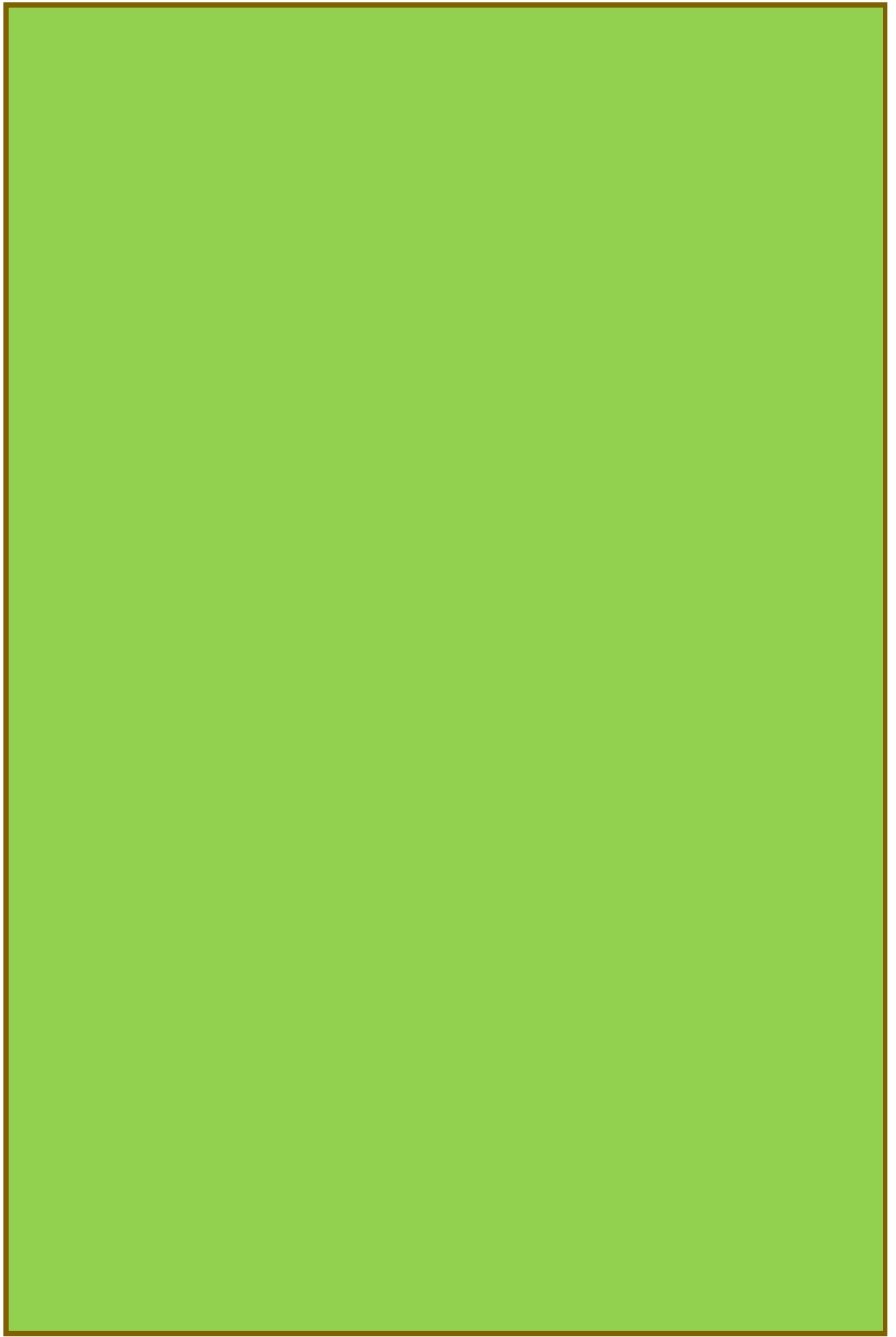




# English Language Conference

**Spring 2018**  
**Abstract Book**



# **Student Research in Literature, Music, Art, and Film**

**Explore the connections between  
literature, art, broadly defined, and the  
surrounding context and community.**

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### Beckettian Elements in *Reservoir Dogs*

Samuel Beckett's plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* are intensely dialogue-driven with in-depth characters whose lives revolve around a particular order. Although not much, if anything, occurs in these plays, they showcase the absurdity and interdependence of life. Similarly, Quentin Tarantino's debut picture *Reservoir Dogs* center on a group of thieves whose predicament forces them to question each other's trustworthiness. Both Beckett and Tarantino establish works that focus entirely on the characters and the central location. Vladimir and Estragon wait for their associate by the side of the road, Ham and Clov talk in Ham's home, and the criminals discuss the plan in a disclosed warehouse. Both artists created a work where the characters establish their personality, and it develops overtime. Additionally, both artists composed a work of art where no additional actions are required. In other words, they present to their audience a set of characters who need not to advance any further. While there are countless theories that might deconstruct either of the writers' works, I argue that there exists styles of Beckett's minimalism in Tarantino's first film. *Reservoir Dogs* is often overlooked compared to Tarantino's more popular and successful films like *Pulp Fiction* and *Django Unchained*. Like all of his films, *Reservoir Dogs* is filled with an all-star cast and overuse of violence. However, unlike his other films, with the exception of the removal of the policeman's ear, *Reservoir Dogs* has few scenes that depict the violent disposition of their behavior. Instead, it relies entirely on dialogue. Through dialogue, the characters intimately confide with one another instead of furthering the plot. In other words, Beckett and Tarantino provide their viewers a chance to observe an aspect of the human condition that we take for granted, rather than follow the plot.

## Lessons from The Iron: An Analysis of Masculinity and Punk Ideology

Punk Icon, Henry Rollins, is a hypermasculine figure whose writing contradicts the image he projects. In his seminal essay, "The Iron", Rollins recounts his journey of self-growth through lifting weights. By transforming his body, Rollins is able to transform his mind by gaining self-confidence after being bullied much of his life. Rollins credits the positive father/son relationship with his school Teacher, Mr. Pepperman, who not only teaches him how to lift weights but also helps him understand what masculine strength looks like.

True strength, according to Rollins, is achieved through restraint, self-awareness, and sensibility. Gaining the understanding that strength is not muscle mass but instead kindness through a stereotypically masculine form of exercise embodies the punk philosophy of anti-conformity by dismantling the toxic masculine stereotype that respect is earned with aggression and the disrespect of other bodies. Instead, Rollins suggests that respecting and taking care of one's own body will, in turn, affect how we treat other's bodies. In addition, Rollins contradicts the appeal of lifting weights for the sake of vanity. The body relates to the mind and weight lifting became important in aiding his mental health, feelings of loneliness, and in strengthening his romantic love. In speaking openly about how weight lifting impacted all of these aspects of his life, Rollins demonstrates how his self-awareness gained through weight lifting affected his relationship with the world as the world gives back what you put out and vice versa.

For my presentation, I aim to analyze the writing and rhetoric techniques used by Rollins to enhance the essay's message making it an example punk ideology and a significant piece in Rollins's body of work. In addition, my presentation discusses how the core message of the essay remains significant today in the face of white male rage and rape culture.



## Politeness, Power, and Gendered language: A case study on the satirical use of gendered language

The use of gendered language has been recognized and even exploited as a cultural phenomenon in comedic TV shows. Gendered language as Allyson Jule states is “the historical patriarchal hierarchy that has existed between men and women, where one (man) is considered the norm, and the other (woman) is marked as other – as something quite different from the norm”. (1). We see the influence of gendered and power language and how it has changed our views on who holds the control in a conversation. This brings up two questions: what happens when gendered language roles are reversed for comedic effect? Is it the use of specifically masculine/feminine roles in language, a characteristic which males/females are born with, or is it one that is acquired through exposure? The purpose of this case study is to explore this question through a discourse analysis of the satirical television show *Portlandia*. In the show, the use of language is a dominating factor where characters switch language roles to exert their power. In this data, a male-female friendship use politeness strategies, power and reversed stereotypes to eliminate the preset notion, which are assigned to gendered language. Is male language the language of power? Examining the control one speaker holds over the other, their use of positive/ negative politeness will allow us to further examine politeness strategies used to avoid and create a Face Threatening Acts (Cutting, E. 2015). We also look at the reversal of gendered language, and how within this case study it has helped develop the use of politeness strategies. This reversal illustrates the use/misuse of power language. Thus, we further exploring our stance on this cultural phenomenon.

**Note: Featured presentation at Student Research Day 2018.  
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Vanessa Wenzell**

*Frankenstein* and Prometheus: Two Sides of the Same Tale

Peter Brooks likens his linguistic godlike science to the Promethean gift that results in paradoxical positive and negative effects on mankind; it sets the foundation for culture, establishes contradictory views of nature as both sublime and monstrous, and warns of the consequences of overreaching. Few literary scholars take the ancient myths seriously as a literary discourse. The many deviations of the Promethean myth and their relation to *Frankenstein* allows for the exploration of what Mary Shelley suggests is the true similitude between the characters of Prometheus and Victor Frankenstein as creators, and their departure from one another. Additionally, the ties between Prometheus' Humanity and Victor's Creature go beyond the acquisition of fire or knowledge. It results in the development of socio-cultural structure, but more importantly a unique moral view explored by the idea of Promethean guilt and suffering. Moreover, there is a pagan nature to Zeus in the myth that is liberating and dangerous; he brings both order and chaos to the cosmos and humanity. Nature in the novel fulfills a similar role in a monstrous, gothic, and terrifying manner. Ultimately, when using the Promethean myth as a valid literary discourse, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* suggests that the motif of "modern" creation can never fully divorce itself from elements of paganism and chaos.

**Dave Travis Bio  
Presentation: Punk Video Archive**

**Dave Travis began videotaping Punk Shows in Los Angeles in 1983 and in the South Bay in 1984 when he was 16 years old. He is now 50 and will be sharing his stories and videos of Punk Rock from the 1980's to the present with an emphasis on the 1980's SST and related scenes including bands such as The Minutemen, Saccharine Trust, and FIREHOSE.**

**Dave Travis filmed and edited Black Flag's "Slip it In" video in 1984 and was a roadie on the Redd Kross 1985 and 1987 tours. He later went on to work on projects for bands like Sonic Youth, Nirvana, and The Gears. In the 1990's, he did sound at Raji's, Al's Bar, and the Silverlake Lounge. Since 1993, Dave has been playing electric Cello in Carnage Asada. In the first part of the 21st century, Travis taught school in South Central Los Angeles. Since 2013, he has run Cafe NELA, a Punk Rock Live House in Cypress Park, Northeast Los Angeles, which features many 20th century punk survivors as well as new bands from all over the world. Cafe NELA has been a nucleus in the Northeast Los Angeles punk scene as a place where bands can form, perform, and communicate.**

**Dave Travis can also answer questions and give advice from his perspective of being a club owner, engineer, and musician over the past 35 years.**

## The Interpretation of the Miltonic Narrator

*Paradise Lost* contains an omniscient narrator that evokes ambiguity and controversy as to who he really is and the significance the narrator has on the poem and contemporary readers. Is the narrator John Milton or is he another separate character stemming from Milton's mind? This issue has led some scholars to argue that the narrator is in fact Milton himself due to the heteroglossia in the images while there are others such as renowned Milton scholar Stephen Dobranski who asserts that the narrator is someone else. The focus of my essay is to expose several examples in the poem that allude to the narrator as having a separate identity and examine how English history and Milton's personal life contributed to the creation and mystery behind the narrator. My analysis also provides readers with an attention to syntax that shows how Milton used the narrator to express political and theological ideas that he would not have been able to directly say during the restoration. Using close reading, analysis of word order, and drawing connections between the books, I was able to support the theory of an epic narrator reflecting Milton's deepest thoughts. These methods are useful for those who wish to study *Paradise Lost* at a deconstructive level. The essay achieves levels of deconstruction by first analyzing Milton's biography, his poetic influences, and finally how the unity of the books is created by the narrator. I aim to build a foundation on Milton as a poet and then dive into what the text shows about the narrator. The Miltonic narrator enacts as Milton's alternate persona and I believe that all readers of Milton should be exposed to this insight because it is essential to understating the poem's complex heteroglossia.

*Laotong: The Eternal Connection of Resilience*

A text exists for a variety of reasons: It can give a voice to the oppressed, the withdrawn, the silenced, and even the *beautiful*. Lisa See's "Snow Flower and the Secret Fan" is a narrative that highlights the importance of language and text as an explicit challenge against hierarchal structures, particularly that of the relationship between a man and a woman. Conventionally, women have been placed as transactions and property, stripped away from their own innate humanity. See's narrative is a paradigm exemplifying the pertinent importance of language as a *direct* form of agency. The story of Snow Flower and her *laotong*, or, "old same", is an important narrative that attests to the resilience of women during 19<sup>th</sup> century China.

In relation to the significance of See's narrative as a challenge toward the male patriarchal hierarchies in 19<sup>th</sup> century China, Michael Warner's "Publics and Counterpublics" is used alongside to analyze the significance of a text and its discourse. Warner elaborates that language and texts are *metapragmatic*, or infinitely complex (Warner 16). This concept raises the significance of interpreting a text for a certain discourse. In See's text, there exists a clear resonance of language as *agency*, and an evaluation of these texts serves as a testament to the value of language against oppression.

What are the stakes of having a text as a challenge against the traumas of violence, physical or mental? An exploration of the importance of sisterhood, *Nu Shu*, and the *Laotong* as a resilient countermeasure against male patriarchal hierarchies is essentially vital to attesting the importance of language as a *vehicular* form of survival and agency.

## **John Outterbridge's Metro Train Station and Banner Art**

**John Outterbridge is an L.A. artist known worldwide. He is best known for his assemblage art. My Art talk focuses on two of his art pieces placed onto Metropolitan Transportation Authority property which memorialize South Central L.A. "Pyramid" at Avalon Green Line Station mirrors the Watts Towers which celebrate its significance to the community. He is also one of many artists who contributed to a series of light pole banners on Crenshaw Boulevard near the Expo/Crenshaw Expo Line Station. His banner pays tribute to creativity and community in Crenshaw.**

## Geopolitical Echoes From beyond YOUR “Canon”

To write something is simple, but to create a world that represents the reality that we choose not to acknowledge is usually accepted as a masterpiece. Typically, these works of art are reserved only for novels, but with Scott McCloud’s insight and the push for comic book studies, we can see how graphic novels can show us aspects of reality that reflect the hidden darkness associated with the usually unavoidable calamities that destroy our ideologies. The film *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*, directed by Zack Snyder, is one of those films that adapts the underlying meanings within the comics and into digital media so that the message can be understood by readers and viewers. The framework is based upon Frank Miller’s *The Dark Knight Returns*, Jim Starlin’s *Batman: A Death in the Family*, and Mark Waid’s *Superman: Birthright*. I argue that they were used by Snyder to create a film that brought contemporary issues to the forefront of digital media. Not only does the film relate Superman’s journey to that of immigration, but it also delves into the reactions of others and how they view this immigrant as either an invader or a refugee.

I further my argument by relating the film and the content within the graphic novels as a representation of what America has become in the post 9/11 era. We have become a fearful and judgmental nation because of our own uncertainties just as Batman does within the film which is touched on within T.D.K.R. as he loses faith in himself and humanity. Finally, I posit that Lex Luthor is the embodiment of the U.S. government as he symbolizes the financially powerful as well as sometimes corrupt elite that pull the strings behind the shadows that sways the hearts and minds of the people.

### **What Am I, Chopped Liver? Carving Out a Niche for Creative Non-Fiction**

**The critical impulse, according to Bruno Latour's "An Attempt at a Compositionis Manifesto" determines who gets to talk about what as well as what is appropriate for discourse, whether political or scientific. The same can be said of pedagogical practices in the classroom. Although an instructor's intention is not meant to thwart a student's progress, strict adherence to convention precludes other avenues of learning. Personal narratives not only satisfy academic requirements—point of view, analyses, argumentation, research and reflection, etc.— they subvert perpetual stereotypes about the barrio, develop students' voices, and provide a link to the audience outside the classroom, an audience who may have internalized misconceptions about themselves. The current mode of contributing to the ongoing dialogue, with the exception of alternative discourse or elective courses, treats the 1st-person as passive, as if the student analyzing a primary text is apart from the person penning the article. Rather than scrutinizing texts in the existing canon, let's add to the canon (attempt to, anyway) by encouraging students to scrutinize their lives and contextualize moments of personal significance.**



Beyond This Place: A New World for Women in Valerie Martínez's  
*Each and Her*

In this essay, I explore Valerie Martínez's poetry collection *Each and Her*, a documentary collage of eclectic texts that are in conversation with the systematic murders of young women in Juarez, Mexico, and the trauma caused by this modern feminicide. I argue that Martínez follows in the vein of other Chicana feminists who rewrite religious figures like the Virgen de Guadalupe while also challenging the patriarchal and often misogynistic systems of religion, capitalism, and globalization. Tenderly, the poet, speaks about the multifaceted trauma of feminicide and the culture that creates it. Through her criticisms of capitalist exploitation and her rewriting of the Virgen and other religious texts, Martínez's poetry collection calls for a world where women are empowered and equal to men. Using the metaphor of a rose, bred and sold by empires throughout time, Martínez shows how these women, most of them laborers in the maquiladoras, are tools in the global capitalist machine. Both the Virgen and the rose represent the dichotomy that women are either virtuous virgins or worthless putas, either delicate or thorny. At the same time, the rose metaphor also works to show the toughness of these women to survive in their environment and the hope of their healing. The speaker cares for her own roses and watches as the once choked and dry roses emerge from the soil green. Martínez ends the collection by crowning the indigenous Nuestra Señora de Los Iguanas as the creator of the world, an aztec representation that empowers Mexican women. Martínez's collection is a vital work of poetry for coping with and drawing attention to feminicide in Juarez, Mexico. Moving from "this place" of traumatic and violent sexism requires radical imagination. It requires writing new origin myths that are empowering to women, tearing down of false dichotomies about female identity, and ending the exploitation of laborers through the system of global capitalism.

### Margaret Fuller: Journey to Selfhood

In the nineteenth century, women were relegated to the female sphere of domesticity and had little or no chance of breaking out of that rather restrictive mold assigned to them. According to this doctrine, women were expected to be docile, submissive and religious. Moreover, they were expected to marry, bear children, and to be subservient to their husbands. Women were also neither encouraged nor expected to seek an education beyond the rudimentary level; and as a result, were not expected to have an opinion or voice of their own. Women's voices in essence were silenced during this era. The laws of the nineteenth century further contributed to this limited way of life for women. During this era, women were not allowed to have property in their own names when they married, but instead it was transferred over to their husbands. This law further served to restrict their autonomy preventing them from being on equal footings with their spouses, and forced them to be entirely dependent on them. The roles for women were completely defined by the male patriarchy and if a woman deviated from outside these prescribed lines, she was both ridiculed and ostracized, by not just the male patriarchy, but also by her fellow women. What was a woman to do if she did not fit into this rather restrictive mold allotted to her? How could she ever envision a life for herself outside of these confines? Margaret Fuller, an American woman born in 1810, would prove to be an exception to that rule, and would challenge these rather restrictive definitions of the

female sphere in both her writings and in the manner in which she conducted her life, which was based primarily on the teachings of the father which were ironically in stark opposition to the standard of that earlier time frame set for women. She received an education that men during this time period would ordinarily receive and, as a result, struggled to come to the terms which gender sphere she belonged to. Was the self that she was to manifest to the world a masculine one or a feminine one? This internal crisis from within created a tension between the masculine and feminine sides of her nature which she struggled to unite into one cohesive part. How could she ever unite her “masculine” mind as she and others described it, with the female mind that she was supposed to have? My paper explores this particular dilemma as well as the psychological crisis of identity that Fuller experienced because of it. How can Fuller ever see herself as something other than freakish because of this splintering of herself, or think of herself as a third or neutered sex, as Edgar Allen Poe once described her: “Humanity is divided into men, women, and Margaret Fuller.” Fuller herself even argues in her writings of the kind of psychological splintering of her psyche because of the teachings of her father, and her inability to see or define herself clearly. This paper explores what it means to have a gendered female body in the nineteenth century— both alongside its limits and possibilities; and what it means and implies to be at home in neither, but rather at sea. What after all is a body? Does the body necessarily have to have a gender, as Ralph Waldo Emerson discusses in one of his essays? Or is the soul the only thing that matters, and

not the body, as a means to inform knowledge and reason, as he argues? I also discuss the theory of liminal space as a space where all transformation can take place; and as a space where Fuller can come to terms with her gender disparity. In addition, I focus on Margaret Fuller's writings themselves. *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, and her writings in *The Dial*, in particular. In *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, one of Fuller's chief concerns is the plight of woman; and more specifically the inequality that they faced because of their gender. I also trace the autobiographical nature of this text, and illustrate how the writing of this text was cathartic and helped her to come to terms with her gender disparity.

My aim in this thesis further illustrates that Margaret Fuller was able to reconcile the two sides of her nature – the masculine and the feminine into one, and to come to terms with it. I use the texts of Luce Irigaray's *This Sex Which is Not One* and Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, to name a few. In Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, I explore Butler's notion that gender is a performance, but further question, and try to come to terms with this insertion as a means to argue that if this statement is a valid one, then how is it ever possible to arrive at our true selves?

In other words, is it ever possible for gender to not be a performance, but instead a reconciliation and acceptance of our gender? My paper concludes that in Margaret Fuller's case, gender was not a performance, but instead was a successful merge between her two identities or selves, utilizing the theory of liminal space as a concept.

Note: Featured presentation at Student Research Day 2018.  
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Helen Oesterheld



