

What We Read
Materiality, Narrative, Text
October 11, 2013

Collected Abstracts
from the tenth annual graduate conference
of the program in comparative literature
at the University of Texas at Austin



TABLE OF CONTENTS

READING THE POSTMODERN 1

Moderator: Dr. Katherine Arens, Germanic Studies

To ‘Make Them Real with His Magic Instrument’: Photographic Allusion and the Viewing of Magical Realism”

Brian Carroll (Department of English, UT Arlington)

Ironic Nostalgia in Steven Chow’s *Kung Fu Hustle*

Chienyn Chi (Program in Comparative Literature, UT Austin)

No, Not the Archive! Zombie Apocalypse and the Breakdown of the Symbolic Order

Anne Stewart (Department of English, UT Austin)

Postmodern Diegesis: Tricky Authors and Familiar Narrators

Todd Womble (Department of English, UT Arlington)

READING ACROSS MEDIA 4

Moderator: Dr. Jason Borge, Spanish and Portuguese

Text as Texts: Translating and Trimming *Ulysses* into Twitterature

Jake Cowan (Department of Rhetoric and Writing, UT Austin)

Nightmare Dork University: A Case Study of the Alternate Universe in Fan-Created Works

Gretchen Kasting (Department of English, UT Austin)

Memory, Dystopia and The Art of Ghosts in Silvina Ocampo’s *Cornelia frente al espejo* and its filmic adaptation

Michelle Quinones (Dept. of Modern Languages and Literatures, University of Central Florida)

From Monkey King to Monkey Clown

Lily Zhu (Department of English, UT Austin)

READING THE POPULAR AND/AS RESISTANCE 7

Moderator: Dr. Lynn Wilkinson, Germanic Studies & Comparative Literature

“I am Aveline de Grandpré, I am an assassin, and I fight for liberation”: Subverting Colonial Control and Playing with Colonial Mimicry in *Assassin’s Creed III: Liberation*’s System of Procedural Rhetoric

Sam Cannon (Department of Spanish and Portuguese, UT Austin)

“Fey”ble: Queering Joseph Campbell’s Monomyth as Found in Lionhead Studios’ Fable III

Nicholas Holterman (Department of French and Italian, UT Austin)

Breeders and Bleeders: The Queerness of *Blacula*

Alejandro Omidasalar (Department of English, UT Austin)

READING WORDS 9

Moderator: To Be Determined

LANGUAGE Poetry and Fugu Fish: Redesigning Textual Studies through Bioinformatics

Daniel Carter (School of Information, UT Austin)

"Na Minha Fala:" Transcription, Translation, and Appropriated Language
in *Macunaíma*

Jonathan Fleck (Program in Comparative Literature, UT Austin)

Ellipses and the failed confession in *Notes From Underground*

Kaitlin Shirley (Program in Comparative Literature, UT Austin)

Automating Ontography

Clay Templeton and Rachel Simons (School of Information, UT Austin)

READING TRAUMA THROUGH MEMORY

12

Moderator: Dr. Gabriela Polit, Spanish & Portuguese

Dystopian narratives in the writings of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War veterans

Itay Eisinger (Department of Middle Eastern Studies, UT Austin)

Modernism and Tomás González' *La Luz Difícil*

Mike Flynn (Program in Comparative Literature, UT Austin)

Narrating the Firing Squad: Metaphors of Sight and Light in Textual and Visual
Representations

Lauren Shigeko Gaskill (Department of Spanish and Portuguese, UC Irvine)

Writing the World: Meta-fictional Magic in Haruki Murakami's *1Q84* and Tea

Obrecht's *The Tiger's Wife*

Rachael Mariboho (Department of English, UT Arlington)

RE-READING THE COLONY

15

Moderator: Dr. Omoniyi Afolabi, Spanish & Portuguese and Africa & African Diaspora

Lew Wallace's *The Fair God* (1873): Or, Guatimozin: Last of the Warrior-Librarians

Dusty Hixenbaugh (Program in Comparative Literature, UT Austin)

Coloniality and Legibility of the Nation: Mexico's Education Project in the Pages of

El Maestro Rural

Daniela MacGregor Sevilla (Department of Spanish and Portuguese, UT Austin)

Rapping to Remember: Médine's Musical Critique of Colonization

Jocelyn A. Wright (Department of French and Italian, UT Austin)

Archival fever at the 30th anniversary of Guevara's death in Ana Menéndez's *Loving
Che*

Nat Zingg (Program in Comparative Literature, UT Austin)

READING GENDER IN THE ARCHIVES

18

Moderator: Dr. Cesar Salgado, Spanish & Portuguese and Comparative Literature

[Untitled]

Ayse Gursoy (School of Information, UT Austin)

Chasing your (Josie) Bliss: The archival *afterlife* of Pablo Neruda's Burmese mistress

Roanne Kantor (Program in Comparative Literature, UT Austin)

Fama Novi Fontis: The Sexual Curiosity of Minerva in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* V

Destini N. Price (Program in Comparative Literature, UT Austin)

"Unsolved Problems": Virginia Woolf and Archives of the Mind, from Early Fiction
to *A Room of One's Own*

Cindy L. Taylor (School of Information, UT Austin)

Moderator: Dr. Karen Grumberg, Middle Eastern Studies

The Word Became Filth: Platonov's *Happy Moscow*

Juliana Leachman (Program in Comparative Literature, UT Austin)

Theatricality and Framing: The Pavilion in Madame de Lafayette's *Princesse de Clèves*

Sarah Lube Roe (Department of French and Italian, UT Austin)

Paper-thin Walls: neighboring, materiality, & the apartment building in *Building Stories* and *NW*

Jenn Shapland (Department of English, UT Austin)

Moderator: Dr. David Kornhaber, English & Comparative Literature

Being, Remaining, and Recovering: The Iterative Ontology of Playback in *Krapp's Last Tape*

Jeffrey Boruszak (Department of English, UT Austin)

Imagine/Say: Performing the Imperative In Samuel Beckett's Late Prose

Jesi Egan (Department of English, UT Austin)

"No Success Like Failure: *Endgame* and the Frustration of Sonata Form"

Courtney Massie (Department of English, UT Austin)

Acts Without Words, Words Without Acts

Elliott Turley (Department of English, UT Austin)

Moderator: Naomi Lindstrom, Spanish & Portuguese

Merengue and Bachata: the official and hidden transcripts of the Dominican soundscape

Nicholas Tschida-Reuter (Dept. of Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Indiana University)

A Mysterious Peacock Lands in São Paulo

Rebecca Lippman (Department of Comparative Literature, UCLA)

Who reads, writes and gets published in Chile?: How Ergo Sum's *Libros Objetos* have contested the dynamics of Chilean literary production

Rae Wyse (Program in Comparative Literature, UT Austin)

Reading the Postmodern

“To ‘Make Them Real with His Magic Instrument:’ Photographic Allusion and the Viewing of Magical Realism”

Brian Carroll

UT Arlington

Traditionally, scholars of postmodern fiction have tracked the ‘prioritization’ of ontological concerns from those of an epistemological nature. The narrative mode of magical realism is located within this larger postmodern context, in part, because of this shift. Also within this arena, critics such as Linda Hutcheon have claimed that the medium of photography may serve as a sort of paradigm for the postmodern. Thus, in fastening these analogous perspectives, I contend that magical realist texts implementing photographic references and allusions can offer readers new ways of perceiving how ontologically-based art forms—both visual and textual—intersect, inform, and influence each other. I am concerned with the underexplored question: how does photography underline, what Wendy Faris has called the “irreducible element” of magical realist texts? In other words, how does photography engage with—and enhance—the magic of these quintessentially postmodern texts? In my paper, I focus on two bookending works in the magical realist canon: Jorge Luis Borges’s “The Aleph” and excerpts from Ben Okri’s novel *The Famished Road*.

If one of the characteristics of the magical realist text is the existence of dual worlds, then Borges’s story proves exemplary. I argue that it is elements of photographic imagery (such as the portrait) in “The Aleph” that provide the needed counterbalance between two separate worlds. In two significant scenes at either end of the story, Borges’s narrator (also named Borges) details portraits of a past lover, navigating readers between two worlds, two simultaneously existing chronological moments. And in this piloting amongst temporal zones, Borges anticipates similar theoreticism promoted by Barthes in his legendary *Camera Lucida*. As for Okri’s *The Famished Road*, I claim that the vital character of the Photographer serves as a type of shaman, a trope associated with the magical realist project. The shamanic character is understood to traverse between a ghost world and a real world; indeed, I argue that the Photographer actually steers himself between multiple sets of dual worlds: indeed the human/spirit, but also the European/African, as well as between levels of the narrative itself via metafictional practice. Finally, I maintain that it is no accident that Okri has assigned this shamanic role to that of a photographer.

I conclude that, aside from the possible beneficial pedagogical implications linking magical realism and photography beneath a common postmodern banner, the wider co-examination of these related ontological vehicles helps negotiate the ineffable gap(s) that superficially exist between the visual and the verbal.

Ironie Nostalgia in Steven Chow's *Kung Fu Hustle*
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Due to the advancement of modern technology in digital archives, the past has become incredibly accessible and infinitely recyclable. In China, the past is everywhere and many times in the form of commercials and marketable products. I locate this nostalgic trend in consumerism through analyzing pop culture and media in the new Chinese capitalism. I explore why there is a sense of longing for the past in 21st Century China. Moreover, drawing on Frederick Jameson, Linda Hutcheon, Arif Dirlik, Wang Ning and Xudong Zhang's theoretical works on Postmodernism, I discuss in my paper the many problems that this consumer nostalgia raises. It attempts to appropriate an authentic past without acknowledging the impossibility of that task. In relationship to this cultural phenomenon, I analyze the 2004 film, *Kung Fu Hustle*, directed and written by Stephen Chow to show that the film uses a kind of ironic nostalgia to mock the consumer nostalgia prevalent in his society. Looking closely, Chow's film is less about the past but more about the present. Chow shows his concerns regarding the future fate of the Hong Kong industries, the dominance of Hollywood films, and the future of Kung Fu as an art form in the film. By analyzing *Kung Fu Hustle*, I will challenge and complicate our idea of nostalgia and the postmodern in art and culture. Most importantly, I will show that ironic nostalgia can be humorously self-critical because it acknowledges the impossibility of finding an authentic past.

No, Not the Archive! Zombie Apocalypse and the Breakdown of the Symbolic Order
Anne Stewart
Department of English, UT Austin

Given all the many ways in which the world could end, why is popular culture so particularly obsessed by the idea – not just of zombies – but specifically of zombie apocalypse? This paper argues that rather than seeking to challenge or critique the status quo of capitalist modernity, the zombie apocalypse narrative reifies and upholds the comforts and satisfactions of being the overdetermined subject of postmodernity's ideological dominants. In *Looking Awry*, Žižek calls the return of the living dead the “fundamental fantasy of contemporary mass culture.” However, the fear of capitalist consumerism giving birth to subjects of consciousness-less drive — theorized in Lauro and Embry's articulation of the anti-subject in their “Zombie Manifesto” — doesn't fully explain the specifically apocalyptic nature of this anxiety. Beginning with a consideration of Poe's preoccupation with the return of the dead in his short fiction, it is the purpose of this presentation to explore zombie apocalypse anxiety as expressing fear of the breakdown of the Lacanian Symbolic Order, and the consequent exposure of that Order's subject to the terrifying specter of the Real. My argument then moves on to a reading of the film *28 Days Later*, which suggests that the zombie hoard functions as an essentially bottomless pool of signification. This apocalypse, then, is not what Derrida calls the “total and remainderless destruction of the archive,” but rather, an opportunity for survivors of ideologically overdetermined postmodernity to mean, and to make meaning, once again. I conclude by suggesting that the goal of the survivor is ultimately to be re-interpellated back into the Symbolic Order and the protection of the Law, a

move which seeks to complicate the poststructuralist desire for the liberation of the subject of ideology.

Postmodern Diegesis: Tricky Authors and Familiar Narrators

Todd Womble

Department of English, UT Arlington

Seminal names in narrative theory have written extensively on questions of author, reader, and narrator. Distinctions are made between (R)real author and implied author, between narratee and implied reader. Questions of narrator tackle elements of diegesis, or the relationship the narrator has to the narrated discourse. In *Narrative Discourse*, Gerard Genette uses the term “focalization” to represent the position of the narrator; according to Genette, a text’s “focalization” directly influences the manner in which readers understand and respond to narrative texts. These “focalizations” dictate how we, as readers, perceive authors, or narrators, or the narrated, and the relationships between each. This works well in traditional narrative forms, in which narrators (extradiegetic, intradiegetic, heterodiegetic, etc.) relay information to readers (both implied and (R)real). But this gets tricky in a number of ways. Specifically, particular authors implement narrative strategies that make it difficult for readers to easily approach narratological questions. Two novels from Paul Auster and Bret Easton Ellis exemplify these types of challenges.

Auster’s *City of Glass* includes two characters named Paul Auster, one a writer and the other a detective. Similarly, Ellis’s *Lunar Park* centers on a character named Bret Easton Ellis, a successful author who wrote *Less than Zero* and *American Psycho* (sound familiar?). In each of these novels, we are confronted with instances in which the (R)real authors (Auster and Ellis) appear as narrators and characters; at the same time, Auster and Ellis make it clear that their narrator-and-character-personas are not direct representations of their (R)realselves. Auster and Ellis-as-narrators-and-characters have explicit biographical differences between Auster and Ellis-as-(R)real authors. This is, to say the least, challenging for a reader trying to figure out the narrative distinctions mentioned above. Narrative theory stresses the importance of making distinctions between (R)real author, implied author, and narrator; how do we do this when these distinctions are subverted explicitly by choices the author makes in the text? How do we use these distinctions to interpret meaning whenever the author seems to be diligently set on keeping us from doing so?

Continuing in the tradition set forth by Genette and others, I hope to analyze the ways in which Auster and Ellis use what I call “meta-autodiegetic interjections” to offer unique reading experiences. By looking specifically at the techniques these authors use to create these narrative situations in their texts—and the purposes these situations serve—I approach these postmodern subversions of narratological approaches and analyze the unique type of readerly experience created. While in the context of traditional narratology these texts seem challenging and problematic, I contend that authors such as Auster and Ellis offer new avenues to explore and expand upon readerly and narratological conventions. These texts allow us to approach the conventional questions of author, narrator, and reader in rather unconventional ways, creating noteworthy experiences with and analyses of narrative texts.

Reading Across Media

Text as Texts: Translating and Trimming *Ulysses* into Twitterature

Jake Cowan

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On Bloomsday in 2011, hundreds of Joyce acolytes from Dublin to Dubai took to Twitter in celebration of *Ulysses*, together tweeting a truncated translation of the modernist tome that highlighted the lengthy epic's relevance even in this digital, late-capitalist epoch. My paper — tentatively titled “Text as Texts” — explores the historical, aesthetic and material conditions of possibility for this unprecedented online event. Beginning with those initial chapters serialized in *The Little Review*, I trace the development of the novel's form as it moves across multiple mediums while nonetheless always remaining a text, an artifact of typed words. Ultimately, this leads to questions of how (if at all) the narrative retains cohesion despite (if not because of) the transformation from a single, hefty thousand-word book to a series of ephemeral 140-character tweets composed by unrelated, practically anonymous authors. In light of the “#BloomsdayBurst” — as it was called on June 16th, 2011 — my paper considers the dialectics of public performance and private writing, collaboration and authorship surrounding *Ulysses*, a set of contradictions that, I claim, lead Joyce to establish the parameters of a prototypical hypertext (an experiment that met its fulfillment in his final work, *Finnegans Wake*).

Nightmare Dork University: A Case Study of the Alternate Universe in Fan-Created Works

Gretchen Kasting

Department of English, UT Austin

What exactly do the immortal embodiment of fear itself, a fallen general from another world, and a sadomasochistic hipster who bakes hallucinogens into cupcakes have to do with each other? Answer: They're all the same character. Or at least, they only began by differing as much as the film interpretation of a character, the book description of the character that film character is based on, and the concept art for the film character based on the book character differ from each other. Different enough to have different personalities. Different enough to be interesting when forced to interact with each other in fan comics. Or when forced to interact with each other as college roommates. Or when transplanted into the story of *The Phantom of the Opera*. In this paper I will map the many transformations and multiplications of the character Pitch Black, the antagonist of the 2012 animated film *Rise of the Guardians* in order to demonstrate the total metamorphic power of fan works in relation to what might be called canonical, but what I prefer to call commercial, material. In so doing, this paper will also offer an example of the ways in which amateur writers online may spontaneously form authorial collectives in which no individual holds the power or responsibility for determining what can happen/what has happened in any particular universe, and all participants understand this. I hope also that the particular example I have chosen to work with will aid in blurring the supposedly existent boundary between that which is original and that which is derivative, particularly

in an age in which “hiding one’s sources” becomes ever more difficult. And finally, I wish to show that fandom, at its best, is nothing more and nothing less than gonzo scholarship.

Memory, Dystopia and The Art of Ghosts in Silvina Ocampo’s *Cornelia frente al espejo* and its filmic adaptation

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This paper seeks to analyze the complex universe of Silvina Ocampo’s short story *Cornelia frente al espejo* (1988), and its filmic adaptation (2012). I argue that her narrative world is a dystopia, due to its indifferent incorporation of the uncanny or “unheimlich”, which Sigmund Freud defines as “that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar” (1). The entire plot takes place inside the protagonist’s house, in scenarios surrounded by domestic elements and the apparently insignificant reminders of daily life. Nevertheless, Cornelia, the protagonist, utilizes ‘dream-images’ and the fantasy/uncertainty of her own death as a method of questioning conventional notions of memory, which she grasps as an ambiguous irreality delineated by the present, yet central to her identity (de)construction. Through a discussion of Freud, Otto Rank, Jacques Derrida and Walter Benjamin, I argue that Ocampo subverts the notions of the mundane and domesticity as safe havens and, instead, transforms them into perfect scenarios for the manifestation of phantasmagoria. Similarly, Daniel Rosenfeld’s film faithfully reproduces Ocampo’s discontinuous universe and its subversive qualities. His film blurs genre lines; it combines fiction and reality, performance and documentary. As Derrida points out, “cinema plus psychoanalysis is the science of ghosts” (McMullen). *Cornelia frente al espejo* (1988) is already loaded with apparitions whose reminiscences merge between the Now and Then. This story, translated to cinema, “enhances the power of ghosts, their power to haunt us”, and our own power to question reality outside of language and our orthodox minds (McCullen).

From Monkey King to Monkey Clown: The Dilution of Chinese Literature in its “Journey to the West”

Lily Zhu

Department of English, UT Austin

There is something often lost in translation when Chinese literature finds itself traveling beyond the realms of East Asia – or maybe, something is simply lost, vanished for good. Despite the cultural importance of *Journey to the West* as one of China’s Four Great Classics, its recent growing popularity in the West hinges on entertainment value with very little recognition of its historical, moral, and spiritual (to name a few) intentions. The charismatic protagonist, the Monkey King, becomes a fable-like figure of amusement with the cleverness of an exceptional primate, no longer the “Great Sage” of Chinese mythology. Sun Wukong’s transformation is a symptom of the West’s tendency to glean what is on the surface – the beautiful, bizarre, contemptibly fascinating, and/or *entertaining* – while neglecting literary and intellectual value. *Journey to the West*’s journey is currently a process of restoration, that is, the restoration of empty tropes and fragmented representations of the Chinese other.

The history of the Monkey King is a long and vibrant one in China and in surrounding Asian nations, but the publication of *Journey to the West* in the sixteenth century ensured the consolidation, preservation, and integration of monk Xuanzang's real-life travels with the already circulating mythology of the Monkey King. Sun Wukong's epic pilgrimage with Xuanzang, Zhu Bajie, and Sha Wujing, spans one-hundred chapters and countless exploits, all presented in a manner similar to the European picaresque. However, despite its ranged appeal as both a religious and an adventure text, its popularity – along with those of the other Four Great Classics and China's literary corpus in general – has remained confined to Asia. It is only within the last fifty years that *Journey to the West* has received more widespread Western attention – surprisingly, in popular culture. While there are an increasing number of plays, novels, and scholarly publications devoted to this legend, they tend to either focus on *Journey* from an East Asian studies perspective or they are simply modern revisions and modern sequels to the original, with explicit intentions to invoke an “authentic” *Journey to the West* for a small, target audience. In pop culture, however, this mythology is appropriated and integrated into the whole of Western society, but without a full awareness of the (Chinese) history that accompanies it.

I propose that *Journey to the West's* most palpable impact on British and American culture can be linked to Sun Wukong's appearances – in various guises – in the Western hemisphere. Given that most species of monkeys are not native to Europe or North America, it is likely that early Western conceptions of this particular primate were – and still are – shaped by economic, social, and artistic interactions with a culture engaged in an animal-oriented tradition where monkeys played no small part. I trace the Monkey King's influence through the changing definitions of the English word “monkey,” to Rudyard Kipling's enduring imperialistic classics, *Kim* and *The Jungle Book*, and end with the distinctive images of Sun Wukong that can be found in popular video games, animated shows, and comic books. Though varied and diverse, Sun Wukong's many transformations in the West are centered on the same idea – an ostensibly powerful “king” who is ultimately only a harmless figure of entertainment, devoid of Oriental threat.

Reading the Popular and/as Resistance

“I am Aveline de Grandpré, I am an assassin, and I fight for liberation.” Subverting Colonial Control and Playing with Colonial Mimicry in *Assassin’s Creed III: Liberation’s* System of Procedural Rhetoric

Sam Cannon

Department of Spanish and Portuguese, UT Austin

The videogame *Assassin’s Creed III: Liberation* (2012) presents the story of the African-French female assassin, Aveline de Grandpré, set in colonial New Orleans between 1765-1780. The unique protagonist and historical setting of this game position it within a discourse of coloniality that must be maneuvered in order to successfully complete the narrative. Aveline de Grandpré, being a female of African decent, must work within the social and political system of colonial New Orleans. Within the game this colonial system is manipulated through the use of various “personas” or outfits. The player can dress Aveline as an assassin (a man’s outfit), an aristocratic lady or a slave in order to complete the game’s storyline. The protagonist uses these personas and her training as an assassin to disrupt the colonial practice of *plaçage*, the arranged marriage between wealthy white French and Spanish men with African, Indigenous or Creole women as a means of “improving” their offspring. In order to understand and analyze the implications of the colonial interactions presented in *Assassin’s Creed III: Liberation* I will apply the theories of Ian Bogost (*Persuasive Games*, 2007) and Homi Bhabha (*The Location of Culture*, 1994). This investigation will utilize Ian Bogost’s theory of videogames as forms of Procedural Rhetoric which use “rule-based representations and interactions rather than the spoken word, writing, images, or moving pictures” to communicate their meaning, and Homi Bhabha’s concept of Colonial Mimicry. The unique procedural processes established by the game provide a virtual sphere of colonial power that the player must learn to maneuver, either through submission or subversion of the system, in order to complete the game. I propose that videogames such as *Assassin’s Creed III: Liberation* can be analyzed as narratives that provide unique insight into the structures of colonial subjectivity, how they are enforced and how they may be subverted.

“Fey”ble: Queering Joseph Campbell’s Monomyth as Found in Lionhead Studios’ *Fable III*

Nicholas Holterman

Department of French and Italian, UT Austin

Joseph Campbell’s monomyth, as described in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, has been considered to be universally applicable to all narratives. However, considering recent social paradigm shifts and new types of narratives such as video games, comic books, television, and film, it is necessary to revisit the model of the Hero’s Journey as it was defined in 1949. By analyzing the narrative structure found in Peter Molyneux’s video game *Fable III* through the lens of video game theory and queer theory, this paper disproves several components and sections of Campbell’s monomyth as applicable to all modern narratives. “Fey”ble: Queering Joseph Campbell’s Monomyth as Found in

Lionhead Studios' Fable III" successfully deconstructs the heteronormative structure of the Hero's Journey through the exposition of queer characterization and gender nonconformity present in Fable III.

Breeders and Bleeders: The Queerness of *Blacula*

Alejandro Omidasalar

Department of English, UT Austin

Gerry Turcotte once termed the Gothic "a hybrid form—a mode delineated by borrowings and confluences, by fragmentation and incompleteness, by a rejection of set values and yet a dependence on establishment." Rarely has this idea of Gothic fragmentation been put more intriguingly on display than in *Blacula*, William Crain's 1972 blaxploitation-horror opus. The majority of queer criticism on *Blacula* tends to focus on the characters of Bobby and Billy, the cartoonishly effeminate gay couple that accidentally bring the titular vampire to America and awaken him from his centuries-long slumber. There seems to be a general scholastic reticence to challenge *Blacula*'s status as a classically masculine and heterosexual blaxploitation anti-hero, because no serious consideration has been given to the potential queerness of *Blacula* himself. This critical trend is questionable, and it is my intent to highlight an alternative queer reading of *Blacula* that invokes the criticism of Frantz Fanon and M. Jacqui Alexander to consider the queerness of scenes of vampiric feeding and the nature of the state's reaction to *Blacula* as a radical queer threat.

Reading Words

LANGUAGE Poetry and Fugu Fish: Redesigning Textual Studies through Bioinformatics

Daniel Carter

School of Information, UT Austin

Textual criticism has had a historically vexed relationship with literary theory. On one hand, textual critics have at times seen their work as theoretically unmotivated: by recovering an “optimal” text, they claim to provide a neutral ground for various theoretical pursuits. On the other hand, textual criticism has engaged heavily with poststructuralist theory, which directly threatens many of its core assumptions.

In this presentation, I consider two of textual criticism’s responses to poststructuralist theory: 1) a move toward presenting multiple versions of works instead of an “optimal” edition and 2) an increased interest in interfaces and tools for this process of “versioning.” While earlier arguments for versioning were primarily theoretical, the later move to consider technical solutions calls into question the relationship between theoretical motivations and actual presentations of texts. Looking to the historical development of software tools used to collate versions of literary texts, I discuss how these technical processes emerged from earlier work in bioinformatics that shares many of the same assumptions that poststructuralist theory critiqued. By calculating an optimal pairing of two texts, or two gene sequences, these processes of global alignment can be seen as presenting another version of the “optimal” text presented in eclectic editions.

However, the history of bioinformatics also suggests alternative methods that could have been adopted by textual criticism. Looking to these local methods of alignment, I present two speculative projects that, rather than calculating the differences between texts, instead suggest areas of similarity. The first of these projects uses topic modeling and dimensionality reduction to compare two English translations of a French pulp novel. The second visualizes patterns in different editions of Lyn Hejinian’s *My Life*. As Hejinian’s evolving text is concerned with (and argues against) the prospect of self-identity, it serves as an interesting test case to consider the relationships between theory and technical processes and interfaces.

"Na Minha Fala:" Transcription, Translation, and Appropriated Language in *Macunaíma*

Jonathan Fleck

Program in Comparative Literature, UT Austin

85 years after its publication, Mário de Andrade's novel *Macunaíma* continues to elicit extensive commentary regarding its creative use of popular Brazilian dialects. However, critical studies have not thoroughly questioned the means or the effects of the linguistic and cultural transformations in *Macunaíma*, instead assuming a more or less transparent link between Andrade's ethnolinguistic sources and the text that appears in his novel.

In order to account for the politically interested linguistic transformations that drive *Macunaíma*, I argue that it is essential to understand the novel as an act of translation. While the novel is not traditionally read as a translation, I argue that the

intense cross-dialectal transformations that structure the novel must be analyzed through translation theory. Recent turns in theory focus on the interventions of the translator in manipulating source works for particular political ends. My analysis of *Macunaíma* forms part of a larger (dissertation) work of reading a wide variety of 20th century Brazilian literature through translation theory.

Ellipses and the failed confession in *Notes From Underground*

Kaitlin Shirley

Program in Comparative Literature, UT Austin

My paper will address the issue of reader response theory with special attention to ellipses in Dostoevsky's *Notes From Underground* while also examining the ways in which the text challenges this theory. Specifically, in my project, I will be looking at confession and ellipses, in order to show how Dostoevsky's text forces the reader to participate but leaves gaps to large to fill. I will discuss the reader and narrative structure, in order to reveal the connections between Dostoevsky's polyphonic narrative and Rousseau's monologic *Confessions*.

Reader response theory has been widely read in the literary field, with scholars such as Wolfgang Iser arguing that the reader participates in producing the meaning of a text. I argue that the underground man's confession fails because of the first-person, monologic narrative that does not fully allow the reader to participate. In Dostoevsky's later works, his narrator evolves into a much more complex character that engages the reader in ways that a first-person narrative fails to do. This project, by closely examining reader response theory and ellipses, sheds new light on the failure of the underground man's confession, the narrator's evolution in Dostoevsky's work, and the relevance of reader response theory.

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Automating Ontography
Clay Templeton and Rachel Simons
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In one of the interviews informing Katherine Hayles’s survey of the Digital Humanities in *How We Think*, Timothy Lenoir articulates a strictly iconoclastic position toward ontologies: “I am totally against ontologies”(2012, p. 28). In this talk, we will propose an approach to textual data that is designed to minimize ontological commitments while affording a level of semantic and narrative analysis beyond what is afforded by flat associations between words and documents.

The aversion of some Digital Humanities scholars to ontological commitments that might bias textual data analysis is shared by at least a few luminaries in the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS). In a recent issue of *Social Studies of Science* devoted to ontology, Michael Lynch argues that “a commitment to a general philosophical ontology confuses investigations of specific practical ontologies”, and proposes instead an ‘ontography’ that treats ontology empirically (2013). In a similar vein, Bruno Latour designates the work of mapping ontological controversies ‘empirical metaphysics’(2005).

Computational linguistics is a natural ally in mapping the controversies through which actors negotiate the terms of the social. Already, a range of approaches in computational linguistics have sought to automate the labeling of ‘semantic roles’ based on syntax and lexicon (Màrquez et al., 2008). The theoretical concerns of semantic role labeling and related tasks correspond nicely to three uncertainties that Latour identifies as sources of information about actors’ worldbuilding activities: the nature of groups, the nature of actions, and the nature of objects.

We intend to describe an approach to coding semantic roles that is based on the actantial grammar of Lucien Tesnière (1959), whose work also informs the minimal ontology suggested by Latour. By deploying our coding frame over a set of citation sentences drawn from a scientific domain, we hope to trace the shifting grammatical role of emergent entities, which we expect might tend to move from less agentic positions to more agentic positions over time. As actantial grammar entails a small ontological commitment, we will explore the trade-off between flexibility and interpretive power in approaches that leverage actantial grammar to analyze large amounts of text.

‘Reading Trauma Through Memory

Dystopian narratives in the writings of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War veterans.

Itay Eisinger

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“Losing touch with its historical memory - [...] political Zionism wrongly promised too much: ‘a complete and absolute solution of the Jewish problem in all its aspects.’”

“The utopia” writes Northrop Frye, “... contracts implicitly or explicitly, the writer’s own society with the more desirable one he describes”. Dystopia is not simply the opposite of Utopia, but a variant of it: a description of an advanced society which abuses its power for a totalistic repression of its members. I identify a distinct sub-genre of dystopian Hebrew fiction that emerged after the 1973 War as a reaction to the decline or corruption of Zionism. The texts I’ll analyze in my presentation illustrate, to paraphrase Fredric Jameson, “the inextricability of politics from fiction in the history of nation-building.”

Zionism was consolidated as a political movement at the last decades of the nineteenth century, and was shaped by the era’s dominant ideologies: Nationalism and Socialism. So far, Zionism has failed to establish either of its goals: a just society or a safe haven for the Jews. For all too many inhabitants of “the much too promised land,” reality is dystopian. Rose writes: “however utopian the hopes, the worst will not let go (it carries over like a demented, never-ending mathematical game).”

Modern Hebrew literature has special relations with Zionism, and hence with utopianism. Some of the most prominent Hebrew writers have also flirted with dystopian themes and narratives. The dystopian narratives/predictions written by Jewish combatants-veterans of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, on whom I will focus, offer a particularly interesting case, indeed because of their foresight.

The first paradigmatic example of this trend in Hebrew literature is Amos Kenan’s fictional *The Road to Ein Harod* (1984). In his short novella, Israel is controlled by a lunatic military dictatorship; only Ein-Harod, a socialist kibbutz in northern Israel, stayed free, and the macho protagonist is trying to reach it with the help of a local Palestinian. The second text is Yoram Kaniuk’s *Basters* (1997). Its protagonists meet daily at the same Tel-Avivian Café, to recall war stories and complain about their health. Above all, they are disappointed by, and envy, the young bodies of Israeli teenagers. Those sexy youngsters don’t care about the veterans’ sacrifices and heroism. So the veteran-fighters begin to murder them, efficiently and consistently—commando-style.

These dystopian narratives reveal several repressed truths, first, regarding the true nature of the 1948 War; but also about the uninhibited nature of violence, which tends to hunt those who practice it, as the return of the repressed.

Modernism and Tomás González' *La Luz Difícil*

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La Luz Difícil is a first-person retrospective narrative which weaves the protagonist's memories of two traumatic losses in his family: his son's assisted suicide twenty years in the past and his wife's death in the recent past. The techniques that González employs, in particular the abrupt jumps along the narrative timeline from past to present and back again, recall two Modernist works purportedly about trauma and memory: William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* and Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse*. I will show how González draws from these works' technique of distorting time as a method of representing memory in the crafting of this superb novelette.

Narrating the Firing Squad: Metaphors of Sight and Light in Textual and Visual Representations

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In Rodolfo Walsh's *Operation Massacre*, a testimonial narrative of an Argentinean mass killing by firing squad in 1956, I will analyze the narration of light and darkness during the massacre, as well as Walsh's spotlighting narrative technique. While it casts light on disparate characters, it constructs a testimonial as faithful to the obscured events as possible. Sustaining that light yields visibility, and that the visibility of prisoners by a firing squad facilitates successful termination, I will argue that darkness correspondingly cedes imperceptibility, permitting escape. Roberto Arlt's 1931 article, "He visto morir" ("I have seen dying"), chronicles the execution of an Argentinean political dissident. In his journalistic narrative of the event, the visibility of a prisoner before a juridical authority connotes death. Interpreting the narrative interplay of light and shadow, as well as the disembodied snapshot-like narration, I will contend that it is the prisoner's own vision, not just his visibility, that conveys meaning. Rejecting a blindfold offered to him, the prisoner insists on seeing until his moment of death. From more than a hundred years earlier, Francisco de Goya's canonical painting, "The Third of May 1808", depicts a tenacity like that of Arlt's prisoner, to see in the moment of death rather than blind oneself to the reality of imminent death. Goya's employment of light emanating from the Christ-like figure contrasts with the night sky and from the prisoners hidden in darkness. My reading of the painting analyzes two opposing discourses: the martyrdom of facing death in the light and the potential cowardice of hiding in the shadows.

While Western conventions from antiquity through the Enlightenment associate light with virtue, in contrast to darkness with iniquity, in this paper I examine the ways in which each of these works suggests an inversion of these standards. In the firing squad, light and visibility lead to death for the prisoners, whereas darkness and imperceptibility facilitate escape. Further questions I seek to address include the following: What avenues of communication exist between textual and visual, writerly and painterly narratives of the shooting squad? What can this sort of interdisciplinary intervention reveal about narrative approaches to sight and light?

Writing the World: Meta-fictional Magic in Haruki Murakami's *1Q84* and Tea Obreht's
The Tiger's Wife
Rachael Mariboho
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One hallmark of postmodern literature is that it is often self-reflexive. Following this trend, the narrative mode of magical realism—arguably one of the most popular contemporary storytelling modes within the larger framework of postmodernism—often uses magic in meta-fictional ways to highlight what Wendy B. Faris calls “the magical power of fiction.” However, because of the unsettling nature of the blending of the real and the fantastic in magical realist texts, there is, according to Irleamar Chiampi, “a systematic questioning of the narrative process” inherent to the reading experience. This becomes more pronounced in texts where the narrative is also an element of the magic in the story. Yet, this questioning also engenders a departure from normal storytelling expectations, as the writing or telling of a story within the central narrative of the novel becomes a generative force that effectively writes (or rewrites) the world of the novel. While this topic has been studied at length in relation to twentieth-century magical realist texts, the use of meta-fiction to illuminate twenty-first century anxieties has not been investigated with as much depth. My paper examines how meta-fiction is used as a narrative strategy in order to explore issues associated with trauma, loss, and isolation in twenty-first century society and the way these issues are often reconciled through the medium of storytelling.

In Haruki Murakami's *1Q84*, Tengo, an aspiring novelist and one of the novel's two protagonists, is asked by his editor to rewrite the work of a mysterious seventeen-year-old girl. The more he works on this novel, the more the world of the book he is writing becomes the world of his existence, as fiction begins to mimic reality. Not only does this create one of the most magical moments of the novel, it also, as I argue, reflects the unstable environment of this “world that bears a question,” which is the contemporary world Murakami is portraying. Furthermore, the intense isolation experienced by both Tengo and his counterpart, Aomame, is only broken through the conflation of the fiction and reality that occurs as Tengo writes the novel.

Written in the aftermath of her own Grandfather's death, Tea Obreht's *The Tiger's Wife* weaves together a history of war and cultural myths to illustrate the grief engendered by loss on a personal, communal, and universal scale. As the protagonist of her novel, Natalia Stefanovic, crosses the border into a place that had once been a part of her country but now was separated by ethnic differences, she must confront the loss of her grandfather while also considering the loss that has consumed her country in the aftermath of war. I argue that Obreht confronts the traumatic effects of war by illuminating the personal and communal loss experienced by those who survived the war. This occurs through the meta-fictional moments created as Natalia finds the truth behind the stories her grandfather told her, and it is within these stories that Natalia finds comfort and a way to overcome her grief.

Re-reading the Colony

Lew Wallace's *The Fair God* (1873): Or, Guatimozin: Last of the Warrior-Librarians

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Lew Wallace, who was a Union General in the United States Civil War and, later, a secret U.S. operative in Mexico, is said to have spent thirty years researching his popular novelization of the Conquest of Mexico, *The Fair God or, The Last of the 'Tzins* (1873). Considering the entwining of scholarship and military service in his personal life, it is unsurprising that in his fiction he would attend to those same themes: About halfway through the novel, Guatimozin (Cuauhtémoc) shows a friend what could be called his library. Standing apart from the rest of the house, the library stores religious texts and a number of other artifacts, amongst them the head and horse of a slain Spanish soldier. Condemning the masses that had welcomed Cortés into the capital city, Guatimozin asks his visitor what many scholars have asked: How could his compatriots have been so easily deceived? Why had they trusted the priests and politicians to interpret for them events they should have examined themselves? Guatimozin announces that he will display the head and horse in the marketplace – that he will help the citizens of Tenochtitlan understand that Cortés and his men are not gods, but men who are opportunistic and susceptible to death. In my paper, which is part of a larger project on the transnational work undertaken in the nineteenth century by writers of historical novels with “Indianist” themes, I explore the sources Wallace consulted in his research and his literary renditions of physical archives and the men who make use of them. Drawing on archival theory by Derrida, Rodrigo Lazo, and M. Jacqui Alexander, and Anna Brickhouse's and Gretchen Murphy's recent work on transnational literary relations, I read *The Fair God* first as the author's domestication of Mexican history for a U.S. American audience and second as his vindication of U.S. military involvement in Mexico. A nineteenth-century Guatimozin, he takes another culture's remains to the market, where he demystifies them for the impressionable masses.

Coloniality and Legibility of the Nation: Mexico's Education Project in the Pages of *El*

Maestro Rural

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El Maestro Rural (1932-1940) was a pedagogical magazine published by Mexico's Secretaría de Educación Pública to serve as material and guidance for the rural classrooms throughout the country. In concert with the topic set for this conference I will focus my presentation on what it meant to create a legible source for the explicit purpose promulgating a newly minted Mexican nationalism throughout the post-revolutionary countryside. By describing *El Maestro Rural* as “legible” I mean to emphasize the fact that the magazine was meant to reach both teachers and their newly literate pupils, both children and adults, through stories, poems, essays and plays. My presentation will analyze the forces of coloniality manifested in the first issue of *El Maestro Rural* (1932). According to Walter Mignolo in contrast to the practice of colonialism which

necessitates one nation exercising power over another, coloniality is the manifestation of patterns of power experienced in the everyday that emerge as a result of political and economic relationships in which one nation or people are under the control of another. The SEP attempted to unify the *indo-campesino* communities of Mexico after the 1910 revolution as a means of creating a homogenous *mestizo* citizenry out of the heterogeneous ethnic reality of the disparate countryside. By analyzing the first issue of *El Maestro Rural* I will show how and why the post-revolutionary rural education project implied a re-colonization of the *indo-campesino* by the intellectual pedagogues writing for the federal government and is therefore a manifestation of coloniality. Finally, I would like to touch on how and where the magazine and the correspondence between teachers and its publishers is currently available both in the SEP's archives and in libraries in the U.S.

Rapping to Remember: Médine's Musical Critique of Colonization

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France's relationship with Algeria has, historically, been one of forgetting. Even though colonization was a major part of both countries' pasts, it has been largely ignored in French public discourse because the shame of imperialism and its aftermath, particularly the Algerian War, are too painful for the state to revisit. Médine, a Franco-Islamic rapper, creates music that fills a gap in the French educational system by teaching its listeners about France's history of imperialism and immigration. His music counters French forgetting by criticizing colonization and highlighting the contemporary problem of discrimination in France, particularly Islamophobia. Médine's albums, music videos, and live shows act as *lieux de mémoire* or spaces for collective remembering. These *lieux de mémoire* counter the forgetting in France's hegemonic historical narrative by preserving the history of French colonization in Algeria. Médine's songs about past events build a present-day identity, creating an object around which a collective can form, preserve, and share memories, thus keeping the Algerian past alive in a country that suppresses the mixed identities of second and third generation immigrants. This paper presents a critique of Médine's role as a popular historian and analyzes his manipulation of the past to condemn the social, political, and economic situation of Algerian immigrants in present-day France.

Archival fever at the 30th anniversary of Guevara's death in Ana Menéndez's *Loving Che*

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On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Che Guevara's death in 1997, three new biographies of the revolutionary were published internationally, almost simultaneously: Jorge G. Castañeda's, Jon Lee Anderson's and Paco Ignacio Taibo II's large tomes privilege new archival sources and new interview materials in reconstructing the image of the revolutionary "hero" or "villain" – depending on who (or which biographer) you ask. The note at the end of Ana Menéndez's 2003 novel *Loving Che* states that her work "draws on the portraits of Ernesto Guevara" in the three aforementioned

biographies. Indeed, her novel – or at least the interpolated “lost diary” that constitutes the second section of the novel – splices together quotations lifted verbatim from the 1997 biographies. Here in Menéndez’s invented diary of one of Che’s spurned lovers, these important, newly found archival discoveries are ventriloquized by a Che who resembles a “romance novel” character more than he does a revolutionary hero/martyr/villain. *Loving Che* reveals nothing particularly interesting about Che himself; rather, it provides a unique perspective into Cuba and Miami of the special period. Menéndez depicts a spiraling “archival” drive that captures the imagination of her Miami-based hero as she searches for her estranged parents on the island (the lost father, in fact, may or may not be Che). The search for a special, unique detail that might link *Loving Che*’s protagonist to her parents, for an important, historical memento on the revolution, or for a new diary on Che that might be of interest to University of Miami academics all display the same features of archival “fever” (Derrida) – archival research ends up looking suspiciously like romance novel in Menéndez’s depiction. Ultimately, these archival techniques on and off the island become economically productive in the era of the special period: Che archive is never complete, bringing in new victims – exiles, academics and tourists – into its romantic orbit.

Reading Gender in the Archives

[Untitled]

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In this presentation I break down the function of the Codex in the Mass Effect trilogy, as a digital archive navigated by the creation of character. The Mass Effect trilogy contains a massive amount of text describing everything from planetary systems to magazines to the main character's personal history. These data are organized into a hierarchical system continuously accessible by the player through the main menu, serving as a type of encyclopedia. Information is added to the Codex once it is encountered in the game, and thus the Codex also serves as the memory of the player character. The final main function of the codex is, I propose, as a guide to role play. By collecting and presenting material that might be ancillary to the main gameplay and leaving it optional to peruse, the Codex opens up space for role playing on the part of the player. In this way, it renders the experience of the game richer.

In this presentation, I argue for the importance of narrative, especially character-driven narrative, in constructing paths through information. Video games, as they represent lore in an accessible way, contain lessons for the wider world of digital archiving. I put a close reading of the lore system in Mass Effect in conversation with existing literature on information retrieval and information organization. Ultimately, the three main functions of the Codex, all narrative-driven, are reflected in the digital infrastructure including its location in the main game menu. Finally, I offer a few lessons in non-ludic digital archive design

Chasing your (Josie) Bliss: The archival afterlife of Pablo Neruda's Burmese mistress

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Residencia I marks an important milestone for Pablo Neruda, one that brought him into the folds of an international literary community. At the same time, however, this poetry also represents the deepest moment of his isolation both from a global literary community centered on Europe and that of his native Chile. Even a casual perusal of descriptors of the collection reflects Neruda's reaction to that isolation through words like "hermetic" and "self-absorbed." But an exclusive focus on his isolation precludes the question of what Neruda *did* see and do during the time he was composing the first *Residencia*. In fact, Neruda was working as a consular official, first in Burma in 1927 and then in Ceylon in 1928, taking an extended tour of the Indian subcontinent in between these two postings. A generalized denial of Neruda's material reality during this period has seriously limited the analysis of this collection since its publication.

In the last decade of his life, Neruda invited a more materially grounded examination of his early years in Asia by revealing his relationship with a Burmese mistress he called "Josie Bliss." Generations of biographers and critics have tried to learn more about this enigmatic figure, who inspired some of Neruda's most haunting poetry of the period, but many have run aground on the same orientalist traditions that often colored Neruda's own writing about her. In the absence of photographs, of contemporary

letters, of any archival evidence of her existence, Neruda critics have relied on a combination of Neruda's own nostalgic descriptions and the works of British Orientalists to fill in the gaps about Josie's life.

This paper about Josie Bliss' critical afterlife demonstrates both the importance of re-situating *Residencia I* in the soil of its composition and the dangers of reconstructing her, piecemeal, from limited and biased sources. Was Josie Bliss a single historical person? Is it important or even possible to recover the details of her life and relationship with Neruda? What is the duty of Neruda scholarship toward her memory?

Fama Novi Fontis: The Sexual Curiosity of Minerva in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* V

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The embedded narratives in Book V of the *Metamorphoses* prompt close readers of the text to be more conscientious to each narrator's audience. The most immediate layer of narration is, of course, Ovid himself, within whose narrative storytelling by an unnamed Muse, Calliope, and Arethusa are contained. This paper will consider Minerva—a goddess known for her *virtus*² and allegiance to male heroes³—as audience to Arethusa's account of her own rape (V.562-642). Using John Heath's reading of Ovid which theorizes the characters of the poem may also be attentive (or not so attentive) readers of its events, then after four sexually violent books of the *Metamorphoses*, Minerva too is curious about understanding her sexuality within a poem obsessed with sexual trauma. She arrives on Helicon as an *elegiac discipula amoris* of the Muses, her *magistrae amoris*. Thus, Arethusa's narrative is an exemplum of female desire for Minerva, an exemplum she ultimately rejects in Book VI.

The work of Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler will significantly inform my discussion of Minerva's sexual curiosity, specifically in regard to gendered narrative and the "maleness" of language. Sexual experience in the poem is predicated upon inequality, and the language of sexual experience/assault creates a strictly binary sexual identity: desirer and desired, pursuer and pursued, catcher and caught. The various levels of narration in Book V, however, confuse traditional narrative structure and create a more fluid, less linear composition appropriate for Book V's location in female, "othered" space. This moment of "othered" space created by the entwinement of female speakers allows Minerva to reflect upon how female sexuality only exists as a resignation to the binary power dynamics of the poem. Ultimately, in Book VI, her awareness of the poem's sexual politics is the catalyst for her attempt to subvert the binary limitations of a phallographic narrative.

"Unsolved Problems": Virginia Woolf and Archives of the Mind, from Early Fiction to *A*

Room of One's Own

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In this presentation, I will discuss Virginia Woolf's relationship to constructed, elaborated, and imagined archives and biographies in work spanning a quarter century of her career. Specifically, I will discuss Woolf's application of fictive biography in three early short stories, a technique which would flower fully decades later as the semi-

biographical fantasy *Orlando*. I will also describe materialist concerns with the nature of the archive that Woolf, herself elaborated within those works of fiction. I will then discuss her application of fictive biography techniques to non-fiction purposes in the groundbreaking feminist essay, *A Room of One's Own*.

I will detail some of the ways in which these modes and devices of fictive biographies and the imagined, elaborated, or transformed archives which support them are influenced by Woolf's own encounters with physical, social, and educational exclusion from the sanctioned archives of her day. I will also catalogue some of her responses to gaping lacunae in women's history and in the archives of women's lives encountered in her own search for the female subject.

In light of contemporary issues surrounding the surfeit of available data and the authenticity, transparency, and accuracy of contemporary internet "archives", I will consider whether locating a mental archive that is "more truth than fact" remains a valid rhetorical approach. I will argue that issues surrounding the materiality of the official archive – its exclusionary, forbidding, even impenetrable nature, as well as enduring issues of curation and resource allocation – remain critical today.

Reading Space & Place

The Word Became Filth: Platonov's *Happy Moscow*

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Platonov's *Happy Moscow* is replete with representations of utopic Stalinist projects such as advancements in air and space technology and the building of the Moscow metro, but it is also full of filth, dirt, excrement, and broken bodies – reminders of mankind's inability to overcome even his or her own body in the pursuit of perfection. Far from the "already-triumphant Utopia" claimed by the Stalin era, the city of Moscow in Platonov's formulation, through its link to the female body, is actually what grounds us not in the utopian "no-place" of the glorious past or the radiant future, but in the reality of the here and now. Platonov's heroine, Moscow Chestnova, resists the Soviets' attempts at modernization as well as the Russian myth of the Eternal Feminine. Such a dual disruption of national narratives reflects Platonov's own anxieties about the discontinuities and inequalities of the Soviet public image, which he seeks to subvert from within.

Platonov achieves this subversion as he transforms Moscow Chestnova from her early status as a "daughter of the Revolution" into the physically and mentally crippled Musya (a nickname meaning "garbage"). By the end of the novel, Moscow Chestnova/Musya no longer works for the improvement of the city and state but wallows away in filth, arguing with Komyagin and begging him to hurry up and die. Platonov's novel reveals that the present cannot be merely a bond with the future in which the perfected Soviet man is thought of as a *fait accompli* to be witnessed in one's own lifetime, nor simply a decisive break with the tsarist past; the present instead must account for all that we might rather leave out or push beyond the pale. Not the dismal view of mankind many critics have noted, *Happy Moscow*, through Moscow Chestnova, seeks to account for the multivalence of a complex nation by privileging filth and illustrating the impossibility of expunging any one particular narrative from a person's or a nation's identity, no matter how undesirable.

Theatricality and Framing: The Pavilion in Madame de Lafayette's *Princesse de Clèves*

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The pavilion in Madame de Lafayette's *Princesse de Clèves* is a space of dramatic importance: it is the setting for both the *aveu*, in which Madame de Clèves confesses an adulterous love to her husband, and for an erotic scene in which M. de Nemours spies on Mme de Clèves as she performs this passion. In this paper, I propose that the pavilion is a theatrical space. Firstly, the pavilion recalls the origins of the theatre as a place of transgression located outside of the city, with one side giving entrance to dangers from the forest and with the other side oriented towards the city and civilization. As a result of this double orientation, the pavilion becomes the stage upon which is performed the inner struggle of Mme de Clèves between virtue and passion. Secondly, the physical

construction of the pavilion with its partial barriers (windows, doors, pillars) and lighting allows it to become a place of spectacle, which, like the fourth wall of the theatre, simultaneously allows spectators to see the action while nevertheless reinforcing the separation between spectacle and spectator. Finally, I propose that the partial barriers of the pavilion, which consciously draw attention to the artificiality of what is allowed to be seen and its separation from the world of the viewer, much as a frame to a painting, constitutes a reflection upon the relationship between the mimesis of the artistic creation and the reality it represents, a reflection upon the role that both fiction and historic fact play in the genre of the “nouvelle historique.”

Paper-thin Walls: neighboring, materiality, & the apartment building in *Building Stories* and *NW*.

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A nexus of socioeconomic changes—unsteady economies, aging populations, and alternative family structures—brings the apartment building to the forefront of conversations about contemporary culture. Apartments in literature have a unique role: they present individual characters, but cannot deny any character’s basic connectedness with other people and eras. The two apartment narratives I address, Zadie Smith’s *NW* (2012) and Chris Ware’s graphic narrative *Building Stories* (2012), deconstruct story in order to build dwellings and communities. They inventory details and objects from everyday apartment life, and it is the reader’s task makes meaning of this proliferative data, to interpret it. Both call the reader to learn a new way of reading. Casts of characters offer multiple, networked perspectives, and shared material conditions facilitate minglings between inhabitants. The texts’ interpenetrating, open structures enable these encounters—some friendly, some fraught, some ending in violence—and engage with what I term the ethics of neighboring; like the texts, neighboring requires attention to others that is both observant and mindful of difference. Apartment narratives depict pluralism, simultaneity, and coexistence in the contemporary urban environment.

Reading Beckett's Media: Surface, Substance, Sound

Being, Remaining, and Recovering: The Iterative Ontology of Playback in *Krapp's Last Tape*

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The term “iterative poetics” examines the use of repetition in composition to challenge existing hierarchical structures. It has become increasingly influential in new media and para-textual studies, and describes a range of practices, including: the increasingly repetitive nature of the world as digital technology becomes more prevalent, the artifice of repeated text within composition itself, and the engendering of (and breaking away from) ideological response through repetition.

I will explore all three of these aspects in the context of sound recording by examining *Krapp's Last Tape*, a 1958 play by Samuel Beckett in which the aging eponymous Krapp listens to tape recordings he has made throughout his life. After establishing the sound recording as a phonotextual object, detailing how a sonic representation can be understood as textual, I will explore the ontological role of magnetic tape recordings, which *Krapp's Last Tape* gives as, “being and remaining.” Then, I will establish that on top of these two functions of the tape, we must add the category of “recovering,” which, while not named by Krapp, demonstrates the iterative function of playback. Finally, I will argue that the material construction of the magnetic tape challenges the static presence of infinite iterability, giving us the context in which a challenge to structures of identity and self-hood might be realized.

Imagine/Say: Performing the Imperative In Samuel Beckett's Late Prose

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Samuel Beckett's late prose texts set the fictional stage in much the same way as his plays do, with terse evocations of place and character followed by meticulous instructions for the scene's (imaginative) staging. In these highly elliptical texts, the roles of speaker and audience are elided into a series of impersonal imperatives, unfolding from the initial command ‘imagine’ or ‘say.’ While critics have often remarked on the thematic overlap between Beckett's drama and his fiction, few have drawn an explicit connection between his stage directions and the function of the imperative in his late prose texts. Drawing on Martin Puchner's analysis of the modernist closet drama, I analyze how the reader's fulfillment of the commands ‘imagine’ and ‘say’ shifts the boundary between private reading and public performance. In doing so, I also seek to construct an alternate genealogy for Beckett's late prose, one which would allow us to treat the imagine/say texts as more intimately linked to his concerns as a playwright and director. Such an approach might allow us to better account not only for the challenge these texts pose to generic conventions, but also for the possibilities they open up for new modes of readerly engagement.

“No Success Like Failure: *Endgame* and the Frustration of Sonata Form”

Courtney Massie

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Samuel Beckett’s skepticism regarding language’s ability to communicate drives his dramas’ use of formal and stylistic gestures that emphasize the musical potential of words. In this paper, I analyze Beckett’s play *Endgame* (1958) in light of its musical elements and their implications for performance. Critics have debated the putative presence of sonata form, a type of musical structure prevalent among classical pieces from the eighteenth century, in *Endgame*. One scholarly camp proposes that the play follows such a form, while another doubts the possibility of such interdisciplinarity due to speech’s lack of harmonic structure. I contend that *Endgame*’s musicality resides in the uncharted territory between these two critical camps, linking the performative implications of the play’s sonata structure and the fundamental separation of language and music to Beckett’s doubt that language can adequately express thought and emotion. Consequently, I argue that *Endgame* functions not simply as a sonata, but as a *frustrated* sonata; that is, it approximates sonata form but can never fully replicate it. Considering *Endgame* in this manner establishes the play as a point of origin for Beckett’s experimental later plays; moreover, it reveals that for Beckett, the failure of language resides in its failure to *be* music.

Acts Without Words, Words Without Acts

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Beckett’s obsession with the difficulties of language and his efforts to explore new modes expressing himself are well documented, epitomized in his final work—a poem entitled “What is the Word.” This paper will explore one facet of these efforts: the composition of wordless mime plays. It will address the three short wordless plays Beckett wrote, 1956’s “Act Without Words” I and II; and 1981’s teleplay “Quad.”

This paper will analyze the three plays as efforts to attain an extralinguistic mode of expression. Although my arguments will nod toward semiotic studies and Derrida’s claim that “language invade[s] the universal problematic,” my focus will be on the plays as performance rather than text. Specially, I want to look at how their performances are received and what audiences and scholars do with them, supplementing my presentation with clips from the *Beckett on Film* versions of the plays.

I will argue that both of Beckett’s “Act Without Words” plays fail to move beyond a linguistic mode of interpretation. For example, a quick perusal of the Wikipedia page of either will supply an argument that the “Act Without Words I” protagonist’s being “thrown” onstage is an allusion to Heidegger’s “thrownness” and that one can read “Act Without Words II” in the context of the linguistic “I can’t go on, I’ll go on” of Beckett’s novel *The Unnamable*. In addition to their intertextual linguistic references, both plays contain intratextual labels, prods, and horns that carry very specific semantic meanings with them. Even as they refuse to engage in spoken language, both are in dialogue with it. “Quad” however, with its emphasis on choreography over action and diagrams over stage directions, does succeed—at least partially—in breaking out of the linguistic mode. In doing so, however, it fails as a drama.

Stepping back, I want to assess the significance of the success and failure of these efforts to the role of language as an expression, even in a mode—drama—that is supposedly less language reliant than the written text. Drama, I will argue, is not much farther from text than other forms of literature. I will however, suggest that some of Beckett's other efforts at self-expression in ways that undermined traditional language were more successful. Specifically, his later prose work, by engaging in forms of linguistic exhaustion, opens new avenues for written expression.

Reading Underground

Merengue and Bachata: the official and hidden transcripts of the Dominican soundscape

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My paper analyzes *bachata* music from the 1970s and 80s as representative of the post-Trujillo primarily black experience in the Dominican Republic. Whereas *merengue* served as a “public transcript” between the *Trujillato* and the people that was propagated by one of the largest, most technologically advanced state owned radio networks in the Americas, *bachata* emerged as a nonhegemonic, contrapuntal “hidden transcript” of those excluded from the national chorus. I follow the genre’s shifting context from its first rural articulations of despair to its migration into the urban barrios to its eventual hegemonic appropriation after the release of Juan Luis Guerra’s *Bachata Rosa* album.

A Mysterious Peacock Lands in São Paulo

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Bearing resemblance to the European chapbook or the French folhetim, Brazilian literatura de cordel or “literature on a string” is the printed version of sung poetic verses from the northeastern states of Brazil. Over the course of the 20th century these tiny folios cover topics as diverse as biblical reinterpretation, melodramatic love stories, northeastern folk history, changing landscapes of rural agriculture and electrification, education about AIDS, political history, and journalistic reports of natural disasters such as floods and droughts. As several studies show, while these pamphlets were originally referred to as folhetos, the more recent preference to call them literatura de cordel reflects changes in the way that Brazilian society consciously values this form of “popular poetry” at particular moments of history. Based on archival research conducted at UCLA’s Library of Special Collections, which holds over 4000 of these pamphlets ranging from dates between 1918 and the 1990s, this paper will consider the trajectory of one 1940s poem, *O Romance do Pavão Misterioso*. The poem transforms multiple times in pamphlet form and then becomes the title track of musician Ednardo’s 1974 RCA Records album. After the success of the album, the song also became famous as the theme song for “Saramandaia,” a novela, or soap opera, that aired in 1976.

By traveling to São Paulo from the state of Ceará, Ednardo reenacts the technological and narrative journeys that tell The Story of the Mysterious Peacock. Though he sings to an educated urban audience, Ednardo inscribes a kind of social pact into his lyrics that resembles what scholars such as Candace Slater have identified as the distinct social ties embedded in the underlying oral and musical nature of the earlier rural poetry. On the other hand, however, the decision to release a print version of the lyrics in the form of a cordel pamphlet reflects a strategy common to 1970s government projects that identified markets for the consumption of commodities through the fusion of new and old technologies of “popular” communication. By considering the narrative and material trajectory of this poem, I aim to suggest that the tension between the earlier role that folhetos played in the Northeast and the manner in which literatura de cordel has

been incorporated into a larger national consciousness is one of several contradictions built into the form, practice and tradition of Brazilian folheto literature itself.

Who reads, writes and gets published in Chile?: How Ergo Sum's *Libros Objetos* have contested the dynamics of Chilean literary production

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Beginning in 1985, Chile's Ergo Sum literary workshops brought authors together to publish collections of short stories, poems, and artwork in the form of *libros objetos*. In the context of the military dictatorship, these self-published book objects represented the authors' rejection of censorship and oppression that shrouded literary production. Concealed as objects such as a broken down cardboard box or a sewing kit, the *libros objetos* could evade detection by military forces, while also mocking what literary production had become in Chile. Even after Chile's transition to democracy up to the present, Ergo Sum's founder Pia Barros continues to bring together authors to publish *libros objetos*. Through them, the authors seek to maintain a literary culture outside of what the market controls. This project focuses on a few central *libros objetos* in looking at how and why they were published at different moments, and what each of them emphasized. At each of these moments, the *libros objetos* created a critical voice interrogating the culture around literary production in Chile, while also providing a space for new literary voices to emerge.