

Noted

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With thanks to Bryn Skibo-Burney, former editor

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Editor's Letter

EMILY SMITH

It's a truism that there are infinite ways to combine words in a sentence, and consequently infinite possible sentences. However, given the last year, I very much doubt that there are any new possible ways to say that we are living in unprecedented times.

Platitudes and aphorisms aside, life is tough right now – albeit in uniquely difficult ways for each of us. What we are all sharing, though, is the experience of disconnection. Given the isolation inherent in our present circumstances, I am utterly delighted to have the privilege of collating some of the wonderful work produced by members of the English Department in Geneva. Re-launching *Noted* at this time seems a natural choice; whilst we may not all be in the department physically, I hope that it will stand as a reminder that we are, nevertheless, all in the department together.

I've not yet decided whether Virginia Woolf would quite endorse a Zoom of One's Own. Nevertheless, academic life has continued apace, to the credit of all parties involved. This issue of *Noted* opens with a series of wonderful writing tips from Megan Zeitz. As a former Writing Lab monitor, she displays both experience and insight by the bucketful. In her words, 'a text will make you feel things'; you'd be well advised to read Megan's account of what she has learned through helping countless fellow students translate such feeling into form.

To read a spectacular example of such academic form, look no further than the very next feature: an exemplary essay by Yoann Didier which examines how writers encounter – and surpass – the 'limits of enunciation'. Finally, to conclude the academic section, we will be taking a metaphorical journey to Bern, where the research team *COMMode* tell us all about the delights of all things obscene in Chaucer's texts and their many, diverse afterlives.

The talent possessed by members of the English department neither starts nor ends with their academic endeavours, however. Valérie Fivaz will be the first of our contributors to prove this fact with her utterly compelling visual art. Not only has Valérie been kind enough to share her creations, but also to give *Noted* some insight into her artistic inspirations and process...including a self-confessed black pen consumption problem!

Moving into the realm of creative writing, Sinem Demiralp's short story 'And Goliath' provides a startlingly bold account of an escape from an abusive situation – particularly powerful in its account of how it feels to be, as she so elegantly puts it, 'past the awe'. Lorraine Devrillard's poem, 'A world of no time', rounds off the section; her expression of a world which reciprocally responds to our imagination is all the more poignant in our currently ever-so-slightly cloistered lives. Moreover, Megan Zeitz's graphic design begins, ends, and permeates *Noted*, in both a literal and a metaphorical sense; what could be more inspiring than her representation of the issue's theme, 'Beginnings', on the front cover?

The ability to experience and share cultural artefacts online has been a saving grace in the darkest days of a gloomy winter. The two essays featured in this edition of *Noted* prove that digital forms of media are far from mere trivialities. Megan Zeitz's argument that Instagram is more than a passive platform, but instead an active force which 'offers opportunities for [...] reshaping of generic literary resources' is a call for all of us to reconsider our perceptions – and indeed usage – of social media. A similar challenge to the status quo is presented by Sabrina Martins, who illustrates how we may begin to grapple with climate change through its representation in the most unlikely of places: horror movies. After all of that intellectual stimulation, it's likely that you're feeling the itch to experience an equally engaging form of entertainment: Andrea Volpicelli's review of the novels *Earthling* and *Convenience Store Woman* will persuade you that reading Sayaka Murata would be a good place to start.

In the 'Varia' section, we'll be helping you answer the most burning of questions: which Romantic poet would you have been? (I, for one, am either William Wordsworth or Robert Burns.) And, last but not least, we have subjected an academic in our department to a gentle, but thoroughly fascinating, grilling.

As a newcomer to the Department myself, it's been an absolute pleasure to meet and collaborate with each of the talented contributors in this edition – and, of course, with the wonderful Segen Tezare, Sabrina Martins, Sara Cerqueria, and Aicha Bouchelaghem, all of whom have curated *Noted*'s sections masterfully. Indeed, each of them deserve to be recognised for the extraordinary amount of effort they have put into thoroughly, thoughtfully, and indeed painstakingly seeing this journal through from plan, to preparation, and finally to print. I hope that you will enjoy the journey which all of these wonderful people have designed for you: sit back, relax, and read on...

ACADEMIA

Writing Tips From a Former Writing Lab Monitor

MEGAN ZEITZ

1. Start with your gut feeling. A text will make you feel things. A specific word may catch your attention and spark your interest. Listen to your instinct when it tells you that this word, that figure, this trope, that pattern, this rhyme or that narrative structure is meaningful. Start there: how does the text function to trigger that feeling in you? Once you have identified how the poetics of the text provoke your impressions, you can turn your affects into a critical argument.
2. When you have several scattered ideas about a text that you cannot seem to order logically, try to find the common denominator between them. What is the thematic thread that connects them? There is a good chance that this thread will end up being part of your thesis and will serve as the guideline that will lead your argumentative structure.
3. Do not try to find a thesis about a text or texts before you have taken the time to analyze it or them properly. Trying to apply an artificial argument to a text might lead to you misreading it and overlooking what is really occurring poetically within it. You may start with a rough idea about your text which will lead your analysis – that is, a working thesis that will help you target what you are looking for in the text – and when you are done analyzing all the relevant passages, you will notice patterns and you will connect the dots. In my opinion, only when the entire analysis is done – perhaps only when the essay is written, even – can you realize what your real thesis is. In my experience, the thesis that you finally come up with as the writing goes is always much more interesting, refined and original than the working thesis that you started with.
4. Dare to own your ideas and to lead the argumentation with your own voice. Owning an argument is scary; we are all afraid of being judged, are we not? Do use authoritative secondary sources to back up your claims, but do not let them overshadow what you have to say. Make your writing voice clearly stand out from your critical background.

5. Do extensive research about the genre of the text you are analyzing and about the ideological background of its author. This will allow you to understand how the text responds to expectations form-wise and content-wise, why the author may have chosen to craft it a certain way, and whose audience it aimed to address in its day. Those are all elements to have in mind when analyzing a text in context, to avoid misreading it.

6. If you have trouble analyzing a passage and building your argumentative paragraph, go back to the basics: P.E.E. – point, example, explanation. What claim are you making? What examples from the text can you find to illustrate it? What is going on at the level of form and content in these examples?

7. A more personal tip to help you study in good conditions: you may want to have background ambient sounds to help you relax while you are studying (because silence can be scary). There are plenty of relaxing ambience videos on YouTube which feature the sound of a crackling fire in a mountain cabin, rain falling and wind howling outside of an old library, or coffee being poured and people quietly chatting in a café. My strategy for ultimate relaxation is to mix a video of ambient sounds with low-volume soft instrumental music.

8. Final tip: do not hesitate to ask your teachers for help and go to the Writing Lab to seek tailored advice!

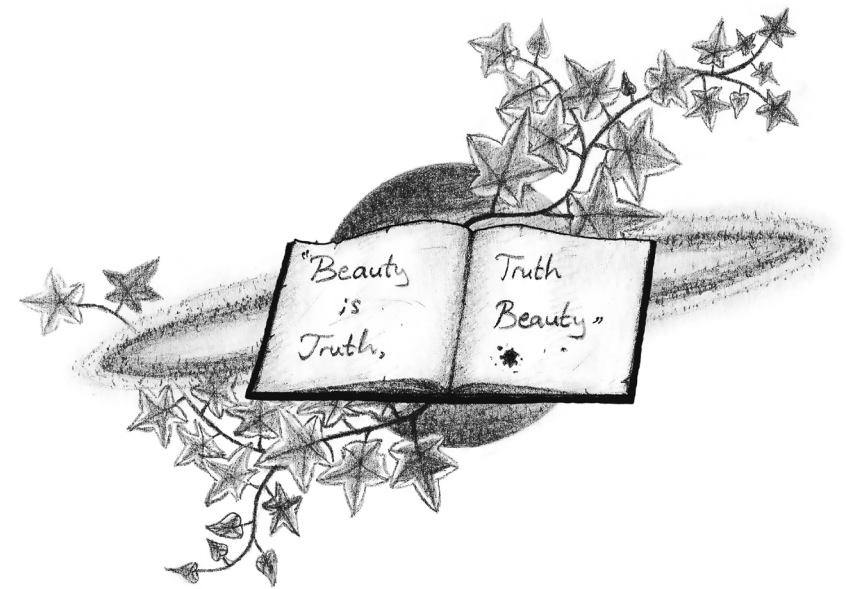
And Another Thing...

When writing - for papers or creatively - set an appointment with yourself, and get ready for it as if you're going to take a real exam. So, read beforehand, take good notes...and write with no distractions.

LORRAINE DEVILLARD | MA Student

Do you always plan or write far over the word count...and end up mourning the loss of points you're proud of? When cutting your essay down to size, never permanently delete a valuable idea which you've decided not to include! Instead, send these poor, unwanted words to the Essay Graveyard. Make a dedicated folder in your computer, and save your rejected thoughts into documents organised by topic. One day, you may find that they will come in useful: you, too, could write your own Zombie Essay.

EMILY SMITH | Assistante



Plath and Hazlitt: Limitless

YOANN DIDIER

Editor's Note: This essay was submitted as an end-of-term paper in part-fulfillment of module BA1, receiving exceptionally high commendation from both markers.

The question responded to was as follows: "The Text is that which goes to the limit of the rules of enunciation (rationality, readability, etc)" (Roland Barthes). How do different texts on BA1 "go to the limit" of "the rules of enunciation"?"

In his essay 'From Work to Text', Roland Barthes uses two concepts to define what a text is. The first one is the word "limit", defined as "[a]ny of the fixed points between which the possible or permitted extent [...]; a bound which may not be passed, or beyond which something ceases to be possible or allowable" (OED 1a). The "bound" which limits the activity of writing are the "rules of enunciation". For Barthes, words become text when those limits are approached and played with. In a sense the "rules of enunciation" do not only contain grammar rules. There are other limits applied to what can be enunciated. Those limits might be contained within the writer; a lot of people have subjects or traumas they cannot talk about for example, but they are also imposed on people by the social context they live in. Everything cannot be said because social contexts do not permit certain thoughts to be expressed. Some writers therefore play with words and rules of enunciation to go beyond this limit. In this sense their texts are texts because they are the only way they can say what must be said. Playing with the limits of the rules is the way to make something that was off limits, impossible, into something possible. This is what I am going to show in this essay.

The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth
The sour breath
Will vanish in a day.

Soon, soon the flesh
The grave cave ate will be
At home on me

And I a smiling woman
I am only thirty.

And like the cat I have nine times to die.

This is Number Three.
What a trash
To annihilate each decade.

EXTRACT FROM 'LADY LAZARUS', SILVIA PLATH

When looking at the poem "Lady Lazarus" by Sylvia Plath, I first noticed the shortness of the stanzas, each composed of three verses. In term of meter, there is no regular form in the poem; in the fifth stanza, for example the first verse is made of ten syllables, the second one is only 4 syllables long, and the third one contains 6 syllables. The apparently random length of the lines gives a jerky feeling to the poem. Every new verse is a surprise: there is no regular rhythm. In a way, this is a form of playing with the limits of the rules of enunciation, as it is normally expected that speakers or writers should produce a more continuous flow of thoughts in which the reader can easily get from one line to the next. This effect relates to the unpredictability and chaos that is experienced by Plath's speaker.

This apparent harshness of the construction is directly echoed by the semantic fields used by Plath. Words like "sour breath", "flesh", "grave", "trash", or "annihilate" are all referring to the concept of death, which is a hard subject on its own. The repetition of the word "soon" at the beginning of the sixth stanza sounds like a reminder that death is awaiting. Contributing to the overall effect of abrupt changes and disturbing rhythm is the seventh stanza which deeply contrast by its positive vocabulary with the dark stanzas that precede and follow. The word "smiling", for instance, looks strikingly out of place and adds a touch of joyfulness rapidly undermined by the word "die" at the end of the stanza, resulting once again in the form of irregularity that the poem embraces.

Another very interesting feature of the poem is the second verse of the sixth stanza: "the grave cave ate will be". The word "ate" is put in a rather strange, unorthodox, and ungrammatical place. The emphasis on this word is further accentuated by the presence of a strong assonance between the three words ending with "ate". It demands the reader to stop and think about what is eaten and what is eating. One of the most probable answers is that the "grave cave" ate the flesh but if we carry on reading, the same "grave cave" is also the subject of the last verse. In a spectacular inversion it is not the body which is "at home" on the grave but the grave that sits on the body, "at home". This is a perfect example of playing with the limits of the rules of enunciation

as it allows Plath to express something terribly violent in a concise and striking way. The flesh which used to be the physical incarnation of life has become the passive object of the grave which now bears the capacity of acting.

This fascinating line could also play on another level with the word “ate” by the fact that this conjugated verb is almost a perfect homophone to the word “hate”. Then the stanza could be read as followed “the grave cave [hate] will be at home on me”. This resonates with the end of the eighth stanza: “what a trash” and “To annihilate each decade”. It is possible to think that Plath, by choosing this word, also wanted to express her feeling of hate for the “grave” and her punctual return to it. This interpretation might be strengthened by the fact that the numerous “deaths” she is talking about are in fact suicide attempts. It is her suicide that gives existence to the “grave cave” and it also seems that it is the same suicide that is considered “trash” and hated.

“Lady Lazarus” by Sylvia Plath can be qualified as a strange, unusual, or even disturbing poem. It displays a lot of challenges to the rules of enunciation. Its irregular form, meter, patterns of sounds, and lexical fields are all symptoms of that play with the rules which Plath engages in. This is a perfect example of the way writers will flirt with the limits to express something that would not be possible to express in another way. Talking or even thinking about suicide is not an easy subject. Sylvia Plath talks about her own suicide attempts in a terrifying way, she does not present it with simplicity and clarity but embraces the complexity of the concept in her writing. She plays with the rules to find a way to express complex thoughts about her own experience of suicide and her playing brings the unutterable into a text.

William Hazlitt, in his essay “On the Pleasure of Hating”, produces another text that plays with language to express a socially almost unacceptable idea. For Hazlitt human beings naturally enjoy the act of hate. There is a strong contrast between words used by Hazlitt, which can be seen on the title which associate the word “pleasure” with the word “hating”. The Oxford English dictionary defines the verb to hate as the action of “feel[ing] intense or passionate dislike towards (a person or thing); to feel strong animosity towards; to loathe, detest (opposed to LOVE)” (1a). On the other side the word pleasure is “The condition or sensation induced by the experience or anticipation of what is felt to be good or desirable; a feeling of happy satisfaction or enjoyment” (OED 1a). If there is pleasure in hating, then hate must be considered as something “good or desirable”. But as hate is widely considered a bad and undesirable thing, this is obviously a thought that goes to the limit of rationality. All throughout the essay, Hazlitt assembles positive words with negative ones, by doing so, he blurs

the social and moral limits that are associated with his essay.

Reading Hazlitt’s essay seems like going through a never-ending list of bitter but implacable assertions. To express and convince the reader of his thoughts Hazlitt is constantly adding new extreme examples. This is really striking when we count the number of times the word “or” is used in his text, on page 121 of the BA Reader, for example, it appears eleven times. Even if the reader wants to escape the point that Hazlitt is trying to prove, there is no way out of the huge accumulation of examples. He goes as far as beginning sentences with that conjunction. By doing this he is in fact playing with the rule that forbids him to do so.

In a similar attempt to find a way of expressing his idea Hazlitt spends ten lines on page 122 speaking about people that were not introduced before. Speaking about those friends he came to hate he says that “There was Leigh Hunt, John Scott, Mrs Novello, whose dark raven locks make a picturesque background to our discourse, Barnes who is grown fat, and is, they say, married, Rickman; these had all separated long ago.” Once again, this goes against the rules of enunciation because the reader is in no way able to understand who those people are, they were not introduced before and no details are given except for small commodities and gossips. The aim here is to amuse the reader while still illustrating Hazlitt’s point. Old friends are now nothing but targets of mockery or receptors of hate.

“The cannibals burn their enemies and eat them, in good fellowship with one another: meek Christians divines cast those who differ from them but a hair’s-breadth, body and soul, into hell-fire, for / the glory of God and the good of his creatures!”

EXTRACT FROM ‘ON THE PLEASURE OF HATING’, WILLIAM HAZLITT

There is a great concentration of Hazlitt’s playfulness with the rules in this quotation. There is in fact two different sentences that are skilfully but irregularly connected by the proposition “in good fellowship with one another” that can be read in relation to both “the cannibals” and the “Christians”. Then he puts a hyphen between the words “hell” and “fire” which once again consists of a certain liberty taken from the rules of grammar. In this case it has the effect of letting the reader choose between two equally hurtful propositions underlining the sinister nature of human beings and reminding him, at the same time, that he is concerned by that pleasure of hating. There is finally the presence of that mysterious dash which is commonly found throughout the essay. This might suggest a small pause in Hazlitt’s discourse and combined with the final

exclamation point it could indicate a form of emphasis on the irony of the end of the sentence.

In the same way that Plath explores the limit of the language to communicate something that is commonly seen as a taboo subject, Hazlitt “goes to the limit of the rules of enunciation” to defend an idea that stands against the socially accepted point of view. While he is saying something really hard to accept or even understand, it is minimised by the rich playfulness of his language. Plath in a way does not hide the harshness of her text but increases it with her use of words and structure. “On the Pleasure of Hating” does the exact contrary, in the sense that it wraps the difficulty of its claim in a more easy-going language full of comic features that makes it appreciable and easy to read.

Playing with the rules of enunciation gives interest to a thought. As Herrick finds beauty in imperfection, literary qualities are found in the play with the rules which extracts a text from a perfectly polished and boring written piece to a more textured and graspable thought. In the most extreme cases, it is the play which enables the simple enunciation of a thought by giving it enough grip to be extracted from the impossibility of expression and thrown onto the light of the text. By “going to the limits of the rules of enunciation”, Plath and Hazlitt created a text and freed themselves from the limits that made their very own texts impossible to write.

Yoann Didier is a first-year student in the Faculté des Lettres.

Swiss English Studies Elsewhere

CANONICITY, OBSCENITY, AND THE MAKING OF MODERN CHAUCER (COMMODE)

COMMode, based at the University of Bern, is a SNSF Eccellenza project which investigates the dissemination and reception history of *The Canterbury Tales*. By examining textual censorship and adaptation in versions of *The Canterbury Tales* published between 1700 and 2020, alongside references to Chaucer's reputation during this period, this project explores how Dryden's text helped to create two popular modern conceptions of Chaucer: (1) Chaucer the canonical 'father of English poetry', whose works are worthy of veneration and preservation, and (2) Chaucer the master of dirty medieval humour, whose obscenity must be either omitted or translated to ensure that modern readers can better avoid or enjoy it. In so doing, this project aims to reveal how Chaucerian obscenity has both complicated and reinforced the shape of the English literary canon both in the past and in the present.

The three researchers on this collaborative project are:

Prof. Mary Flannery, who focuses upon 'Chaucerian Canonicity and Chaucerian Obscenity', and is particularly interested in editorial and publication history.

Dr Amy Brown, who looks at 'Fabliau Obscenity and Modern Chaucer(s)', and is particularly interested in modernisations and adaptations.

Ms Kristen Haas Curtis, who examines the relationship between obscenity and gender in her doctoral project 'Chaucerian Obscenity and the Wife of Bath'.

Understandably, this highly intriguing project provokes many questions... which the COMMode team kindly agreed to answer!

1. *If you had a time machine and could return to visit yourself as an undergraduate student, what would you like to tell your past self about Chaucer from what you've discovered so far during this project?*

MF: 'You'll like him more, later.' I first encountered Chaucer in a survey course called British Writers I, and I was not impressed. In fact, I don't think I became truly interested in Chaucer's work until I started to teach it...and now I can't stop writing about it!

AB: During my undergrad I was focused on Old English to the near-exclusion of everything else, and the only Chaucer I encountered was the Book of the Duchess, which isn't all that much fun. Maybe I'd tell past me that the later Middle Ages has better sex and fart jokes.

KHC: I studied psychology as an undergraduate – other than a brief high school run-in with Chaucer, past-me had no idea...

2. *What is your favourite part of The Canterbury Tales – and why?*

MF: My favourite part is definitely the disclaimers, specifically the passage at the end of The Miller's Prologue when Chaucer tells readers they should 'Turne over the leef and chese another tale' if they don't think they're up for the 'harlotrie' that's coming up.... I feel like that passage is the key to understanding Chaucer as an author, and I'll be spending the next few years figuring out why that might be.

KHC: I love the interactions and interruptions between the pilgrims. The tales themselves are wonderful, but for me these brief moments where we get to know the pilgrims are endlessly fascinating.

AB: I think it's still the Miller's Tale, which is where I started when someone did finally tell me Chaucer is where the good dirty jokes are.

3. *Which adaptation of Chaucer do you think is the strangest (whether an isolated episode, or an entire tale), and could you give us a brief synopsis of it?*

KHC: There are so many odd adaptations: I love that they run the gamut from adaptations for children, such as that of Marcia Williams, to the pornographic version from the mid 1980s. I've also seen an Oracle Card Deck based on the pilgrims and heard tell of a handmade automaton of the full pilgrim group interacting, though I have not seen it. Talk about versatility! I find it interesting that a single source can go such radically different directions.

MF: The Oracle Deck is very cool (I have so many questions!), but I'm really curious about how *The Ribald Tales of Canterbury* (the pornographic adaptation) got made. What I find 'weird' isn't so much the fact of the adaptation itself as the effort that obviously went into it: it's a relatively lavish production! Hyapatia Lee, the star and screenwriter for *The Ribald Tales*, clearly writes it as a 'version' of Chaucer's work,

although the only 'tale' that really resembles one of Chaucer's is the sequence based on The Reeve's Tale. Ms Lee has said that she would be willing to speak with us about how and why that version got made in the first place, and I'm very curious to know what her own experiences of Chaucer were like.

AB: It really depends what you think is weird. I'm reading one right now that's a retelling set amongst a group of contemporary Canadian off-piste skiers! But actually, that's not all that weird. Even though it's not got embedded stories, you can tell that the author decided the important part of the Canterbury Tales was 'a bunch of people from different backgrounds stuck together, being a microcosm of society' and worked to reflect that. Honestly, when you really think about it, *A Knight's Tale* is the weirdest, because it actually has nothing to do with Chaucer. The basic plot isn't Chaucer's Knight's Tale! Why is Chaucer even there? It seems to be to give a sort of cultural prestige to an otherwise fun but unremarkable medieval-ish comedy. Which. Okay. But then he spends most of his time half-naked and drunk?

MF: Amy, we know why Chaucer's there: it's so we can all feast on the sight of Paul Bettany.

AB: But then why can't I find a gif of Chaucer's arse on Twitter when I need it?

4. *Why do you think that the study of medieval literature, more broadly, is so important in the 21st century?*

MF: So many reasons are leaping to my mind I don't know whether I can put them in order. But, speaking as a US citizen who has been watching medieval stories and symbols be misappropriated in aid of some truly awful causes in recent years, I think that quite a lot of medieval literature can help us make sense of the present. For example, if you're familiar with medieval narratives featuring 'queenly intercessors', you might, like medievalist Sonja Drimmer, be able to recognise a familiar pattern in the way that the Trump administration tried to frame Melania and Ivanka Trump as 'merciful' female figures shaping policy behind the scenes (and you might write a terrific op-ed about it like Dr Drimmer did for *The Atlantic* in 2018!). And medieval stories about honourable women have helped me to understand the insidious role that sexual shame continues to play in the oppression of women even now.

KHC: I trust that Mary and Amy will answer this more broadly, so I'm going to approach it from a more personal angle. As a child, I read a lot of mythology, tales, and

legends as an escape from everyday life. In adulthood, I find myself drawn to the same material, but now more for the sense of connection to the long picture of what it means to be human than as an escape. I find the familiarity of certain emotions, situations, and obsessions that appear in literature hundreds of years ago and still carry through today to be oddly comforting. I think it does us all good to remember that, despite the changes and newness we feel in modern life, there are essential qualities to human life that are largely unchanged.

AB: I'm in a funny position where obviously I find what I study really meaningful and want that to be available to others, but I don't really think it's crucial that everybody study it. When I came through the University of Sydney it was definitely possible to do a BA in English without medieval literature, and I did Medieval Studies instead of English anyway because that's what interested me most. What ended up happening, though, was that studying the past taught me ways of thinking about society and power that I needed but which I didn't think applied to me. For one thing, when you encounter medieval queer theory you learn that the world hasn't always been divided up into gay people and straight people and maybe bisexual people who all mysteriously know since puberty *What They Are*. If the temptations of homoeroticism can lie in wait for Sir Gawain, they can lie in wait for you, too, young Amy! When I taught at Sydney, I definitely had students studying courses like 'Sex and Sin in the Middle Ages' because that was a place where they could learn to think about the patriarchy, or how religion shapes attitudes to sexuality, or queer theory. Sometimes they needed to do that without their family noticing (it's just medieval history after all). Sometimes they were more like me: they needed to practice thinking things out in the past before they could tackle the present.

5. *What are you most excited to explore during the remainder of the project?*

MF: I feel positively greedy about how much knowledge I'm going to acquire about how *The Canterbury Tales* have been edited and adapted over the past six centuries. It might sound silly, but I'm so excited to wade through that history and come out the other side with all that knowledge!

AB: I'm looking forward to working more on the 18th and 19th centuries - my interests have always been either medieval or ultra-contemporary, so it's a really good chance to broaden my scope here.

KHC: I'm excited to better get to know who Alisoun, the Wife of Bath, has been

through time. Though she might appear as a different version of herself in each adaptation, whether changed in small ways or more significant ones, she never fails to entertain.

As part of her PhD project, Kirsten produces many delightful comics - one of which she has very kindly shared with *Noted*.



Further information about COMMode can be found at the project's website: https://www.ens.unibe.ch/research/projects/snsf_eccellenza_commode/index_eng.html.

You can also follow the project's progress - and find many more comics - on their Twitter account, @ChaucerCommode.

ART

Artist Showcase

VALÉRIE FIVAZ





More of Valérie's art can be found on her Etsy and Instagram, below. She is also available for commissions on request.

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/snarlingtree>

<https://www.instagram.com/snarlingtree/>



Sabrina, *Noted's* Art Editor, conducted the following interview with Valérie:

1. *What inspires and influences you?*

I think Tim Burton's movies had a huge influence on me. I remember when I was younger, my art teacher showed us the short movie *Vincent*. In only five minutes I was totally caught up in this black and white, creepy ambience. The general oddity in his movies really drew me in. I have also found countless inspiration from fairy tales. What I always come back to is the illustrations that accompanied the stories, especially those by Gustave Doré and Arthur Rackham. One of my drawings featured here is my version of the Twelve Dancing Princesses, a story that my grandmother often read to me.

The biggest influence definitely comes from what I read. I love gothic novels like *Wuthering Heights* or *Frankenstein*, and I incorporate different elements from that in my art. I want to create the same mysterious atmosphere as in those novels. *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy has also had a huge effect on me, especially because it is such a detailed world. I would not even dream of making something even half as intricate as what Tolkien has created. Alan Lee's artwork for the books and the movie sets have also impacted me quite a lot; the *Rivendell* architecture especially because it is very reminiscent of Art Nouveau, one of my favorite art styles. I like how it uses elements from nature. Plants, flowers and just nature in general usually play a big part in my own drawings.

I guess what I love is details. Even if people cannot see everything at first glance. I like very cluttered compositions, which probably explains my obsession with the very extravagant – and very dramatic – 18th century.

I have also used different costume designs I have seen in movies and TV shows. If you are an *Outlander* fan you can probably recognize a lot of the costumes from the show in my drawings. I truly adore Terry Dresbach's work on the clothing because it is so intricate, and each piece has their own little story. For example, one of the characters is an apothecary and his coat has a representation of different diseases on it, with the plant that was used to cure the illness. I am an absolute sucker for little details like that.

2. *Which materials do you use for your artwork, and why?*

I rarely ever use color, so my go-to are black pens in different sizes, preferably Faber-Castell ones. I have also started using India ink because I was going through so many black pens it was ridiculous (and Faber-Castell is not cheap.) Sometimes I will dilute the ink with some water to get different shades of grey. On very rare occasions, I use acrylic paint if I need a rich color or if I need it to stand out. For example, I worked with acrylic paint for the golden frame in one of my pieces.

I have been asked if it was not too restrictive using only black and white but on the contrary, I think it makes you more creative because you need to figure out how you can do different textures or pieces of clothing using exactly the same color. Moreover, if you do decide to add another color then it will make it stand out even more.

And Goliath

SINEM DEMIRALP

Editor's Note: the author wishes to provide trigger warnings for the following - very brief mentions of blood, eating disorders, and physical violence.

There's a painting by Andrea Vaccaro at the Museum of Art and History in Geneva that hypnotised me when I visited the town. A painting of David after he beheads the giant Goliath. It's called The Triumph of David and depicts, in visible and dynamic strokes, the celebrations following the beheading. In the foreground, two or three women are dancing and spinning around David who's at the centre, in a contrapposto. He almost looks like he's walking, but, really, he's frozen. Everything about him is. His feet, his hands holding the sword brandishing Goliath's head, and his expression. Parted lips and wide eyes tilted up to stare at the monster. David doesn't look happy. He's the only one who doesn't. He's not part of the celebrations. Some would say it's a dreamy expression. Some would say it's shock. I guess the right word would be that he's awestruck. He almost seems to question himself. What have I done, where am I, who am I? That's how I feel during the parties my husband's workplace organises. I look at him and wonder, what have I done, where am I, who am I?

What have I done?

Nothing. This isn't my fault.

Where am I?

We're outside, heading toward our car. My husband's walking in front of me. Stomping, rather. We argued inside. He doesn't like that I don't look 'excited enough' to attend yet another event after a tiring week at work. My work doesn't matter to him anyway. Sometimes, I think that the sole reason why he still allows me to have a job is his fear of what I might attempt if I'm home alone.

And who am I?

I'm not sure.

I only realise that it's starting to snow a little when I see a few white particles falling on his black coat and disappearing at the contact.

No, it doesn't disappear. It transforms.

I think about that for a moment.

The transformation.

I should make something of it – my fingers even twitch as if begging to hold a pencil and jot down some ideas for my next novel – but I don't know what.

To distract myself, I inhale, exhale, grab my pack of cigarettes, light one up, inhale the smoke, exhale the smoke.

I watch it dissipate and blink slowly to adapt to the darkness.

Now, the cold and colossal night stands before me.

Whether it is to devour or serve, that is the question.

I feel the blood on my temples, then on my cheeks. My vision blurs. Black spots cover my eyes like a lacy veil wrapped around my head. I'm suffocating. I have no energy to go on. And for a second, I confuse the past and the present. I'm in our bedroom. I perceive his silhouette on the side, waiting for me to make a move to protect myself or to get up. That's what he likes the most. Me trying to protect myself, me getting up despite everything. And he always kicks me in the ribs. His favourite spot.

Some Freudian theoretician would tell you that it comes from his inner hatred of women. He attacks what I took from him to exist. I think it's simply that the spot is more accessible. And I've lost so much weight after getting with him that he directly hits my bones. It must be satisfying to him, to feel that solid surface against his feet. Or it makes him forget that I'm human. Without flesh, I could be a wall. And I often feel like a wall. Silent, silenced, inanimate.

Then... the cold air burns my cheeks and I realise that I'm not in the bedroom.

But... where am I?

Grass... grass... humid grass... I'm outside. It's still snowing.

What happened, though?

Where is this blood coming from if not from his hits?

I'm crawling out of the car.

Car... car... He crashed it!

We argued for half an hour and he stubbornly crashed it.

To kill me.

What about him?

I'm not sure he's alive. He's still in the car, I think. While I crawl my way out of it with my deadened legs.

I feel like a snake.

I don't even know if it was a conscious decision to do so, but I'm trying to reach the road so that a passing car can notice me.

But my arms are weak, so I decide that I'm close enough to my goal and lie on my back

to watch the snowflakes. They sing as they reach my bloodied skin. I can picture them turning red for a split second. Then melting. Droplets of water joining the blood.

And I remember.
Nothing disappears. It transforms.
Like pain.

I can heal. My mind can heal. If I survive, of course. But I am healing.
Because I've survived all these years and I've managed to acknowledge it.
I think of my husband again and I feel like David in the painting. Awestruck at this bittersweet victory.

Why am I sure it was bittersweet for David too?
Maybe because of what it takes to be a survivor.
The choices you have to make. The sacrifices. The inner sacrifices.

I've lost so much. I've become a fragmented being. I might die or my husband might be alive and start again, but... I've found an ephemeral yet delicious freedom in this act of crawling out of the car to save myself. I finally believe in it, that I deserve to get better.

And I'm practicing this belief. It's all that matters right now.

And I've lived longer than David. I'm past the awe. So, I get up and I join the women dancing around me. And then I realise that after Goliath was gone, David wasn't David and Goliath anymore. He was only David. And that must have been hard to process. Maybe he wasn't quite questioning who he was for having done what he did, but who he was without the and Goliath. Who he was without what his enemy made of him.

So, I wonder again, as my mind becomes my own for what could be a very brief instant; who am I?
Who am I without what my abuser made of me?

And there is, in this, an awareness that I'm not defined by the violence.
I'm so much more.
And I'm excited to find out how.

A world of no time LORRAINE DEVRILLARD

A world exists, calling for you

It dreams you at the same time as you dream it. An alchemy in creation

Can you hear its voice? Its whispers that call you back to life

To death

To that path inside where freedom calls.

A world of Beauty awaiting your attention.

It is here. You simply have to breathe it

In

Out

And there, with that sacred principle of life,

This creative respiration,

You manifest it.

Lorraine Devrillard is currently completing her MA studies in English Literature, and has written her mémoire in contemporary literature.

CULTURE

Futurities of Reading? The Poetics of Popular Hermeneutics and Aesthetic Self-Narration on Instagram

MEGAN ZEITZ

Editor's Note: this essay is the compressed version of a research paper which was submitted as a graded paper for Professor Leer's Autumn 2019 MA seminar "Histories of Reading".

In the age of the ubiquitous digital image, Instagram may be the most apt platform to meet the expectation of "snapshot culture" (Serafinelli, 2018, 44), that is, the pressure to record all potentially relevant moments of one's life on the go, to enhance them and to order them into a carefully crafted, publicly displayed sequence, as to create an aesthetic narrative of one's evolutive persona. My essay analyzes the semiotic structures of Instagram as intertextual, interdiscursive and intermedial spaces which allow users to read content of interest to them and to narrate an aestheticized version of themselves. Both aspects of the literary potential of Instagram are underscored by a common feature: virtual interactions with other users, who represent both fellow readers and an audience. This implies that engaging with content and narrating the self always include some degree of dialogism and co-construction of meaning. Users can demonstrate elevated levels of literacy in the discourses of social media culture and traditional bookish reading, and they can actively use Instagram's semiotic structures for two reading purposes: to create ad hoc communities of interests wherein they can co-create popular literary genres and read content dialogically; to draw on narratological conventions and intertextuality to fashion aesthetic self-narrations, to which other users, as readers, can respond. Users with proficiency in both social media and literature literacies—while maintaining a rewarding aesthetic persona, which they mutually affirm with fellow readers—can re-appropriate the discursive codes of conventional reading to co-construct popular, accessible, and creative forms of collaborative reading.

Although Instagram encourages users to be passive consumers of content, users can nonetheless act as active readers — and writers — of content. By appropriating the semiotic codes of the platform and mixing them with culture-specific codes, they can collaboratively create counter-discourses, which can be read and reflected upon among communities of users. Users can participate in the ad hoc communities of interests

generated by hashtags—for instance the hashtag #englishliterature—and posts by interacting with content in a reflexive way and by engaging in a critical dialogue with other users. Dialogism and intertextuality inherently depend on and involve sociocultural discourses, which demand specific types of literacy. In order to make sense of culture-specific posts and to engage in critical discussions about them, users need to master specific sociocultural semiotic codes to be Instagram-literate and to be literate in the discourse of a given community of interests. For instance, to make sense of the connoted meaning of a meme implies that readers must have access to culture-specific cognitive frames and master culture-specific literacies. Seemingly simple memes can prompt dialogic reading of content and a re-appropriation of discourses which are usually bound to academic structures.

While hashtags are the primary spaces of dialogic reading, personal pages and personal posts are the structures most adapted to aesthetic self-narration. On Instagram personal pages, users mobilize the visual-textual presentational features of their profile to signal to their audience what type of persona they are assuming and what type of self-narrative they are telling. Aestheticization through sequencing and editing is part of the generic conventions and expectations of Instagram publications: users construct an idealized persona—the protagonist of their self-narrative—by drawing on discursive codes, which signal how persona and self-narrative should be read by their audience. The narrativity of a user's feed should not overshadow its image-driven format, however, as the aesthetics of the episodic grid is as important as its sequential ordering. Indeed, some users pay close attention to the overall design of their episodic grid and make sure that each post will be coherent with the other ones, as to obtain a specific visual style, which signifies a purposive identity design. Within the user's self-narrative, the Instagram post is a snapshot-episode in a self-chronicle, which allows the user of the page to present their persona as the main character of their own life-story, whose meaning is implicitly co-constructed with the audience through the interpretation of the author's aesthetic and rhetorical choices. A close-reading of individual posts reveals that authors can show high levels of literacy in the discourses of canonical literary genres, popular literary genres, and Instagram photo-sharing. Their posts enable a dialogue between the codes of these discourses, which results in the efficient construction of a specific persona, which is the protagonist of their self-narrative.

Finally, the story function of Instagram allows users to chronicle their personal life daily, almost in real-time, while strengthening the aesthetic identity of their narrative persona, in a form of “live” visual autobiography. The seeming spontaneity

of the story drives users to stage an intimate bond with their audience, who is made privy to the persona's relevant life-moments, only to encourage viewers to read them a certain way. The typical in-character perspective of the story further strengthens the user's self-fashioning as the protagonist of their life-narrative, whose relevant experiences are systematically captured and narrativized. The images published in a user's stories, although meant to be spontaneous, are designed to aesthetically advertise the user's persona and make it relevant amid the myriad of competing subjective realities of social media culture. Although the author of a page has complete agency over the composition of a story, the meaning of that story is constructed collaboratively: a user always publishes stories knowing that other users will see them and infer intentionality from them, generating a hyperconsciousness of being watched. This confirms that posting stories consists in an aesthetic performance of one's persona, which the viewers are always implicitly invited to react to and interpret.

My review of the semiotic structures of Instagram shows that, although some structures are better suited for hermeneutic reading and others for narrativization of the self, both literary performances overlap and mutually support each other across structures. The dialogic reading allowed by the hashtag-communities of interest greatly participates in co-constructing and mutually reinforcing users' identities, and the aesthetic personae and self-narratives produced by users on their personal pages also count as pieces of visual literature meant to be read by an audience. Without idealizing Instagram as a popular reading platform, I suggest that it offers opportunities for both individual and collaborative reshaping of generic literary discourses. Although they draw on already existing conventions, users can decide which works of literature deserve to be anthologized and discussed, they decide to incorporate literary quotations, tropes or characters into their life-narratives, and they decide that their everyday-life moments deserve to be narrativized and recorded as if they were canonical narratives. Perhaps the elevated and polyvalent literacies of certain social media users will allow the expansion of reading practices, which will hopefully ensure that readers will keep on reading and reflecting on literature, both in classrooms and on social media.

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‘Nature Strikes Back!’: The Ecology of Horror Cinema

SABRINA MARTINS

Editor's Note: 'Nature Strikes Back' is an adapted version of an oral presentation given by Sabrina Martins at Leeds' Undergraduate Research Experience in February 2020.

I don't know about you, but I... am terrified.

The Copernicus Climate Change Service has revealed that 2020 ties with 2016 as the warmest year on record. On a slightly better note, it might be one of the coolest in the upcoming years. Homes are flooded, fire is raging, and despair seems almost unavoidable. Thinking about the future is tiring, draining. Many people – especially younger generations and Earth scientists – are experiencing what we've come to call 'ecological grief': 'the grief felt in relation to experienced or anticipated ecological losses' (Cunsulo, Ellis, 275).

Climate change has for a long time now felt like a horror show to me. And maybe I'm just being dramatic, or maybe horror is the only form I've found to express what I've been experiencing. It's not just the limbs and corpses already laying around that frighten me. It's the fear of something much worse awaiting: the killer behind the door, the monster under the bed, the ghost in the attic. And each time I fall into this mindset, I have to remind myself that the monster is never truly a monster, and that it is telling us more about ourselves than our own reflection ever could.

'Human history,' writes Simon Estok, 'is a history of controlling the natural environment', this 'hateful object in need of our control, the loathed and feared thing that can only result in tragedy if left in control' (Estok, 210). We have separated the environment from us, made it our monster to conquer. This is perhaps why horror cinema took such an interest in ecological disasters: it is after all 'a key form for visualizing otherness' (Lowenstein, 521). Any horror story embodies a kind of otherness, let it be in a clawed killer, a demon possessing a child, or Nature itself.

Eco-horror can be described as 'works in which humans are attacked by natural forces that have been altered or angered by humans in some way' (Rust, Soles, 510). The earliest examples go back to the 50s with nuclear monster movies: in *Them!* (1954, dir.

Gordon Douglas), people are attacked by gigantic ants after conducting nuclear tests in the desert; in *Godzilla* (1954, dir. Ishirō Honda), an ancient sea monster emerges from the ocean after being awakened by similar experiments. This subgenre then exploded in the 70s with films featuring mutant species getting their revenge: ants make their return in *Phases IV* (1974, dir. Saul Bass); a mutated bear lurks in the forest in *Prophecy* (1979, dir. John Frankenheimer); rabbits start eating people in *Night of the Lepus* (1972, William F. Claxton).

These movies are not necessarily masterpieces, but they still show a potential for horror to portray environmental issues, and a certain likeness between our relationship with the environment and the Us-versus-Them narrative that is constantly present in the genre. Yet horror, more than anything, blurs the line between us and the Other.

In *Mimic* (1997, dir. Guillermo Del Toro), scientists create a hybrid insect to stop the spreading of a disease. This breed then multiplies and grows larger – so big, in fact, that in the shadows they practically look like humans. They escape their instrumental role and attempt to take over the city. They start mimicking their creators in size and behavior. Just like we tried to conquer the wild, it tries to conquer us back.

In *Annihilation* (2018, dir. Alex Garland), we see an alien zone where animals borrow human voices and humans turn into plants. The protagonist says that the zone didn't attack her: it mirrored her attack, and she wasn't sure it realized she was even there. As the film ends, we don't know whether it is the protagonist or a clone who came back from the zone, if there is difference between the two at all.

But *The Host* (2006, dir. Bong Joon Ho) is probably one of the most interesting eco-horror films of the last two decades. The movie itself defies categorization. An American military pathologist orders his Korean assistant to dispose of toxic chemicals in the sink, and soon after a monster appears in the Han River. The fish is big and ugly, but it's far from being the scariest part of the movie. What is much scarier is the control of the American military over Korean people. When a little girl is kidnapped by the monster, her working-class family doesn't only have to fight her captor: their main obstacle are the military officials who don't believe or listen to them. In a heart-wrenching scene, American scientists lobotomize the girl's father to silence him, and in that moment the movie captures the complex power dynamics at hand in ecological disasters. Our protagonist, like the monster, is alien in their eyes.

The movie highlights several questions: who caused this? Who are the victims? If we think about Estok's understanding of human history, who is controlling the environment? Many scholars and activist groups have long argued that this history is also one of social inequality and oppression – most notably Dina Gilio-Whitaker, who writes for instance that 'Indigenous ways of understanding land and human relations' are 'obstructed or not recognized at all' (Gilio-Whitaker, 23) in environmental justice movements. She stresses that if we wish to address environmental issues, we must also address colonialism (see also Thorn).

Horror cinema will not solve climate change, obviously. But it might be a good medium for us to understand the issues embedded in it, and how we view and interact with the environment. This framing might frighten us, but fear doesn't have to lead to despair. Instead, it can push us to ask ourselves: What is 'the environment'? 'Nature'? What is it to us? And what are we if we are not part of it?

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Sayaka Murata: *Earthling* and *Convenience Store Woman*

REVIEWED BY ANDREA VOLPICELLI

Editor's Note: Andrea wishes to provide a trigger warning for the books reviewed, which feature some scenes containing sexual violence.

'On Earth, young women were supposed to fall in love and have sex, and if they didn't, they were "lonely" or "bored" or "wasting their youth and would regret it later!'", comments Natsuki in *Earthling*. A similar realization is shared in *The Convenience Store Woman*: "This society hasn't changed one bit. People who don't fit into the village are expelled: men who don't hunt, women who don't give birth to children. For all we talk about modern society and individualism, anyone who doesn't try to fit in can expect to be meddled with, coerced, and ultimately banished from the village." In both narratives, the Japanese female protagonists reflect on their place since childhood – and on expectations placed by unspoken conventions or by individual desires – in Japanese society. Both characters embody the experiences and reflections around an implicit normality that should be respected by all members of 'the Factory' or 'the Village'. *Earthling* is the last novel written by Sayaka Murata, who also won a prestigious literary award, the Akutagawa Prize, in 2016 for her most popular work *The Convenience Store Woman*. The young Japanese author has already produced a dozen novels and various essays about the human condition and adaptation towards conventional behaviors, and talks about subjects like cannibalism and the spectrum of sexuality. Murata studied Literature in the University of Tamagawa and, like her character Keiko, she used to work for eighteen years in convenience store (Konbini in Japanese). The following novels are translated from Japanese to English by Ginny Tapley Takemori. They are based on the life experience of two Japanese women who have always felt marginalized without really understanding why, which increases their difficulty to define who they are and how to live. Murata succeeds in creating fictions whose content is a satisfying mixture of maverick situations combined with daily consternations upon the realities of external life.

The Convenience Store Woman narrates the story of Keiko, a woman whose family always communicated to her that she was broken and needed to be fixed: 'So that's why I need to be cured. Unless I'm cured, normal people will expurgate me'. No psychological or medical diagnosis is presented in the text. However, readers quickly

understand that from the early stages of childhood, Keiko had never been able to read other's emotions, behaviors, or communication. Her job in the convenience store, which she loves and had been her exclusive professional activity, is the basis on which she builds her identity upon. "I wished I was back in the convenience store where I was valued as a working member of staff and things weren't as complicated as this. Once we donned our uniforms, we were all equals regardless of gender, age, or nationality— all simply store workers." Similarly, Natsuki, the young schoolgirl from *Earthling*, imagines herself owning magical powers and coming from an alien planet. Unconsciously, the child compensates for the psychological trauma of her experiences of rape and pedophilia, which she is not able to understand nor communicate. Her disability will follow her until she reaches adulthood, when Natsuki will eventually realize the violence she had been through and start to rebuild her self.

Even though both narratives cover the childhood and adulthood of the protagonists, *Earthling* mainly represents a childlike point of view and integrates the imaginative and honest naiveté of children. In contrast, in *The Convenience Store Woman* Keiko's narrative centers on her grown-up life's struggles, although episodic mentions of her childhood are brought up to complete her thoughts. The narration is cleverly employed in order to create a coherent understanding of the marginalized characters' individualism, though some elements keep their mystery.

Readers are invited to share the most intimate emotions of the two women, and quickly engage with the very personal and sometimes eccentric reality they construct. Nonetheless, the offbeat quotidian is hastily caught up in the power of conformity and social pressure. As females, two options are available: marriage and family or a serious career - 'serious' because working in a convenience store or being unemployed are not considered as optimal. Both women therefore construct a fictional marriage, where they can enjoy a temporary break from their social and sexual expectations. The double life they lived alone is further shared with someone else, whose vision of society intensifies the marginalized position of the protagonists, but at least these women have finally someone with whom to share their feeling of rejection.

The unrealistic tone of the characters contrasts strongly with social realities of conformation and assimilation. Western cultures are not exempt from these hegemonic dynamics, but individualism has been promoted since the beginning of what could be understood as 'modern societies' in the eighteenth century. Conversely, Japanese culture is presented as more overt in its social dynamic of conformism as a normative standard. Sayaka Murata exposes in her two novels the effects of a lack of

belonging on the psychological, rational, and emotional components of individuals, especially women. More than simply life, the narratives project the efforts related to a necessity and a desire to survive. Throughout the books, we witness the different attempts - successful or not - to construct a certain notion of individuality and identity in various strata such as society, family, or the professional environment.

The diction in the novels is accessible, fluid and does not present a complex language barrier, even for readers unfamiliar with Japan. Yet their content and structure can be very unexpected: in both *The Convenience Store Woman* and *Earthling*, situations are expressed which are light and goofy, or on the other hand dreadful and heavy. Ultimately, the narratives are very powerful because they exploit the very reality of the characters' sensorial perceptions of sounds, smells, bodies and words, which accentuate the realism in the life of these women that sounds unreal. Readers who love literature that enables fiction to acquire a sense of reality through the stimulation of empathy, and the exploration of the troubled quest for the self will enjoy reading Sayaka Murata's novels. These books contrast the duality of what sometimes feels like fiction in our real lives. They are open doors to think about our own position in society, and to reflect about tools and strategies to try to own this position.

The Convenience Store Woman and Earthling, translated by Ginny Tapley Takemori, are published by Grove Press. They will soon be available in the collections of the Japanese Library of UNIGE.

Tag Yourself: The Romantics Edition

MEGAN ZEITZ

VARIA



William Wordsworth

- Had hope for a better world...once
- More interested in what isn't than what is
- Takes very dramatic walks
- Just wants to meditate, by a lake and alone



Samuel Taylor Coleridge

- Professional procrastinator
- Can't find inspiration...unless high
- Into obscure philosophers; knows many more than you
- Just wants people to be nicer



Mary Shelley

- Mommy and daddy issues
- Sick of their friend's BS
- Quietly the smartest person in the room
- Just wants to settle down
- Still has an imaginary friend



John Keats

- Too soft for this world
- Inferiority complex mixed with cockiness
- Wishes to disappear into an imaginary world
- Really needs a break



William Blake

- Spiritual™
- Believes they're a visionary
- Constantly dreads the end of the world
- Says everything that they think out loud



Percy Shelley

- That radical idealist who doesn't actually do anything to change the world
- Thinks poetry will fix society's problems
- Science nerd in their spare time



Robert Burns

- Has to be their Authentic Self. But, like, all the time.
- Refuses to admit when they're cold
- Wears really colourful clothing; has no eye for colour



Jane Austen

- Judges everyone around them
- Loves to gossip
- More interested in others' love lives than their own
- Snarkier than they look



Lord Byron

- Hates everyone but themselves
- Lives for the drama, and also the aesthetic
- Master of Sarcasm
- Problematic but in a sexy way

A Gentle Grilling...

WITH PATRIZIA ZANELLA

Dr. Patrizia Zanella is a maître-assistante in the Department of English Literature at the University of Geneva.

Her research focuses on Indigenous literatures, specifically place-based ways of knowing, kinship, and Indigenous language revitalization.

When did you choose your academic speciality – and why?

During my undergrad, I spent a semester abroad – one of the most valuable experiences academia can offer, I think. I took History and English courses at Thompson Rivers University in what is currently known as British Columbia. The university is located on the traditional and unceded territory of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc. At the time, I didn't realize that I was an uninvited guest on the territory of an Indigenous nation, nor did I grasp the extent of Canada's ongoing settler-colonial violence. I was, however, drawn to the political commitment and the humour in the Indigenous literatures we read. I later decided to write my MA thesis on the fiction of Anishinaabe author Louise Erdrich and I'm still spellbound by the incredible breadth of Indigenous literatures and the sheer amount of new publications coming out each month.

If you could make the world read any book, which one would it be?

The same book I'd assign to myself, that is the latest item on my to-read list: Harsha Walia's *Border and Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism*. You can get a taste of it here: <https://www.haymarketbooks.org/blogs/276-border-and-rule-global-migration-capitalism-and-racist-nationalism>.

What piece of advice, wisdom, or encouragement would you give to your first-year past self?

Stay curious. Follow the rules – not that they'll all make sense (do ask questions) – in order to pass while investing as much time as possible into pursuing your own interests. If there is something you want to change, get organized. It's okay to learn at your own pace.

Who is your favourite poet?

Chrystos (Menominee), Amber Dawn, Deborah Miranda (Ohlone Costanoan Esselen), Jillian Christmas.

What is your favourite French word or expression?

Il va neiger.

What is your most marked personal trait?

Stubbornness.

Which talent would you most like to have?

Falling asleep within minutes.

Which fear have you successfully faced?

Running out of candy. I did not handle it well.

What's your hidden talent?

Scaring my family and friends on sled rides.

What has been a particular challenge in researching and teaching in your field specifically?

1. Facing my own complicity in perpetuating white supremacy. Grappling with the limitations of English Studies to accommodate the full complexity of Indigenous, Black, and queer of colour writing.
2. Resisting the extractivist logics of academia and accepting that some knowledge is not meant for me.
3. Foregrounding Indigenous voices and refusing academic ascriptions of expertise so as not to replicate settler-colonial mechanisms of erasure and replacement.
4. Teaching Indigenous literatures in a way that acknowledges the full extent of ongoing settler-colonial violence whilst celebrating the brilliance, creativity, and joy in Indigenous-authored texts.

What can your field teach Western academia, if anything?

Everything. A more critical perspective on knowledge, power, and academia's complicity in maintaining existing power structures. A transdisciplinary approach. The interconnections between stories, language, law, and science. Careful contextualization. The need to dismantle Western academia as it currently operates. A more collaborative and less ableist vision of education that is based on consent, the recognition of individual strengths, and honouring knowledge keepers outside of academia.

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Deadline for contributions: 10th September 2021

Contributions, comments, and suggestions are very welcome, and can be sent to noted-lettres@unige.ch

Thank you for reading *Noted!*

