorical, but all living things are coders, and all the codes of living things are relevant to rhetorical critics" (371).

By imagining the (feminist) "critic as empath," Condit reaffirms the role of active, empathic *listening* even—and, indeed, especially—within asymmetries of power. For the "subaltern" voices of feminism, race, and postcolonialism demand and deserve a witness, which the empathic critic seeks to provide. Condit describes the practice:

> An empathic study does not seek to develop a single, tightly held position. Neither does it presume a universal stance or even a Hegelian dialectic of synthesis. Instead, the critic begins with a modicum of openness and uncertainty and simply tries to lend as empathic an ear as s/he possibly can to multiple voices. The goal is not to promote one "side" of the discourse over another, nor to synthesize, though either of those may sometimes be the product. The goal is to construct discourses one can best embody (whether at the social or individual scale). ("Contemporary" 370)

psychotherapy, but in behaviorist-affective models of neuroscience. With this forecast of the thesis fueling Part 2, the first part of this double essay comes to an end.

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Empathy and Abjection after Burke (2): Embodied Narrative and the Resistance against Persuasion

James S. Baumlin | Missouri State University
http://ellids.com/archives/2023/11/5.4-Baumlin-2.pdf

Abstract | This present essay continues a two-part survey devoted to Kenneth Burke's agonistic model of rhetoric—specifically, its binary of identification/division among speakers and audiences—and its permutations throughout late-20th century theory.[1] Like Part 1, Part 2 of this double essay asks, *What is it in rhetoric that leads it to succeed, or fail, as an instrument of persuasion?*

The latest advances in cognitive science have rhetorical implications, in that the neurophysiological effects of language (written as well as spoken) can be mapped with seeming precision via the brain's "mirror neuron system." This discovery reinforces the role of empathy in contemporary models of "embodied narrative." Yet a further discovery, the neurophysiological basis of abjection—that is, of visceral responses of rejection, expulsion, and disgust (Kristeva)—reinforces, *in some audiences on some occasions*, one's strength of resistance to opposing discourses. It seems that we must learn to speak of persuasion, not as a change of mind, but as a change of brain chemistry. One's politics, it turns out, often correlates to specific personality traits, which are themselves "hardwired" into individuals' brain functions where cognitive-affective "triggers" of empathy dominate in some, of abjection in others. It's not an empathetic "listening-rhetoric" (Booth) so much as a rhetoric-of-resistance that dominates in American popular/political culture. This insight undergirds the political philosophy of "agonistic pluralism" (Mouffe), an emerging theory in politics and the social sciences; Burkean in implication, it's a theory custom-made for contemporary models of rhetoric.

Returning to ethical/ethotic themes introduced in Part 1, this present essay ends with a meditation on public discourse in the United States today.

Keywords | Abjection, Embodied Narrative, Empathy, Ethos, Identification, Mirror Neurons, "Listening-Rhetoric," Neurorhetoric, Rogerian Argument, Wayne C. Booth, Kenneth Burke, Marco Caracciolo and Karin Kukkonen, Julia Kristeva, Carl Rogers

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[1] See my essay, "Empathy and Abjection After Burke (1): On the Rise and Fall of 'Listening-Rhetorics,' 1936–2023," included in this issue of *LLIDS*.

> By declaring narrative—mythos, *not* logos—the foundational activity of human social discourse, we seek to ground postmodern ethos in storytelling. There are more components to ethos than one's storytelling; [Aristotle's] *Rhetoric* convinces us of that. But story is the glue that holds them all together.
>
> Action, agency, time, and place—the stuff of narrative—are ethotic building blocks. A singular moment in time, often one of trauma or tragedy, can come to dominate the narrative—hence, the identity—of a person, or of a people. When a specific marker of identity is embedded within an action or event-in-time, one's storytelling is reshaped accordingly: A speaker can affirm and commemorate, defend and advocate, repair and seek justice, or seek transcendence (seek, that is, to move beyond the self-defining marker). A psychosocial model of ethos as "self in process" assumes that ethos can, in fact, evolve or change over time. In this sense, ethotic discourse rests in telling and retelling, in making appeals to the future as well as in acknowledging the past.
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> —James S. Baumlin and Craig A. Meyer, "Positioning Ethos in/for the Twenty-First Century" (16)

By focusing on the logos-aspect of argument, the classical-Aristotelian model largely ignores the fact that persuasion affects, not a change of mind merely, but a change in self-image: that is, in ethos. The epigraph quoted above presents a hopeful picture of the healing, reconciling powers of narrative; I still place some hope in that possibility. Still, recent research suggests a greater complexity within the inner workings of narrative, particularly in its isomorphism with brain structures. Immersed in time, place, and culture, our actions-in-the-world (in effect, our "worldliness") bind ethos strongly to narrative, and *vice versa*. That said, it's the neurophysiological triggers of *embodied* narrative—affects tied not to cultural immersion simply, but to evolutionary biology more deeply—that account for the hold ethotic discourse has on our species, to a considerable extent governing our social-political behaviors.

Whereas Burke's *Rhetoric of Motives* (1950) drew on Freud for its group psychology, later writers—including Wayne C. Booth and the trio of Richard Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike—turned to the client-centered therapy of Carl Rogers. By translating Burkean identification into "empathetic understanding" (Rogers), Anglo-American theorists from the 1960s through the 1990s sought to fashion a "new" rhetoric, premised not in persuasion but in "mutual assent." It was to be a "listening-rhetoric" (Booth), one that sought to reduce conflict and induce cooperation among speakers and audiences. By the 1990s, however, Rogerian modes of argument had fallen under criticism precisely for their inability (or failure) to confront the agonistic cultural/political/ideological *differences* separating speakers and audiences. As Burke declared, "identification" entails "division," and *vice versa* (*Rhetoric* 22): From a

Burkean perspective, the varieties of Rogerian argument erred in downplaying or ignoring half of rhetoric's terrain.

By the first decade of the 21ˢᵗ century, rhetorical theory had evolved yet further in its understanding of both audience psychology and "embodied cognition." To the humanist models of Freud and Rogers, rhetoric could now add the material-behaviorist models grounded in neuroscience. It's here in contemporary theory that this present essay begins, picking up where the previous survey had left off. In turning to cognitive science, this present essay offers further proof of the Burkean binary. "Empathetic understanding" remains an aim of 21ˢᵗ century rhetoric, but its workings will be explained in terms of brain chemistry. And the failure of this "understanding"—which marks the failure of rhetoric as an instrument of social cohesion—will be charted within brain chemistry, as well.

The cross-fertilizing of such disciplines as cognitive science and rhetorical narratology is teaching us ways to observe—and, important for rhetorical theory, to predict—the real (if largely unconscious) effects that narrated action, gesture, and affect have on audiences. I would argue that this hybridization of disciplines is already transforming ethos studies. Whereas the postmodern self-in-process is, by definition, open to change, current models of psychology point to mechanisms of defense that work to resist change—in effect, to resist persuasion.[2] This is not to say that persuasion—ethotically, the effecting of a change of mind leading to change in self-image (which alters the unfolding narrative of one's self-making)—has become impossible. But paragraphs following will point to several of the challenges (and the causes thereof). Empathy can tell only part of the story, though it's the part we begin with.

I am following Marco Caracciolo and Karin Kukkonen's summary of research in *With Bodies: Narrative Theory and Embodied Cognition* (2021). Though narrative fiction—specifically, a reader's identification with literary characters—remains their primary focus, Caracciolo and Kukkonen assert that "all narratives—including stories as trivial as an account of an ordinary day at work—are deeply embodied in that they tap into a repertoire of embodied interactions with the world (through situation models, motor resonance, and so on)" (15). By "embodiment," they refer "primarily to the way

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[2]As a starting point for this outline of neurorhetoric, I give the older, Freudian-humanist model informing previous discussions: "We assume that self-concepts, like the stories that undergird them, require some stability (that is, some predictability and replicability in behavior)," which makes them at the same time "self-protective and inherently resistant to change" (Baumlin and Meyer, "Positioning" 18). With reason, then, Marshal C. Alcorn defines rhetoric as a "strategy for changing self-organization" (14). And, due to "the inner dynamics of self-division—the ability to liberate repressed voices, to activate self-conflict, to reshape the linguistic form of self-components" (Alcorn 26)—the most potent force of change comes as a mode of *self-persuasion*. As Alcorn notes, "Self-persuasion comes not from the outside, as an external authority goading people to accept certain values, *but from the inside*, as an internal voice (both an agent and an expression of self-change) reorganizing relationships among self-components" (26; emphasis added).

It's the "inside" of self-persuasion (and of its cognitive-affective opposite, self-protective resistance) that paragraphs following will explore; and, demonstrably, it's an "inside" that's embedded more deeply within the nervous system than Burke, or Booth, or Rogers—or I myself (or any of my previous co-authors) could have anticipated. (See Baumlin, "Ethos"; Baumlin and Baumlin, "Psyche/Logos"; Baumlin and Scisco, "Ethos and its Constitutive Role"; and Baumlin and Meyer, "Positioning.")

in which cognitive processes are shaped by the makeup and sensorimotor possibilities of human bodies" (4). By "situation models," they refer to "unconscious cognitive construals of the situations evoked by a narrative" (6): These, Caracciolo and Kukkonen note, "are created and updated on the fly, as we parse language, and encode features such as the characters' spatial whereabouts, relevant objects in the characters' vicinity, and the nature of the described space (for instance, enclosed vs. open, urban vs. rural, etc.)" (6). In sum, the linguistic comprehension of texts "relies on our bodies through situation models" (34), and the situation models that direct our reading experience "are constructed from 'experiential traces' left by prior embodied interactions with the world" (Caracciolo and Kukkonen 6–7).

In layman's terms, what does all this mean?

We begin with the simplest of definitions, distinguishing empathy from sympathy. Within the classical-Aristotelian vocabulary, both are expressions of pathos, though with different effects. In sympathy, one "feels for" another person or group (or species), as one might experience compassion for another's suffering; in empathy, one "feels with" another, mirroring that person's specific emotional state (joy meeting with joy, grief with grief, and so on). "Mirroring" is the key term here. And more than feeling can be mirrored: Another's actions as well, whether observed visually or constructed/interpreted textually, can create "motor resonances." As a rather obtuse personal example, I find it hard to sit still when watching American football. (My wife finds it harder to sit next to me, given my arm-flailing gyrations.) When the quarterback hands the ball off to a running back, I "run" with him, parts of my body contorting as the runner changes direction, evading tacklers. I can't help it: My body mirrors what the eye sees unfolding on the playing field. Caracciolo and Kukkonen explain: "[W]hen we observe another individual perform a physical action, our own bodies become attuned to, or resonate with, the movement—as the activation of the mirror neuron system suggests" (129). Citing Rolf A. Zwaan and Lawrence J. Taylor, they ascribe this same "resonance effect" to "language understanding as well" (129). That is, "reading action sentences about the movement of specific body parts activates the corresponding areas of the brain" (Caracciolo and Kukkonen 129).[3]

Discovered in the mid-1980s and explored in depth since, the system of mirror neurons is implicated in this ethical/experiential/physiological/phenomenological/psychological/aesthetic "mirroring" effect (Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia; Gallese and Keysers). Located in the brain's premotor cortex (a.k.a. "Broca's Brain"), the system "become[s] activated both when a subject *performs* a physical action and when he or she *observes* another individual perform the same action—hence the apparent 'mirroring'" (Caracciolo and Kukkonen 128; emphasis added). In *Neurorhetoric and the Dynamism of the Neurosciences* (2012), David Robert Gruber elaborates on mirror neurons, their

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[3]See Zwaan and Taylor, "Seeing, Acting, Understanding: Motor Resonance in Language Comprehension" (2006). In situations less frenetic than American football, "motor resonance is, normally, an unconscious response" (Caracciolo and Kukkonen 130). But even texts, when action-driven, can bring motor resonances into our conscious, aesthetic experience of literature: "When a character's embodied actions become foregrounded in a narrative and the focus of readers' attention, motor resonance may tip over into embodied simulation, which is more likely to be experienced at a conscious level" (Caracciolo and Kukkonen 7). See also Hannah Chapelle Wojciehowski and Vittorio Gallese, "How Stories Make Us Feel: Toward an Embodied Narratology" (2011).

location in brain anatomy, and their functioning within "object-understanding": "Although similar mirror-like neurons may exist in other areas of the brain […], mirror neurons have been most extensively studied within the F5 area of the brain, also called Broca's area" (56). He continues:

> By the mid-1990s, it became clear that F5 motor neurons were considered to be a link between hand and eye. Mirror neuron research, for example, seemed to establish that the eye saw what the hand could grasp but that the hand was, in turn, equally involved in the act of seeing since what was seen was, in terms of object-understanding, that which held the capability to be grasped in this way or that way. In other words, these [mirror] neurons appear to respond to the meaning the stimulus conveys to the individual, rather than its sensory aspect, and reacting to a meaning is precisely what one means by understanding (Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia 50). (Gruber 58–59)

Combining "object-" and "action-understanding," the mirror neuron system provides a model of imitation (and, hence, of learning) in virtually all human activity, since "watching another individual do a never-before-seen action—such as a conductor directing an orchestra in a new way—prepare[s] the viewer to repeat that action, to imitate it" (Gruber 60). And emotions—the stuff of empathy—are implicated in mirroring, as well.

In "Mirror Neurons and the Phenomenology of Intersubjectivity" (2006), Dieter Lohmar describes the mirroring of cognitive/emotional states, whereby "we co-feel others' feelings and co-enact their bodily actions without acting" (15). In this manner, "we experience an unavoidable proximity and a cognitively immediate bodily equality" (15). Gruber states the implications:

> These discursive moves to bridge phenomenology and the neurosciences allow, nearly request, the humanities—a set of fields dedicated to understanding human experience—to enter into an exploration of neurobiology, while they simultaneously position the neurosciences as a key explanatory gatekeeper of human experience, integral to a complete knowledge of the human. (74)

It's nothing less than a new field, a neurohumanities, that Gruber projects as the hybrid theoretical/discursive container for ethos studies today.

In "The New 'New': Making a case for Critical Affect Studies" (2008), Jenny Edbauer Rice argues that "non-conscious processes of the human affect may advance rhetorical theory" (Rice, qtd. In Gruber 16). By means of neuroscience, rhetoricians "can consider the way affect transfers back-and-forth in a room through bodily chemicals and brain signals" (Rice, qtd. in Gruber 16). In "Identification: Burke and Freud on Who You Are" (2008), Diane Davis goes further, suggesting that neuroscience gives reason "to completely undo or overturn existing rhetorical theory" (Gruber 17). Summarizing Davis, Gruber writes: "Rhetorical identification should be reconsidered in view of Sigmund Freud's non-representationalist primary identification and in view of new neuroscience

research into mirror neurons, [which] seem to pre-consciously allow direct access to the mind of others by enacting a direct simulation of the observed event" (17).[4]

In applying mirror neurons to ethos studies, I must revisit a point made by Caracciolo and Kukkonen: specifically, the ways that readers imagine or mentally construct the fictive worlds of texts. As Ruth Ronen writes in *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* (1995), "the world reconstructed from a text *always includes more than what is explicitly indicated by the author*" (95; emphasis added). Elaborating on this point, Caracciolo and Kukkonen note that "the reconstruction of an extratextual world is performed by readers, who have a crucial role in bringing narratives to imaginary life. Possible worlds thereby became psychological, rather than logical, constructs" (33). That is, the text supplies linguistic cues that, in turn, create "the mental space into which readers can 'immerse' themselves" (Caracciolo and Kukkonen 26). Such worlds, they add, describe "imaginary constructs *that readers create from the verbal structures* of the literary text, but *that are ultimately independent of these verbal structures*" (26; emphasis added). Hence, "while readers imagine, in a way, the embodied experience of [a literary] character, the mental imagery evoked [in a text] is embodied and not visual, gappy and not complete" (17).

"Gappy and not complete": Let's assume that the ethotic power of all worldly-referential discourse (whether fictive or rhetorical, empathetic or abjected) derives from a cognitive/affective process of embodiment where affect-terms and action verbs provide cues that audiences then expand, imaginatively and emotively, into narrative frames. It wouldn't take much; merely a word or phrase (however abstract) could provide cues that expand into a micronarrative. In Burkean terms, one might say that discourse triggers identification by mirror-imitation, which is cued by language primarily (though visual cues come increasingly to dominate in popular media). With every exhortation, every gestural act of persuasion or dissuasion, every "Do this, don't do that," a speaker projects affect-terms and action verbs that invoke mirror-neuron responses in an audience. These micronarrative effects are (to borrow from Caracciolo and Kukkonen) "gappy and not complete," a mere scattering across texts. But their power, perhaps paradoxically, would lie precisely in the gaps that audiences are habituated to complete by brain activity.[5] By

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[4]As Gruber notes, "Davis [144] seeks to make what Burke termed identification into an always existent physiological condition that the body itself fails to uphold in the conscious withdrawal of identity" (34). He elaborates: "Identification, then, is no longer compensatory to a necessary condition of division between people who are dependent upon a rhetorician to proclaim their unity [Burke, *Rhetoric* 22]; identification is, instead, an underlying reality of the functioning of the human organism" (Gruber 34–35).

As I read her work, Davis's critique of Burke rests in the mirror neuron system's predominantly automatic/unconscious functioning. I accept Davis's analysis as an expansion of Burkean identification, and not as its refutation in any absolute sense. As we've seen, Burke anticipated the role psychology plays in his system. As he writes in "Rhetoric—Old and New," "the key term for the 'new' rhetoric would be 'identification,' which can include a partially 'unconscious' factor in appeal" (203). More specifically, Burke sees identification through the lens of Freudian depth psychology (and, hence, as a production of mind—that is, of "imagination"—rather than brain function). To quote Davis directly, "This is why Burke can write in the *Rhetoric* that empathy and sympathy are "'imaginative' identifications" with another's state of mind [Burke 130], that they are affects that one 'individual' *has* in regard to another, imaginative projections based on comparison or analogy" (Davis 132; emphasis in original).

[5]Our identifications are themselves "gappy," as Caracciolo and Kukkonen note: "In empathizing with others, we tend to imagine only some aspects of their overall experience" (76). They continue:

"situation models" and "motor resemblances," an audience fills in the gaps *that lead, albeit unconsciously, to identification*. Such, I would argue, is the Burkean implication of neurorhetoric (or, alternatively, the neurorhetorical implication of Burke).

And what of *division*, the Burkean "other" of empathy and identification? For a personal example, I turn to George Stephanopoulos's 2012 television interview of Rick Santorum, then a Republican candidate for U.S. President. A quick web search led me to an ABC TV News article of February 26, 2012, titled "Rick Santorum: JFK's 1960 Speech Made Me Want to Throw Up." The article begins: **"**2012 GOP presidential hopeful Rick Santorum said today that watching John F. Kennedy's speech to the Baptist ministers in Houston in 1960 made him want to 'throw up.'" Within this one "gappy" sentence, the affect-terms and action verbs ("said," "watching," "made," "want," "throw up") create a striking (if, to me, offensive) mental image. In this micronarrative, relatively few details are given; still, out of verbal cues, the audience constructs the scene and responds affectively—perhaps even physiologically—in turn. Santorum continues, "That makes me throw up *and it should make every American* who [differs] from the president, someone who is now trying to tell people of faith that you will do what the government says, we are going to impose our values on you, not that you can't come to the public square and argue against it" (qtd. in Stephanopoulos; emphasis added). Santorum doubles and triples down on this public declaration of disgust: "To say that people of faith have no role in the public square? *You bet that makes you throw up*," to which Stephanopoulos adds, "Santorum also said he does not believe in an America where the separation of church and state is 'absolute'" (emphasis added).

Some context might help. Had Santorum been elected, he would have become the second Roman Catholic president, John F. Kennedy being the first. Political concerns over JFK's Catholicism—whether he'd place an allegiance to Rome over his duty to the American people—led him to reaffirm the "separation of church and state" enshrined in the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Seemingly more pious, Santorum held no such scruple. I remember the TV interview: I saw it live, and it appalled me, frankly, that he would use such language in describing a president whom I personally admired. I remember thinking something to this effect: "How could another man's reasonable words make him want to puke? Surely he must be trying to score points with his religiously-conservative political base. He must have been joking—exaggerating." Apparently, he was not joking, though I didn't know this at the time. In the light of cognitive science I know better now, since much of the same brain chemistry that is operant in empathy can be implicated in Santorum's expression of disgust—the topic to which I now turn.

There is no need to consider, in our imagination, everything about a person's mental life—and indeed this might be quite difficult. Usually, we only take on the mental states that seem important or relevant in a given context. [There are] several aspects of a person's perspective that we may empathize with: perceptual, when we imagine another's exteroceptive experience of the surrounding environment; somatic, when we share another person's bodily feelings and sensations (e.g., pain, proprioception, or other interoceptive states); emotional, when we bring our emotional responses in line with those of another person; epistemic, when we entertain another person's beliefs about the world; axiological, when we consider another person's values and goals. (76)

On Abjection and "Rhetoric as Resistance"

> In the final analysis, oppressors must be reduced [in number] to sovereignty in its individual form: on the contrary, the oppressed are formed out of the amorphous and immense mass of the wretched population.
> —Georges Bataille, "Abjection and Miserable Forms" (9)

> Distaste for a particular food, of dirt, of refuse of rubbish. Spasms and vomiting which protect me, repulsion and nausea which separate and turn me away from the impure, from the cloaca, from filth. Ignominy of compromise, the in-between of treachery. Shudder of fascination which both leads me there and separates me from it.
> —Julia Kristeva, "Approaching Abjection" (126)

In her "meditation on the dynamics of disgust" (Irish 52), Lacanian psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva returns to a topic first explored by French philosopher, sociologist, and art historian Georges Bataille (1896–1962): abjection—the exclusion (often violent) of all things and conditions antithetical to human life, including material waste, putridity, and necrosis. As Maggie Hennefeld and Nicholas Sammond describe the Kristevan developmental model, "the child, as it learns to identify as a sovereign subject, regards the products of its own body (and the bodies of others)—blood, snot, piss, shit, mucus, sperm, rotting flesh—as vile, disgusting, and in need of suppression, rejection, and regulation" (2). In their loathsomeness, such rejected objects must be "forcefully cast from sight" (Irish 52). This learned self-regulatory behavior will reach deeply into the social-symbolic order, affecting adult attitudes toward ethics, law, economics, and power-relations. As Kristeva writes,

> It is not then an absence of health or cleanliness which makes something abject, but that which perturbs an identity, a system, an order; that which does not respect limits, places or rules. It is the in-between, the ambiguous, the mixed. The traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the rapist without scruple, the killer who claims to save […]. All crime, because it indicates the fragility of the law, is abject, but premeditated crime, sly murder, hypocritical vengeance are still more so because they emphasise this exhibition of legal fragility. (127–28)

The human victim of crime—of physical assault, of political or economic or religious or racial violence or oppression—is themself rendered abject, declared loathsome and deserving of destruction. For strong evidence, Kristeva peers into "the obscure rooms of the museum which is what remains of Auschwitz" (128). She continues: "I see a pile of children's shoes, or something similar, that I have already seen elsewhere, under a Christmas tree for example, some dolls I think they were. The abjection of Nazi crime reaches its apogee when death […] is mixed with what, in my living universe, is supposed to save me from death: childhood and science, amongst other things" (128). Published in 1982, Kristeva's reflection on the Nazi death camp casts a backward glance at Bataille, whose "Abjection and Miserable Forms" (1934) charts the early progress of European fascism. In their assumption of absolute "sovereignty," the authoritarian excludes the ethnically, economically, politically, sexually marginalized, declaring them unclean and removing them from sight.

"The latency of such infantile abhorrence," write Hennefeld and Sammond, "has an irresistible political influence" (2) both in Bataille's time and in our own. In homespun terms, Tracy Dennis-Tiwary explains:

> Evolutionary psychology has long argued that we evolved to experience disgust towards things that could make us sick (rotten meat) or harm us (poisonous plants), *and that we then transformed this physical disgust into the moral and ethical domain*. […] Moral disgust leads us to "expel" the offenders. We want nothing to do with these disgraceful human beings—they are reprehensible, beyond the pale, and beyond our ability to reach an understanding. They are not part of our group, our society, our tribe. They are outsiders or "those people." ("Politics"; emphasis added)

It was a "moral disgust" that Rick Santorum declared in the example given above. We note a double movement in the workings of abjection, its inward expression marked by visceral nausea and disgust, its outward expression by acts (verbal-symbolic, but potentially physically violent) of condemnation, rejection, and expulsion. Objects, images, people, and principles can be condemned and abjected in this way (as Santorum abjected the Constitutional principle of the separation of church and state, which JFK had affirmed).

Reaching beyond Burke's social psychology of scapegoating and Kristeva's Freudian/Lacanian analysis, Peter Hatemi and Rose McDermott turn to neuroscience in their essay, "Disgust and Purity in Democratic Debate" (2012)—published the year of Santorum's failed candidacy for president. Though their argument remains controversial, they work from the thesis that moral judgments are themselves "hardwired" in the brain in ways that "harden" people's value systems, making political preferences (as well as people's responses to moral/social issues) consistent *and predictable*. Before exploring the political implications of Hatemi and McDermott's essay—what we might call, for the nonce, its neuropolitics—we should glance briefly at Gruber's discussion (published too, coincidentally, in 2012):

> In the realm of neuroscientific research, Plailly et al. (2007) showed that the insula—a small nodule tucked deep in the center of the brain—activated with taste and smell, and Krolak-Salmon et al. (2003) showed that the insula activated in monkeys and in humans when the subject felt nauseated. When these observations were coupled with additional studies (Phillips et al. 1997 […]), which previously showed that pictures of disgust on the faces of people could activate the insula, the rationale for theorizing an emotional mirror mechanism was in place. […] Consequently, disgust was theorized to be not so much a rational activity based on inferential or associative cognitive processes (Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia, 2008, p. 182) but was better explained as a process of simulating or mirroring the environment in terms of what a viewing body was coding—or had already experienced—as disgust. (68)

It doesn't surprise that mirror mechanisms of embodiment are engaged in abjection equally as in empathy, nor does it surprise that such mechanisms have a specific brain-mapping.[6]

What I do find surprising, and unsettling, is the way that mirror mechanisms of empathy/abjection provide a map of the current American political divide.[7] Here, typologies of personality impinge upon value systems:

> [W]hile liberals tend to focus on two main aspects of morality—those related to harm/care and fairness/reciprocity—conservatives rely on three additional factors to make judgments, in-group/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity, to those which liberals espouse […]. Specifically, conservatives focus on issues of sanctity and purity, whereas liberals stress the importance of values such as fairness. (Hatemi and McDermott 680)

Intuitively, I can agree with the notion that values of "sanctity and purity" underlay Santorum's declaration of disgust. But Hatemi and McDermott go further, in declaring that "disgust encompasses the cognitive, emotional, and physical properties that are predictably divergent across ideological positions and infuses evaluations of morality along dimensions of purity and sanctity *in conservatives but not in liberals*" (677; emphasis added). They offer, in fact, to measure levels of "disgust sensitivity" (681) in individuals, levels that are regulated not rationally or consciously but neurophysiologically (though, of course, *they can be rationalized* within public debate, popular media, and other forums of moral/political theater). For individuals who self-identify as politically/religiously conservative, high levels of disgust sensitivity are "activated around precisely those issues that [have] evoked purity and sanctity concerns, such as abortion, homosexuality, and gay marriage" (Inbar et al., qtd. in Hatemi and McDermott 681).

If the full implications of Hatemi and McDermott's argument prove valid, then our politics, similarly, are not chosen but are *lived through*—bound to our brain chemistries and embodiments. Given our varying levels of "disgust sensitivity," Hatemi and McDermott write:

> This phenomenon does not result from different preferences or derive from diverse childhood socialization, but represents a truly inherent difference in psychophysiological experience. These physiological differences are similar to those reported by Oxley et al. (2008) in their study showing that conservatives demonstrated a greater physiological response to threat than liberals, *while*

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[6]As Hatemi and McDermott write (citing the same source as Gruber), "research using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) located the origin of disgust in the anterior insular cortex (Phillips et al. 1997)" (678).

[7]Among other sources, Hatemi and McDermott cite Jesse Graham, Jonathan Haidt, and Brian A. Nosek's essay, "Liberals and Conservatives Rely on Different Sets of Moral Foundations" (2009).

There is, coincidentally, a further significance in the year 2012, when Barak Obama was reelected as the first African American president. His election and reelection came, despite attempts (spearheaded by future GOP candidate, Donald J. Trump) to dispute Obama's citizenship. The divisive rhetoric of abjection—aimed specifically at persons of color—intensified with Obama's presidency and hasn't let up since.

leaving open the question of whether ideology or physiology leads the charge. (678; emphasis added)

In sum, "it is not simply that conservatives are more easily disgusted, but rather *people with greater disgust sensitivity*, showing greater neurological and physiological activation when confronting disgusting stimuli, *tend to be more politically conservative*" (Hatemi and McDermott 681; emphasis added). Of a sudden, the rhetorical binary of identification/division collapses into differences in neurophysiology.[8] The Burkean binary holds, but the capacity of rhetoric to negotiate between parties is cast into doubt. What power can empathy wield when abjection proves so powerful, so irrational a force in so large a portion of the electorate? Must we now speak of persuasion, not as a change of mind, but as a change of brain chemistry? More likely, we're discovering the strength of our species' hardwired *resistance* to change and, hence, to rhetoric.[9] What hope is there for democratic process when culturally situated argument, however well-intentioned, *increases* an audience's rage, aggression, and disgust?

Ethos and the Authoritarian Personality

"I'm tired of this separation of church and state junk."
—U.S. Rep. Lauren Boebert (R-Colo.), as reported in the *Washington Post* (June 28, 2022)

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[8]In "Empathy and the Liberal-Conservative Political Divide in the U.S." (2020), Stephen G. Morris argues that empathy, much like abjection, is expressed on a sliding scale. Morris elaborates:

> Iyer's (2010) research is consistent with other studies conducted on voter patterns in the U.S. For instance, the Pew Research Center (2014) observes that those with the strongest liberal and conservative attitudes are the ones most actively involved in politics […]. If the patterns identified by the Pew Research Center hold true for the general U.S. population, therefore, we should expect exactly what Iyer found—namely, that the empathy divide among liberals and conservatives grows in relation to group members' interest in politics. And this finding could help explain the growing political divide among the U.S. electorate insofar as it appears that those with the most empathy (i.e., the far left) and those with the least empathy (i.e., the far right) have increasingly comprised a greater proportion of the U.S. voting population (Pew Research Center, 2014). (11)

Note that Ravi Iyer's psychometric study makes use of the Emotion Reactivity Scale (ERS), "a 21-item self-report measure designed to assess individuals' experience of emotion reactivity" (Nock et al.). Similar self-reporting questionnaires have proliferated in recent years, becoming widely used in clinical settings. (See, e.g., Becerra et al. for the 30-item Perth Emotional Reactivity Scale). Despite the widespread use of such instruments, I confess to some reluctance regarding Morris's claims. His work—like that of Hatemi and McDermott, Hennefeld and Sammond, Caracciolo and Kukkonen, and Gruber—has been peer-reviewed and has its advocates (see Edsall). Lacking expertise in interpreting voter patterns, I leave it to readers to work out their own responses.

I, for one, deplore the divisiveness in political discourse today and—nodding to Booth—wish there were ways to bring all parties to the table as equal discussants. As preeminent values, I affirm diversity, inclusivity, social justice, and enfranchisement. Though I stand center-left in the American political spectrum, I respect "principled conservatism" and believe that democracy thrives in dialogue. I am also aware that the "preeminent values" aforementioned, being expressive of fairness/reciprocity (Hatemi and McDermott 680), place high on an empathy scale and would subject me to abjection—to being named (and scorned as) a "bleeding-heart liberal."

[9]Let me stress a point made earlier, which is that persuasion over such heated topics as abortion-access, LGBTQ rights, and gay marriage cannot hope to succeed by "good reasons" alone: A person deeply committed to "the right to life" has their own self-image invested in that anti-abortion stance. The discursive battleground may begin in logos, but it proceeds through pathos and rests in ethos. Indeed, the "resistance to rhetoric" that I'm describing here reinforces (from a psychological perspective) the self-protective function of ethos (Alcorn; Baumlin and Baumlin).

Returning to the historic moment of Burke's *Attitudes Toward History*, the great political threat to world order was fascism; it was so in 1937, and it remains so in 2023, though its resources have evolved with media technologies and, in the context of American politics, its points of attack now come from within the nation itself. As an Enlightenment, logos-driven mustering of "good reasons," the practices of rhetoric failed back then, just as they are failing now. Divisiveness reigns, with the rituals of identification—of Burkean courtship and consubstantiation—put in service of factionalism. (Perhaps more accurately, we can say that the neuropsychology of divisiveness, being bred in the bone, is now fully awake and empowered.) As research in neuroscience implies, we are more than taught our politics: Apparently, we are born as much as made MAGA, born as much as made Antifa.[10] Much like Burke and Bataille and others who, more than a half-century ago, glimpsed war over the horizon, we must learn to call fascism by its name and bear witness to its abjected victims. We may not persuade those who are resistant, resolved, or simply unconvinced, but we need to tell the story of our own historical moment, to be our own witnesses.

During the Second World War and in its aftermath, a series of books by the likes of Eric Fromm (1900–1980), Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), and Theodor Adorno (1903–1969) offered to profile fascism, not as an ideology simply but as a set of personality traits.[11] Narcissism ("my two greatest assets have been mental stability and being, like, really smart"), delusions of grandeur ("… not smart, but genius, … and a very stable genius at that!"), personality-cultism ("I alone can fix this …"), and paranoia ("witch hunt!") are qualities of the fascist leader irrespective of year or nationality. But the leader's mass of followers needs studying, too. As "a major landmark in political psychology," Adorno's *Authoritarian Personality* (1950) "represents one of the most sophisticated attempts to explore the origins of fascism not merely as a political phenomenon, but as the manifestation of dispositions that lie at the very core of the modern psyche" (Peters 26). As Gordon E. Peters notes, Adorno's team of social psychologists "set out to demonstrate that fascism is something far deeper than a political

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[10]Welcome to the American "culture wars" of 2023. For those unfamiliar with the terms, MAGA—"Make America great Again"—was Trump's 2016 presidential campaign slogan. It has since come to name his most fervent followers (as in the phrase, "extreme MAGA wing of the Republican party"). In the U.S., Antifa names a set of loosely organized, largely autonomous groups committed to resisting fascism (Antifa=anti-fascism), racism, and far-right extremism. The two groups have come to blows, meeting each other's street-protests with counterprotests of their own.

[11]See, e.g., Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* (1941) and Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). In 1950—the publication date of Burke's *Rhetoric of Motives*—Adorno co-authored *The Authoritarian Personality*, which includes the so-called F-Scale ("F" for Fascist), a questionnaire aiming to measure an individual's conformist tendencies and attitudes toward authority. Though its methodology and conclusions have come under question, the F-Scale remains of historical interest. Several abridged/updated versions are available online (see "F-Scale Study," IDRLabs.com). According to the Anesi.com website, the F-Scale seeks to measure the following traits:

> Conventionalism: Conformity to the traditional societal norms and values.
> Authoritarian submission: Passive acceptance of conventional norms and obedience to authorities.
> Authoritarian aggression: Inclination to condemn and punish individuals who refuse to conform.
> Religion and superstition: Inclination to ascribe events to "higher powers."
> Power and "toughness": Admiration of strongmen and of their willingness to use force.
> Anti-intraception: Intraception being a tendency to process external events through feelings and emotion, and anti-intraception is marked by "rejection of all inwardness, of the subjective, the imaginative, the tender-minded, and of self-criticism." (Anesi.com)

form: it correlates with psychological patterns of domination and submission that take shape in earliest childhood and later harden into a syndrome of attitudes regarding hierarchy, power, sexuality, and tradition" (26). He continues:

> [F]ascism appears as the political manifestation of a pre-political disposition. The authoritarian personality does not always turn explicitly fascist; *its politics may remain dormant, only to emerge under certain social-historical conditions.* This thesis offers an important corrective to those who prefer to see fascism as discontinuous with liberal-democratic political culture: fascism is not mysterious, and it is not something otherworldly or rare; it is the modern symptom of a psychopathology that is astonishingly widespread and threatens modern society from within. (Peters 27; emphasis added)

In the passage above, I've highlighted that crucial feature of the fascist personality that is roiling American popular culture today. The campaigning and leadership style of the 45th president of the United States has helped awaken a once dormant but now powerfully influential faction—as much as one third of the electorate—to support a populist, protectionist, anti-globalist political, economic, and religious conservatism. Its enemies (there are many, real and imagined) are atheists, queers, communists—*les Misérables* in Bataille's vocabulary, the raft of immigrants, welfare moms, blacks, Jews, … the usual suspects. Anyone familiar with American politics today knows the rest of this part of the story. It's a hardened *attitude*, resistant to change.[12] It's also a *rhetoric* that I'm describing here, a rhetoric of abjection, one that imposes its divisiveness upon a nation.

In American politics during and since the 2016 presidential campaign, declarations of disgust have filled the airwaves and news media. As Dennis-Tiwary notes, the 45th president "used the word disgust […] referring to Hillary Clinton, Rosie O'Donnell, a lawyer taking a break to pump breast milk for her three-month-old baby, Barney Frank, Madonna, the failure to repeal the Affordable Care Act, and the list goes on" ("Politics"). For more graphic instances of abjection, there's Trump's comparison of illegal immigrants to "Mexican rapists" (Walker) and his description of news anchor Megyn Kelly "bleeding from her wherever" (Addady). In the heat of campaigning, abjection backfired when Hilary Clinton named Trump's MAGA faithful "the deplorables." Affronted, both sides went off to lick their wounds.

Ironically, those who have fallen prey to the seductions of fascism claim victimhood *for themselves*. As Maggie Hennefeld and Nicholas Sammond write,

> While some of us are always already abjected—marginalized because of our race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, nationality—other self-styled minorities, such as men's rights groups and white supremacists, have attempted to co-opt the rallying cries of the truly oppressed, claiming the status of the outcast. Every genuine liberation protest is now echoed by its scandalous inversion, exemplified by perverse chants such as "Blue Lives Matter," "Affirmative Action for White

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[12] As Peters notes, the authors of *Authoritarian Personality* "were hardly confident regarding the prospects for any straightforward 'cure' for those who scored highest on the F-scale. 'Therapeutic possibilities of individual psychology,' they wrote, 'are severely limited'" (Peters 38). Here, too, we can invoke the insights of neuroscience, since we're dealing with an extreme (and, as noted, "hardened") expression *of personality type.*

Applicants," or "Men's Rights Are Human Rights." If social authenticity is a currency that derives from a wounded identity, abjection is its lingua franca. In other words, many people normally associated with the dominant culture are increasingly claiming an abject status in order to adopt, ironize, and undermine the markers of marginalization by which damaging social and power hierarchies have traditionally been administered and enforced. (1–2)

The implications are clear: In our time, "abjection has become central to the negotiation of social identity" (Hennefeld and Sammond 4). So the immediate task, as Hennefeld and Sammond note, is "to distinguish between who gets to be a sovereign ego and who has to be abjected for that ego to feel (temporarily) secure in its own sense of self. Who is being sacrificed on behalf of the nostalgic, ethno-nationalist wager to 'Make America Great Again'?" (4). Much of our ethos-making—that is, our storytelling—will bear witness to abjection, even as it seeks an empathetic response. Still, our higher aim in speaking remains "to open a space" through language "that allows the self to be heard and, saliently, *to be seen*" (Baumlin and Meyer, "Positioning" 17; emphasis in original). Call it self- and community-building through storytelling.

An Ending Without a Conclusion

Classical rhetoric with its modern manifestations and modifications has served and still serves well. We did not, however, persuade ourselves to study war no more; we did not learn how to say love and generosity to others so that they might be realized. We may not get a new rhetoric until there is a new kind of creature. Some risk waits, and we may find that undesirable or unthinkable. We go on.
—Jim W. Corder, "On the Way, Perhaps, to a New Rhetoric, but Not There Yet, and If We Do Get There, There Won't Be There Anymore" (170)

Obviously, the rhetoric of the political world, more complex than ever before, cannot be fully cleaned […]. Conflict will never be totally escaped. Even threats of violent alternatives to LR [listening-rhetoric] will perhaps never disappear, *homo sapiens* being what you and I are. For all we know, the horrors of World War III *will* arrive.
—Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric: The Quest for Effective Communication* (128; emphasis in original)

I looked the man in the eye. I found him to be very straightforward and trustworthy. We had a very good dialogue. I was able to get a sense of his soul; a man deeply committed to his country and the best interests of his country.
—George W. Bush, speaking in June, 2001 of "Putin's 'soul'" (Flashback, NBC News)

I circle back to a point made in Part 1 of this double essay: "The progress of human enlightenment," Burke declared in 1937, "can go no further than in picturing people not as *vicious*, but as *mistaken*" (*Attitudes* 41; emphasis in original). To give its broader context, Burke is seeking to interpret history through modes of Western literature. Here, he's writing of the lessons taught traditionally by comedy, which, "like tragedy," "warns against the dangers of pride, but its emphasis shifts from *crime* to *stupidity*" (41; emphasis in original). The passage continues:

When you add that people are *necessarily* mistaken, that *all* people are exposed to situations in which they must act as fools, that *every* insight contains its own special kind of blindness, you complete the comic circle, returning again to the lesson of humility that underlies great tragedy. (41; emphasis in original)

Such a passage begs the question of whether there "is" progress in history, of whether there "is" an enlightenment evolving within human society. There is little of Hegel's philosophical idealism here, which defines history as "the progress of reason in the world." Rather, "by 'history' is meant primarily man's life in political communities": So writes Burke in the Introduction (unpaginated) to the book's 2nd edition (1959). He declares,

The book deals with characteristic responses of people in forming and reforming their congregations. You might call it "Attitudes Toward the Incessant Intermingling of Conservatism and Progress." Or, translating it into expressions now often encountered, we could entitle it "Statements of Policy on Problems of Organizational Behavior." […]

It operates on the miso-philanthropic assumption that getting along with people is one devil of a difficult task, but that, in the last analysis, we should all want to get along with people (and do want to). (Introduction)

I'd like to make similar claims for the "attitudes" and "statements" explored throughout this double essay.

By 2023, one wonders if civil dialogue and public debate remain possible. When one side so thoroughly demonizes the other as to make them into an existential threat, the nation's politics loses its civility. The American culture wars cannot be dismissed as a moral equivalency between competing perspectives, equally compelling. An ethotics of (cultural) difference rests in (cultural) diversity, whereas an identity-politics rests in hegemony and privilege. For many on the alt-right, the very fact of diversity in race, ethnicity, and sexuality raises an abhorrence felt viscerally and deemed intolerable; if democratic process and majority rule need to be sacrificed in its relief, "so be it." On so-called mainstream news media, we hear of looming threats to democracy. Anticipating the 2024 U.S. elections, we need to look coldly at the current state of politics, which no rhetoric now available can repair: One side at least of the American electorate seeks not to outvote so much as to make outcasts of its morally/spiritually abhorrent opposition. Talk of secession in "red states" like Texas and Georgia enacts a fantasy of expulsion—of removing people whose color or culture or sexuality or belief "makes you want to throw up." It's a fantasy fueled by abjection.

As Robert L. Ivie writes, "politics in a healthy, pluralistic democracy is necessarily agonistic, and thus the principal challenge of agonistic democracy is to address the 'other' as a legitimate adversary rather than as an evil enemy" (277)—the aim being "to keep agonistic relations between adversaries from degenerating into antagonistic battles between enemies" (Ivie 284). Ivie cites Chantal Mouffe as his precursor in political philosophy; he could as well have cited Burke.[13] Is there in rhetoric,

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[13]In her essay, "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?" Mouffe writes, "It is only when we acknowledge [that] 'politics' consists in domesticating hostility, only in trying to defuse the potential

Ivie asks, a "comic corrective to the tragic inclinations" (283–84) that lead us time and again into conflict, both at home and abroad? Here, Ivie is invoking Burke directly, specifically the latter's view of history: What makes Burke's assertion pertinent still—that "human enlightenment can go no further than in picturing people not as *vicious*, but as *mistaken*"—is its hope that the "comedy" of human error can be corrected and cured without spilling over into that ultimate of tragedies, war. (This last sentence comes *verbatim* from Part 1 of this double essay; it is worth repeating here.)

In the introduction to Part 1, I cited my own youthful struggle to judge "Hitler's soul" in Burkean terms. *Could* the hatred and violence that Hitler unleashed upon the world be judged as, say, "the most deadly instance to date of the human 'comedy of error'"? Or were his words and actions the height (depth, rather) of human viciousness—of soul-sickness? As I was writing the final paragraph of this second essay, I was reminded of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945), the German Protestant theologian whose *Letters and Papers from Prison* was assigned reading in my 1973 freshman-year theology class (a required course at the Catholic university that I attended). Arrested in 1943 for his underground seminary-work, Bonhoeffer was held at Buchenwald for a time, while awaiting trial; on April 9, 1945, he was executed by hanging. I imagine that his brief essay, "On Stupidity," informed my debates with fellow students over the fascist Hitler's soul-sickness, since Bonhoeffer was writing of the Führer and his followers:

> Stupidity is a more dangerous enemy of the good than malice. One may protest against evil; it can be exposed and, if need be, prevented by use of force. Evil always carries within itself the germ of its own subversion in that it leaves behind in human beings at least a sense of unease. Against stupidity we are defenseless. Neither protests nor the use of force accomplish anything here; reasons fall on deaf ears; facts that contradict one's prejudgment simply need not be believed—in such moments the stupid person even becomes critical—and when facts are irrefutable they are just pushed aside as inconsequential, as incidental. In all this the stupid person, in contrast to the malicious one, is utterly self-satisfied and, being easily irritated, becomes dangerous by going on the attack. For that reason, greater caution is called for when dealing with a stupid person than with a

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antagonism that exists in human relations, that we can pose the fundamental question for democratic politics" (754). In terms strikingly Burkean, she continues:

> This question, *pace* the rationalists, is not how to arrive at a rational consensus reached without exclusion, that is, indeed, an impossibility. Politics aims at the creation of unity in a context of conflict and diversity; it is always concerned with the creation of an "us" by the determination of a "them." The novelty of democratic politics is not the overcoming of this us/them distinction—which is what a consensus without exclusion pretends to achieve—but the different way in which this is established. What is at stake is how to establish the us/them discrimination in a way that is compatible with pluralist democracy. (754–55)

There is, additionally, work for rhetoricians to do in bringing argument—its theorizing, teaching, and practice—into the 21st century. Logos-centric models having proved inadequate against divisiveness, resistance, and abjection, it's to research in "the human sciences"—sociology, psychology, neurobiology, anthropology—that we must turn for further insight. Until we acknowledge that persuasion is largely extra-rational in its workings and proceed accordingly, the profession of English studies will have precious little impact upon the conduct/direction of public discourse. For a textbook in English studies, I'd consider Robert B. Cialdini's *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* (2021)—Cialdini being a social scientist and business consultant, not a writing teacher *per se*.

malicious one. Never again will we try to persuade the stupid person with reasons, for it is senseless and dangerous. (Bonhoeffer 49)

(If Bonhoeffer is right, does the Burkean distinction between error and evil collapse?) *Letters and Papers* was published posthumously in 1951. Here as with the writings of Fromm, Arendt, and Adorno, I find that the most telling analyses of partisan politics today were written some seven decades prior, in the aftermath of World War II.[14]

 I still don't know if Hitler's in heaven or hell—or if there is a heaven or hell. I know there's much evil in the world; there's even more human stupidity. Rhetoric cannot solve most of the world's problems, especially when attitudes are "hardened," bred in the bone. We fail in negotiating with "our dearest foes," to paraphrase Shakespeare's Hamlet. But that doesn't mean that we don't try. At the least, we tell our stories. I do agree with Burke that, in the last analysis, "we should all want to get along with people (and do want to)." We go on. On that vaguely hopeful note, I've reached an end.

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[14]Yet the question—admittedly unanswered by this present essay—remains: Can one negotiate "in good faith" with any and all opposing factions, including Hitlerian fascism? In his *Rhetoric of Rhetoric* (2004)—the last book published in his lifetime—Booth reaffirms his commitment to listening-rhetoric (LR), even in times when political rhetoric (or P-Rhet) spills over into "Rhetrickery":

 We must train ourselves to judge P-Rhet fairly, by really listening to the enemy and imagining ourselves into the enemy's true motives. We must judge no piece of P-Rhet according to whether the judge and rhetor share the same "side," or whether a given audience was won over. […] Like a genuinely admirable legal judge, the critic should consider the "evidence for and against the case." (127)

Were Wayne Booth in Prime Minister Chamberlain's shoes back in 1938, would he have pursued his "listening-rhetoric" with the German Chancellor, hopeful of finding common ground? Would he have sacrificed the Czech Sudetenland, trading "land for peace"? And what of the 43rd U.S. president, George W. Bush? As he listened attentively, empathetically even, to Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, was it the Russian president's "soul" that he had sensed back in 2001? Or was it all mere projection, an American president's desire to find his own plain-dealing personality mirrored in his rival? Was it all, in the end, mere Rhetrickery?

 "George W. Bush: 'Putin changed' since I looked into his eyes and saw his soul," reads a web headline of the April 18, 2018 *Washington Examiner*: "When I looked into his eyes and saw his soul, Russia was broke. […] And ah, the price of oil goes up and Putin changed" (Giaritelli), Bush had told a TV interviewer. Did it not occur to Bush that he had been fantasizing all along, and that his original claim was foolish to begin with?

<div style="text-align: center;">Works Cited</div>

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To Tell or Not to Tell: Nature and Objectives of Mental Illness Narratives/Autopathographies

Naveen John Panicker | University of Delhi
http://ellids.com/archives/2023/12/5.4-Panicker.pdf

Abstract | The act of writing about oneself has almost always been seen as an inherently truthful act, and the ensuing narrative as authentic; memoirs, autobiographies, and life narratives in general have often been regarded as truthful accounts of an individual or a collective experience. But any act of narrativizing—regardless of whether it borrows its source material primarily from one's imagination or from one's lived experiences—cannot be entirely truthful, since it is not merely subject to the choices and deliberations of the author in deciding how the story would be told, but also owing to the inadequacies of memory and the flawed process of remembrance itself. This is further complicated in the instance of illness narratives, particularly concerning narratives of mental illnesses, since they also encounter the difficulty of language, of finding suitable vocabulary to express the seemingly inexpressible, represent the seemingly irrepresentable, to capture in words experiences that defy conventional understanding. The paper will attempt to examine the objectives and concerns of such narratives through a study of two mental illness memoirs/suicide narratives, namely, Katherine Redfield Jamison's *An Unquiet Mind: A Memoir of Moods and Madness* and William Styron's *Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness*.

Keywords | Mental Illness Narratives, Memoirs, Autopathography, Depression, Suicide, Memory, Agency, Testimony, Language, Katherine Redfield Jamison, *An Unquiet Mind*, William Styron, *Darkness Visible*

Narratives of illness or pathographies are concerned with how the seemingly inexpressible can be expressed and how experiences of pain and suffering, of paralyzing feelings of incomprehension and chaos, are narrativized and made intelligible. Autopathographies, or self-narratives of one's experience of illness, is a category of literature that aims to accomplish this objective, of trying to articulate what an illness *feels* like. It is a form of a memoir where the illness becomes the focal point, against which one begins to evaluate, or re-evaluate, one's life. It is a way of offering a testimony for oneself and/or for others. Such testimonies are assumed/considered to potentially be the most complete and truthful account of oneself, of one's life, and of the lived experiences that compose and constitute it. The 'authenticity' of the articulation derives its authority from the articulator being the primary experiencer of what is being articulated. The act of self-narrativizing relies on 'autobiographical memory,' that is, the memory of one's individual, personal history. These memories are deeply personal and they construct and constitute the individual; they are the foundation upon which one's sense of self is built, which is the lens through which one experiences, evaluates, and engages with oneself and the world. Autobiographical memory involves "both *episodic* and *semantic* knowledge of the past; while episodic memory makes possible the recollection of personal experiences that occurred in a particular time and place, semantic memory allows the retrieval of general knowledge and facts" (Varga 148).

The general tendency to assign 'truthfulness' to personal testimonies is problematic, for one's memories and recollections are often colored by one's inclinations, biases, and prejudices. As stated by Nobel Prize winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman (in a TED talk delivered on February, 2010, at Long Beach, California), the *memory* of an experience is often times removed from the *reality* of the experience. One needs to therefore approach one's memories not as gospel truth but merely as a semantically rich text that has the ability to throw up multiple meanings and facilitate varied interpretations, to try and make sense of it in terms of what the work "can be possibly interpreted to mean," for often what "the author actually 'had in mind' may be completely beyond recovery, even for himself" (Eagleton 81). Personal testimonies, of which memoirs/autopathographies are but one instance, are nevertheless seen as a narrative form that comes closest to conveying *how* an experience was, even if the conclusions one draws from it may be contested. It thereby acknowledges and signifies the particularity of individual experiences and validates them. The unreliability of the narratorial voice has often less to do with any conscious or intentional attempt to distort or manipulate and more to do with the very nature of memory itself and how it works, for memory is never a composite of fixed and immutable entities, 'found' or 'unearthed'

through the act of remembering, but is rather always 'put together' or 'reconstituted' in and through every act of remembering; memory is, or becomes, in a sense, a thing of "shreds and patches" (Barnes 105).

This aspect of memory complicates and problematizes the notion of 'truth' of the narrative and 'truth' of the experiential moments that constitute one's narrative; this is not to doubt whether an incident actually occurred but simply to ask questions about how it is being recalled, since the very act of recollection involves the act of narrativizing. One remembers one's life as a narrative, as a series of stories which compose and constitute their autobiographical memory, and this memory is inextricably linked with their current sense of self, a notion that influences the nature of remembrance. Remembering is, in other words, less a matter of replaying to oneself 'factual' or 'truthful' information, or revisiting events exactly as they happened, and more an act of *re-presenting* to oneself, of imaginatively reconstructing or putting together certain facts, events, experiences, or mental/physical/emotional states of being; what is understood to be 'discovered' ('finding' in memory) is in fact 'constituted' ('putting together' memory) (Varga 148–150). We often tend to read our need to remember in a particular manner into the act of remembering; this is where imagination comes into the picture. Julian Barnes, in thinking about the interplay between 'imagination' and 'fact,' which constitutes and/or influences memory, is especially sensitive to this problem inherent in the act of narrativizing:

> For the young—and especially the young writer—memory and imagination are quite distinct […] For the older writer, memory and imagination begin to seem less and less distinguishable. This is not because the imagined world is really much closer to the writer's life than he or she cares to admit […] but for exactly the opposite reason: that memory itself comes to seem much closer to an act of the imagination than ever before […] I do not mistrust them, rather I trust them as workings of the imagination, as containing imaginative as opposed to naturalistic truth. (97–98)

These questions and concerns regarding the act of narrativizing and the unreliability of memory must inform our engagement with literature in general, and with the two texts being examined in this paper in particular. The memoirs *An Unquiet Mind: A Memoir of Moods and Madness* by Kay Redfield Jamison and *Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness* by William Styron (the Vintage mini-series is simply titled *Depression*) attempt to think through and narrativize experiences of suicidality and of the crises of agency, in addition to looking at some of the challenges inherent in the very act of narrativizing these experiences. In doing so, they engage with the question of language and its limits, with the difficulty of articulating experiences that are often rather alien to or incongruent with everyday existence. The experience of depression and the feelings of chaos, terror, and helplessness it engenders in an individual are beyond language to adequately capture. The fact that the titles of both these memoirs feature the word 'madness' is surely worth noting, as both these individuals, one a clinical psychologist and another a writer of fiction, chose the same word to try and articulate experiences they

similarly view as beyond/outside conventional structures of sense-making, interpretation, or intelligibility. The experience of a mind turning against itself can only be apprehended by the very same mind that has been turned against. The difficulty of articulation is therefore not merely limited to the constraints acting upon language but also due to the difficulties in perception, the difficulty of looking clearly at oneself; this naturally raises questions about the 'truthfulness' of such accounts.

The experience of a mind warring with itself is felt as an overwhelming state of disorientation, helplessness, and incomprehension that leads to the loss of agency (Holmes 128), a state of being that has been poignantly lent expression by Jamison in this manner: "I would wake up in the morning with a profound sense of dread that I was going to have to make it through another entire day. […] I understood very little of what was going on, and I felt as though only dying would release me from the overwhelming sense of inadequacy and blackness that surrounded me" (44). The terror of "understanding very little of what was going on" can sometimes cause individuals to lapse into a state of denial with regards to their illnesses. A broken mind, a depressed mind can sometimes refuse to, or is unable to, acknowledge its brokenness, acknowledge depression; even when it recognizes it in others, it can often fail to recognize it in itself. Denial can be a refuge against the storm of terrifying self-knowledge which threatens to uproot the very foundations upon which one's identity, one's sense of self has been built. Jamison—an authority on manic-depressive illness, an illness that she herself suffers from—states that despite being taught and trained to make clinical diagnoses she was unable to make a connection or discern any similarities between what she was being taught to recognize in others as manic-depressive illness and her own experiences of disorientation, euphoria, restlessness, and depression which was textbook manic-depressive illness (58–59). William Styron similarly confesses that his acceptance of the fact and nature of his illness came after several months of denial during which time he persistently attributed or explained away his intense mental, physical, and psychological discomfort to external causes (to having abruptly stopped drinking alcohol) or to maladies of the body, and suggests how this tendency may be looked at as a "part of the psyche's apparatus of defense unwilling to accept its own gathering deterioration, the mind announces to its indwelling consciousness that it is the body with its perhaps correctable defects—not the precious and irreplaceable mind—that is going haywire" (39).

This reluctance may also stem from the fear engendered by the loss of a sense of self, which represents to the individual a loss of the capacity for meaning making, and thereby, of meaning itself. This leads many to try and hold on, ever more desperately (and nostalgically), to an earlier notion of their selves, to an immutable idea of their pasts: "I had a horrible sense of loss of who I had been and where I had been […] it is a very real adjustment to blend into a three piece-suit schedule, which while comfortable to many, is new, restrictive, seemingly less productive and maddeningly less intoxicating" (Jamison 91–92). Depression singularly and acutely isolates the individual from the world around them, causing them to feel an acute and overwhelming sense of loss against

which they find themselves utterly helpless; this loss colors and poisons every value, belief, principle, possibility, any shred of certainty, control, or hope in one's life: "Loss in all of its manifestations is the touchstone of depression […] This loss can quickly degenerate into dependence, and from dependence into infantile dread. One dreads the loss of all things, all people close and dear […] the acute sense of loss is connected with a knowledge of life slipping away at accelerated speed" (Jamison 51–52). The acute sense of loss, coupled with the anguished knowledge of life slipping away and a profound state of helplessness to do anything about it, can often lead to a fragmentation within the individual, causing them to simultaneously become an active experiencer and a passive observer: "A phenomenon that a number of people have noted while in deep depression is the sense of being accompanied by a second self—a wraithlike observer, who, not sharing the dementia of his double, is able to watch with dispassionate curiosity as his companion struggles against the oncoming disaster, or decides to embrace it" (Styron 58). This can often heighten feelings of anxiety and self-hatred, further isolating the individual and compounding their feelings of alienation and burdensomeness.

The heightened self-awareness of the kind Styron is attempting to articulate constantly holds up the individual's flaws and failings, highlights (and exaggerates) their mistakes and transgressions, and pushes them to a point where suicide begins to present itself as the only way to end the tortured internal monologue. Suicide may be the cessation of choice, agency directed towards its own annihilation, but it is also the silencing of this tortured internal monologue. The disorientation and incoherence that results from the illness, and the resultant failure of language with which to articulate and make sense of one's condition, with which to share and lighten one's burden, makes it virtually impossible for the individual to be or feel truly agential, making it increasingly difficult to find reasons to justify their continuing living to themselves. The depressed/suicidal mind is characterized by a veritable flood of thoughts and impulses, unfiltered and unrestrained, to the extent that it makes coherent, intelligible thoughts, actions, or responses nearly impossible to apprehend, articulate, or perform: "I fell onto the bed […] nearly immobilized and in a trance of supreme discomfort […] a condition of helpless stupor in which cognition was replaced by that 'positive and active anguish' […] the ferocious *inwardness* of the pain produced an immense distraction that prevented my articulating words beyond a hoarse murmur" (Styron 12–15). The mental incontinence characteristic of this condition, one where words and impulses, thoughts and ideas crash and fragment without end, order, or design, making it difficult to even "remember the beginning of a sentence halfway through," results in a state of disorientation so severely crippling as to virtually shut down the individual and plunge them into a state of apathy and numbness (Jamison 83).

Siddhartha Mukherjee reflects on the nature of the apathy that patients afflicted with cancer (can often) descend into, of the near impenetrable shell into which they retreat as they slowly get desensitized to experiences of pain and suffering through an excess of pain and suffering, while devoid of a sense of futurity (169). In the absence of a larger meaningful narrative (within which to locate and lend meaning to such

experiences) and in the breakdown of one's personal history and identity, everything begins to feel meaningless, including the very experiences of pain and suffering. The illness steadily disconnects them from feelings and emotions, and numbs them to everything that once connected them to their life. It erases the idea of a future and annihilates the possibility of a life beyond it, thereby causing a moral and spiritual death which was a feeling similar to the ones experienced by those who were imprisoned in concentration camps; one becomes so intensely preoccupied with their illness that the world begins to fade away (Mukherjee 398). The illness becomes their sole identity (as the sick, the diseased); they're no longer their individual identities but are reduced to the status of a patient; they are no longer the sum of their personal histories but become reduced to their medical histories. Their illness replaces everything they've ever been. They're consumed by it to the point where nothing exists beyond its immediate, pressing reality (Holmes 118).

Mukherjee reflects on the instance of a particular patient and the mechanical nature of her response to his queries regarding an absent friend to illustrate the degree to which an illness can dehumanize and supplant the individual it takes possession of: "Carla had barely any emotional energy for her own recuperation—and certainly none to spare for the needs of others. For her the struggle with leukemia had become so deeply personalized, so interiorized, that the rest of us were ghostly onlookers in the periphery" (169). A severely depressed individual is similarly numb to themselves and to the world around them; the passage of time is not registered, nor does the manner in which it structures an individual's reality into a past, present, or future have any relevance anymore. For the severely depressed individual, caught in the throes of their suffering and struggling with a severe loss of a sense of self, there is no future to look forward to, no past to derive comfort from, and the present is at best tenuous and unpredictable. There is no reality beyond their immediate reality, filled with unendurable and unending experiences of pain and suffering; this becomes their only reality, stretching endlessly backwards and forwards, one moment indistinguishable from the next (Cvetkovich 63). To them, their life becomes a burden not merely to themselves but also to those around them; their existence becomes the proverbial albatross around the neck of their caregivers and loved ones, and in their depths of despair, suicide presents itself as the only solution that can liberate them from this near-constant feeling of being a burden.

Thomas Joiner, in his book *The Perversion of Virtue: Understanding Murder-Suicide*, suggests that "perceived burdensomeness" constitutes one of two central elements in serious suicide ideation, the other being an acute sense of alienation (91). The feeling of being a burden justifies, to the suicidal individual, their decision to act so as to end another's suffering by ending their own. This manner of reasoning allows them to accord a moral or ethical responsibility to their actions and allows for a small measure of agency with which to respond to a continued state of inadequacy and indignity. It is as much a struggle for human dignity as it is a desire for escaping a state of constant and seemingly irremediable pain and suffering: "I could not stand the pain any longer […] and felt that I could not continue to be responsible for the turmoil I was inflicting upon

my friends and family. In a perverse linking within my mind I thought that […] I was doing the only fair thing for the people I cared about; it was also the only sensible thing to do for myself" (Jamison 115). Jamison is nevertheless careful to use the word "perverse" when reflecting on her reasons for attempting suicide. In suggesting that her desire for suicide arose from a 'perverse' logic of altruism, she remains in agreement with Joiner who states that the logic employed by the suicidal individual to not continue to be a burden to anyone any further, stemming as it does from a mind torn apart by great pain and suffering and from a mistaken and misguided desire to be virtuous and altruistic, cannot be anything but perverted (114, 132).

There is a tendency towards fatalism and nihilism that afflicts these individuals. Despite knowing only too well that depression is a common malady that afflicts several thousands of people everywhere every year, each individual suffering from depression begins to perceive their condition as unique and their suffering as one of its kind; this may be, in some part, on account of the "long-standing assumption that my experiences are a kind of private property" (Eagleton 7). It is because every individual experiences the world in their own unique way, from within their uniquely contoured subjectivity and their singularly individual experiential and perceptual faculties, and never from without. This causes many individuals to believe, despite knowing that there are many who go through similar situations and recover sufficiently from it or manage it tolerably, that there can be no help beyond the limits of their own agency (Pompili 21).

There is a sense that a 'common' solution cannot help resolve their 'uniquely' painful condition and, in this manner, display a kind of "heightened narcissism" (Shneidman 215) that expresses itself in this manner: "Now and again we would talk about the possibility of taking antidepressants, but we were deeply skeptical that they would work and wary of potential side effects. Somehow, like so many people who get depressed, we felt our depressions were more complicated and existentially based than they actually were" (Jamison 54). To know that one's suffering is perhaps not much different in nature or degree from another's can sometimes cause one to feel as though one's experiences of pain and suffering are somehow diluted, that it somehow is made ordinary, that the unique tragedy of their lives is getting diluted to the status of the common sorrow of everyday, ordinary humanity. Many are therefore likely to persist in viewing their condition as more *their* condition than as a common condition or malady and are likely to be wary of seeking help from external sources, and in certain instances, rejecting it altogether.

This brings to the fore the "paradox" at the heart of (published) self-narrativizing, for while "the book purports to be about a unique life, and all its details, its particular mix of fate and will, of planning and opportunism, of confidence and diffidence, are designed to emphasize just how unique it is," it has to "appeal to certain general features of what it means to live any human life" in order for it "to be intelligible, let alone interesting, to strangers from very different backgrounds" (Cowley 5). Every common experience, as stated earlier, is experienced uniquely, and there is a desire, therefore, to have one's experience remain unique, remain unequivocally their own and not seem

common or ordinary. However, it may appear to some that the uniqueness of their narrative is lost the moment it is narrativized. What contributes to the tragedy of an individual's situation is the perceived inability of another to ever comprehend what they are going through—the feeling that the individual is, as stated earlier, *uniquely* doomed and alone. However, individual experiences (of pain and suffering), when narrativized, no longer remain individual or singularly one's own, nor are they then utterly beyond another to understand, relate to, or even, in a certain sense, inhabit.

The act of writing not only creates a distance between the writer and their narrative, thereby enabling the text to exist as an entity independent of the writer, but it can also be seen to cause a split within the writer themselves, thereby resulting in the creation of two selves, namely the self that is narrating and the self that is being narrativized. It is a quality of the mind that it "is capable of splitting consciousness in two, so that one half is examining coolly what the other half is experiencing" (Barnes 51). This spilt, and the ensuing distance that separates these two selves, has the possibility of being therapeutic, as it may enable the writer to ever so slightly move beyond or escape the stifling confines of their largely inescapable interiority and critically examine their life, emotions, illnesses without being consumed by them. On the other hand, this split can be seen as something akin to the unsettling state of internal dissonance that Styron talks about when he describes the feeling of being accompanied by a second self, an observer, a wraithlike figure who merely observes with dispassionate curiosity (58).

There emerges a rupture of sorts between the individual's self and their experiences, for the latter, through the act of narrativization, assumes a certain (common, intelligible) form and steps outside the former. This can often create a deep anxiety within oneself, a fear that in the process one might lose control over one's story, have it become less particular and more general, less one's own and more someone else's: "I am deeply wary that by speaking publicly or writing about such intensely private aspects of my life, I will return to them one day and find them bleached of meaning and feeling […] I fear that the experiences will become those of someone else rather than my own" (Jamison 202). And yet, if one did not write about it, then how might one hope to have another acknowledge, understand, or appreciate the nature and gravity of the problem or try to become part of the solution? How else might one lend one's fellow sufferers a voice with which to articulate and make visible their suffering without feeling utterly crippled by shame or fear, to have them find a degree of comfort in the recognition accorded to them and their lives?

Mental illness is not a condition that lends itself to easy empathy. In the instances of physical illnesses, a sick individual's "invalidism would be necessary, unquestioned, and honorably attained," (Styron 57) but those suffering from depression, on account of it being "dull enough and invisible enough—no blood, no wounds" (Cvetkovich 35), are required to always seem normal "despite the anguish" they experience and present a "face approximating the one that is associated with ordinary events and companionship" (Styron 57). The necessity of having to keep up the pretense of normality is not merely exhausting for the depressed individual but it is, according to Gerald Priestland,

especially taxing and corrosive to their sense of dignity; this further alienates the individual from themselves and from everyone around them and deepens their feelings of disingenuity, inauthenticity, helplessness, and abandonment, causing them to live with guilt, to continue believing themselves to be an "empty fraud" who will be found out one day and exposed: "What crime? You don't know; you only know you are guilty; and you can hear them coming down the corridor to get you" (qtd. in Rowe 8). This also takes a toll on those around the mentally ill, for it often becomes very difficult for them to read the individual's impulses, actions, and responses as products of their illness and not necessarily of their personality: "Once a restless or frayed mood has turned to anger, or violence, or psychosis, Richard, like most, finds it very difficult to see it as an illness, rather than as being willful, angry, irrational, or simply tiresome. What I experience as beyond my control can instead seem to him deliberate and frightening" (Jamison 174).

This frightening absence of control is felt not only in the very experience of the illness itself but also in relation to the tremendous struggle to articulate that experience in the form of a narrative; this brings in the question of language and the linguistic registers that are available and whether they are suitable or adequate to the purpose for which they are being sought. Both Styron and Jamison are thinking about the use of the medical register in making sense of and representing the condition of depression and both find its sterile, polished register inadequate and falling short of enabling a non-sufferer to even remotely appreciate the extent of pain and suffering that the condition of clinical depression entails:

> "Melancholia" would still appear to be a far more apt and evocative word for the blacker forms of the disorder, but it was usurped by a noun with a bland tonality and lacking any magisterial presence, used indifferently to describe an economic decline or a rut in the ground, a true wimp of a word for such a major illness […] Told that someone's mood disorder has evolved into a storm—a veritable howling tempest in the brain, which is indeed what a clinical depression resembles like nothing else—even the uninformed layman might display sympathy rather than the standard reaction that "depression" evokes, something akin to "So what?" or "You'll pull out of it" or "We all have bad days." (Styron 32–33)

Jamison states in a similar vein that she finds the term 'bipolar' quite offensive, as its rather disconnected and sterile tone conveys nothing of the experience of the illness and may even "paper over the reality of the condition" or misrepresent it to someone who does not suffer from it, whereas the term 'manic-depressive,' in her estimation, feels more adequate with regards eliciting a more serious and/or sympathetic response from another (181–182). A similar sentiment is expressed by Jerry Pinto: "Depression seems to suggest a state that could be dealt with by ordinary means […] it suggests a dip in level ground where you might stumble, but from which you might scramble […] unharmed" (59).

The issue of language, and how it may be marshalled and utilized for the purposes of adequately capturing the experience of depression, is a challenge that many writers of

such autopathographies encounter. Language shapes representation, and that in its turn decides the response of the reader, whether the reader responds, as stated earlier, with sympathy or indifference. Language then can be employed imaginatively and creatively, on the one hand, to convey an idea of the extent of the disability caused to the individual by their illness; this may be more effective in eliciting sympathy and tolerance for the suffering individual (in order that they are not dismissed or the extent of their suffering diminished) but this may also result in the suffering individual being reduced to their illness, to see them as helpless and incapacitated by their illness. In other words, this risks sacrificing the individual's agency and identity. On the other hand, a clipped, polished register with a relatively detached tone potentially protects the sufferer's agency and identity by disguising the extent of the disability caused by their condition of depression, but which would then elicit much less sympathy and tolerance for the suffering individual (and possibly even allow them to escape the stigma surrounding mental illnesses).

The type of language, and the nature of the linguistic registers deployed depends on the objective of the text and whether a certain type of language is suitable and/or effective for what the writer intends to accomplish. Jamison admits that the medicalization of the condition of depression, with its attendant jargons, does help to an extent by pushing out of regular and everyday usage certain insensitive words, phrases, or adjectives and enables greater awareness and sensitivity. Nevertheless, she is quick to state that one must not be under the impression that mere linguistic sanitization solves much, for "the assumption that rigidly rejecting words and phrases that have existed for centuries will have much impact on public attitudes is rather dubious. It gives an illusion of easy answers to impossibly difficult situations" (180). The manner in which the condition is articulated is also problematic, for in the instance of physical illnesses, the illness is generally seen only as a part of the individual whereas in the instance of mental illnesses, the individual's identity, their personality, and the very nature of their existence are often reframed and reformulated along the specific contours of their illness. One is prone to say, "he/she has cancer," not "he/she is cancer," but one does not readily enough say "he/she has bi-polar disorder" but it's more often "he/she is bi-polar"; therefore, through the use of a particular kind of language, the sufferer gets formally indicted.

Even as one wonders whether the language used is suitable or adequate to capture the experience of depression and/or mental illnesses, one must nevertheless acknowledge its effectiveness in these texts in conveying sincerity and even a note of urgency, possibly stemming not only from a desire to have their experiences matter, to lend voice to their pain and suffering, but also from a great need to have their lives and their accounts serve as cautionary and even redemptive tales. Both Styron and Jamison detail their struggle with their respective mental illnesses and attempt to articulate the terror they experienced when confronted with the horrible and all too real possibility of losing their identities, their sanity, and even their lives. They both acknowledge the limits of agency, of what they could or could not do, and perhaps even what they ought to have done. To acknowledge one's limitations is not a sign of weakness; rather, in accepting that there is only so much control one can exert over oneself, there is a *decisive* move to not remain in denial and further worsen their states of helplessness and despair. The acknowledgement of one's helplessness is a crucial step in actually moving beyond this paralyzing feeling; to accept limited control is the step to finally take back some control over their lives and their illnesses: "What control do mad people have? I don't know

myself. I only know that there is some control. Some things you can choose not to say. Some things you can choose not to do" (Pinto 100). Or, in this instance, there are some things you can choose to say or do.

These are tales of individuals who have struggled with painful, traumatic experiences and lived to tell the tale and the very act of writing about it, therefore, is an agential act. There is a desire inherent in these writers to offer their own lives as testimonies and to have it serve as small beacons of light and hope for those struggling to find their way through the alienating and terrifying darkness of depression. This sentiment is exemplified by Victor Staudt who states thus with regards to his account of his depression: "I will go on sharing it, hoping that by doing so it will be just a little bit more easy for others to open up about themselves, knowing that they are not alone […] Without shame, without prejudices or whatever kind of taboo" (207). There is a desire for normality and an appreciation for the everyday and the ordinary, for a state of affairs most people take for granted: "I began to covet the day-to-day steadiness that most of my colleagues seemed to enjoy […] Volatility and passion, although more romantic and enticing, are not intrinsically preferable to a steadiness of experience and feeling about another person" (Jamison 169–70).

A depressed and/or suicidal individual experiences an acute sense of loss and a great fear of abandonment; the desire for normality, for the 'day-to-day steadiness,' however causes many to maintain a state of strained normality through denial, misrepresentation, excessive externalizing/psychologizing, or by simply rejecting offers of help, for accepting help is also an acknowledgement of the existence of a deep-seated problem for which one needs help. This is not to say that those refusing to seek help or rejecting it are necessarily convinced that they can do without it; rather, it may result from such individuals not wishing to be seen as asking for help since it suggests, as stated earlier, a loss of dignity and autonomy. Rather than simply be the pitiful recipients of someone's pity or charity, they prefer to be gently persuaded to help themselves: "He could tell from my voice what state I was in, and, despite my pleas to be left alone, he would insist on coming over […] I would be secretly and inexpressibly grateful, and he somehow would have finessed it so that I didn't feel like I was too huge a burden to him" (Jamison 117). Often, all that is needed or required is a small measure of patience, kindness, and acceptance. One must be aware, nevertheless, of the multitude of factors that come together to constitute the condition of depression and how one understands and responds to it, and know that many who suffer through it often lack the privilege of familial support and understanding, the love and sympathy of friends and well- wishers, access to adequate medical/healthcare facilities and, most importantly, the capacity to find for oneself, while aided by others (and favorable circumstances), the necessary strength and reasons to persist through the darkness.

There is an attempt in these texts to retrospectively derive a sense of comfort in knowing that not only have they survived but that, in surviving, they have been transformed; there is a sense of gratitude that underlies and informs their professed intent to aid others and help transform their lives as others helped transform theirs, to keep them continuing to live as others kept them living. To have lived through it and to be able to look back on it is to have "felt more things, more deeply; had more experiences, more intensely; loved more, and been more loved; appreciated more the springs, for all the

winters […] and slowly learned the values of caring, loyalty, and seeing things through" (Jamison 218). There is an emphasis on the need for kindness, for tolerance, and an unflinching conviction that human life, despite all the pain and suffering it might bring one, is indeed worth keeping. The return from the abyss, according to Styron, is not unlike "the ascent of the poet, trudging upward out of hell's black depths and at last emerging into what he saw as 'the shining world.' There, whoever has been restored to health has almost always been restored to the capacity for serenity and joy, and this may be indemnity enough for having endured the despair beyond despair" (78).
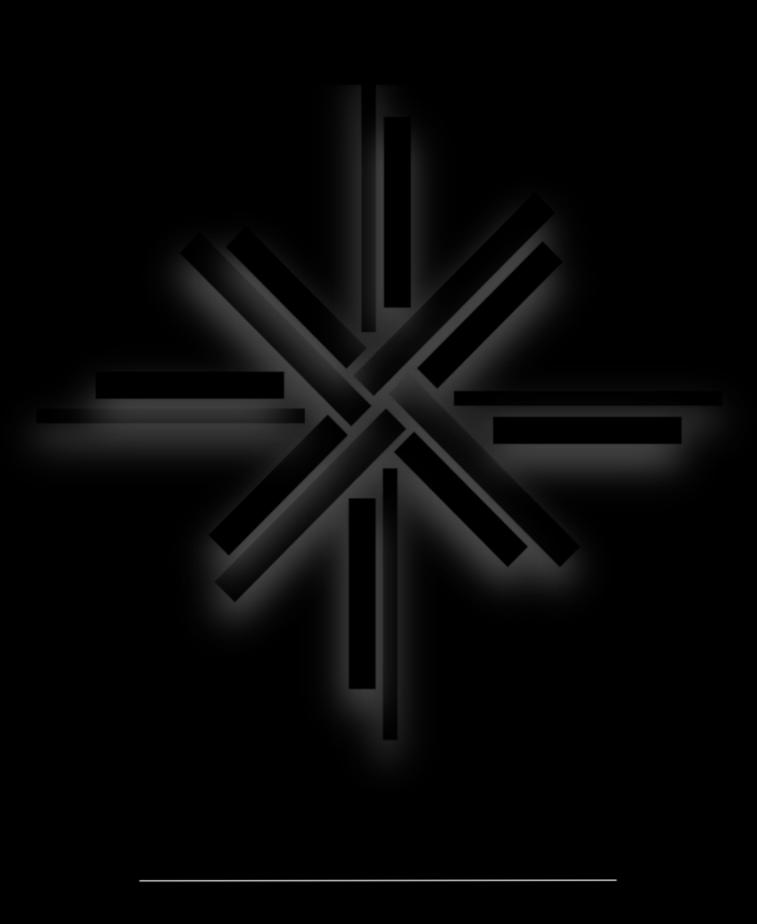
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