

Editor's Introduction

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Welcome to the seventeenth volume of *Young Scholars in Writing*. It marks another year of impressive undergraduate research and, bittersweetly, an editorial transition as I reach the end of five years as Editor of *YSW* and we begin the transition to the fantastic new team at York College of Pennsylvania—about which more later.

This year's volume features eight articles in our regular section, plus four in our first-year section, spanning speech analysis, genre analysis, cultural and historical rhetorical criticism, and qualitative pedagogical research. We open with two articles studying audience reactions to the speech of historical personages. Jennifer Liu brings current thinking on rhetoric and demagoguery to bear on two unlikely rhetorical performances by Adolf Hitler, speeches to the German Reichstag in 1934 and 1939 which audiences were predisposed to receive unfavorably—but didn't. Karis Blaker studies contemporary newspaper accounts of Sojourner Truth, pursuing the question of how decidedly mixed representations of Truth's speaking in her own day have transformed to the acclaim she enjoys now.

Work on cultural representation continues with Alexandra Ellis's analysis of Velma Wallis's novel *Two Old Women*. Ellis's discourse analysis of how Wallis writes traditional Gwich'in tales to promote cultural literacies, resist colonial pressures, and enact survivance emphasizes place-specific language and translanguaging. Next, Emily Bremer's case studies of Instagram photographers present questions of how the changing tools of a literacy—photography—alter the accessibility of that literacy

to previously excluded people, and what new gatekeeping attitudes and practices may emerge to reinscribe the exclusivity of the artistic literacy in response. A chilling study emerges from Meghna Israni's application of genre theory to the phenomenon of school shootings. Israni analyzes news coverage of shootings to hypothesize the emergence of a reporting genre that in turn feeds a genre of the shootings themselves, potentially contributing to a "contagion" of follow-on shootings.

Three articles in this volume take up pedagogical questions. Kathryn Monthie conducts an interview-based study of participants in creative-writing workshops and, through a lens of relational theory, explores the challenge of writer defensiveness to workshop feedback. Gabrielle Stanley works from a corpus of incoming college students' writing to take up the question of what conceptions of writing students bring to college from high school. And Anya Schwartz takes us to the writing center, exploring the question of how empathy and relationship-building might allow tutors to work effectively with writers even when tutors lack deep or experiential knowledge of the genre which the writer is composing.

The four articles in this year's Spotlight on First-Year Writing are led by Kendall

Matsumoto's examination of "Orientalism and the Legacy of Racialized Sexism" in American media representations of Asian and Eurasian women. Matsumoto traces intersections of race and sexuality in the images of fully-Asian and part-Asian models and media personalities. A second image-based analysis of racialized histories comes from Matthew Yee's study of Chinese immigration portraits from the turn of the 20th century, as Chinese immigrants resisted a wave of U.S. anti-Chinese immigration policies by altering passport photos and their settings.

Two more Spotlight articles are based on genre analysis. Maryam Ahmed studies the nature and makeup of Supreme Court opinion through a genre-theory lens, considering how the generic nature of the SCOTUS opinion impacts democracy and government in the U.S. And finally, Huisheng Zhu and Qinyan Cai create a nearly textbook study of a rarely examined genre, the scholarly book preface, with the intriguing observation that the "intimacy" of such prefaces varies inversely with the specialization of the audience.

What I will miss most about editing *YSW* is seeing the big picture of what consumes undergraduate researchers in rhetoric and writing studies. I'm looking forward to getting back to the intense one-on-one mentoring work our Faculty Advising Editors do with writers whose submissions are being considered and developed for publication, but in the FAE role I won't have such a clear sense of the breadth of subjects that students are working on in their classes and independent research projects. These past five years, it has been simply revelatory to see the questions that undergraduate researchers take up—what seems to matter, and what's researchable for students ranging from seniors to first-years.

YSW is striving to represent even more of that. This year, the editorial board developed a statement of inclusion that we sought to let guide our call for papers and our review process, hoping to encourage research on historically underrepresented groups, identities, and areas of study, and to ensure that *YSW*'s pages are welcoming to researchers of all backgrounds and demographics. We have a long way to go to be more fully representative of the world of rhetoric and writing, the undergraduates studying it, and the faculty teaching it, but we were encouraged by the response represented in this volume.

The journal's act of rhetorical listening (in the sense developed by Krista Ratcliffe)—which we want the submission process and research we publish to represent—goes to what I think of, as I step away from the editorship, as one of the most pressing roles for culturally relevant research today: contributing to civil discourse. A number of communication trends of the preceding decades—most notably the rhetorical impacts of the Web's embrace of user-generated content, the fragmentation of mass media to narrowly channeled interests, and the aggregation and sale of user data—are at this point clearly not working out for the better, in terms of enhancing communication across interest groups and thus contributing to a civil discourse. The U.S. appears to be approaching a tipping point where factions will neither be interested in civil interaction nor even able to hear each other's speech—at which point, whither the polis? (For a disturbingly not-so-far-off picture, see "Moab" and "Ameristan" in Neal Stephenson's new novel *Fall*.) What at the dawn of the internet seemed a rather far-fetched, worst-case dystopian outcome is now arguably upon us; the science fiction, it turns out, was not the

miasma of hyper-partisan intellectual and communicative ghettos, but rather the idealist “open” network, the “marketplace of ideas,” and the egalitarian notion of shared public works and goods and “free” information that would all be essentially harmonizing.

Ignoring the lessons that so far appear to make any such idealism ludicrous, though, I continue to hope that inquiry-based academic research, as a way of knowing, can bridge many factions and create common ground—if we consciously undertake it with that purpose and conduct and write it accordingly. As we have a problem now, culturally, agreeing on ways of knowing, on what counts as a fact (much less what counts as truth), and on how to share even the most basic goals for the polity, we need a kind of discourse and a space that will lay such qualities open and available themselves for discussion. Research, to these ends, *can* and *must* be an act of rhetorical listening. Done well, it leads with questions rather than answers. It treats its participants or subjects of focus as “knowers,” as the informed and the “expert” in the research situation. Its methods are in essence systems for interlocution among researchers and informants. And it seeks transformation of the researcher. If as researchers we can inquire across and among factions, if we can share stories grounded in lived experiences, if we can interpret with lenses that themselves we are able to make intelligible and valuable to our participants and various communities of readers—then, maybe, we have a basis for a kind of communication that many factions will feel is to their benefit.

True, pretty much the whole of study of cognitive biases and a host of other human shortcomings suggests this hope is unrealistic—perhaps tackling a ways-of-knowing

problem by asserting, louder and slower, a particular way of knowing already rejected by many factions ain’t the most likely path to restoring civil discourse. Perhaps such a strategy doesn’t reach deep enough to find the common roots that would let us start again toward the project of sitting in the fire and hearing one another. (Perhaps there is no way even to persuade various factions to adopt that purpose to begin with.) That may be. But at least in the process of failing, we might succeed at finding what some of those common roots could be. I look to the research in this volume as a series of deeply meaningful accounts, stories, histories, and experiences that show us some deep roots of the discourses under study. By helping map the paths people have and do walk, such research really may help establish *common* grounds for engagement among factions.

To the extent *YSW* has done so, this year and over the five of my editorship, I have many people to thank. For Montana State University’s solid commitment to fund and produce *Young Scholars in Writing* through the second half of the second decade of the millennium, I gratefully acknowledge Provost Bob Mokwa; Vice Presidents of Research and Economic Development Renee Reijo Pera and Jason Carter; the College of Letters & Science’s Dean Nic Rae; MSU’s Liberal Studies Program, especially Tami Eitel; MSU’s Undergraduate Scholars Program, directed by Colin Shaw and executed by Rose Dormanen and Scarlet Schwendtner before her; and the Department of English, particularly its chairs during these years, Phil Gaines and Kirk Branch, and most especially budget manager Mandy Hansen. Throughout my editorship, the journal has been designed and laid out by graphic designer Alison

Gauthier and print-production manager Kay LaFrance of MSU's University Communications, and in MSU's Renne Library, Leila Sterman, along with Jason Clark and Erik Guss, have supported our tech needs in the journal's web version on Open Journal Systems.

Students not only do the research *YSW* publishes, but offer hands in producing the journal. I want to thank again my undergraduate Editorial Assistants over the years: Anjeli Doty, Sadie Robertus, and Kinsie Clarkson. And each year, I thank the students of our Magazine Editing and Production course, who work on the journal staff as peer reviewers—more than sixty of them over the past five years. In summer 2019, this harried but cheerful group were Patrick Allard, Liz Anderson, Jenna Barker, Jordan Devers, Donita Fatland, Heidi Froelich, Maggie Hudlow, Andrew Jefferis, Sydney Knox, Dylan Osborn, Amanda Roberts, Riley Slivka, Luke Stevens, Joseph Tadsen, Amie Tiday, and Rose Vejvoda.

I am deeply grateful to the national editorial board which comprises the heart of *YSW*'s mentoring work in developing undergraduate researchers in their writing, our core of Faculty Advising Editors. Among this year's board are

many new arrivals—to the continuing band of Jacob Babb, Paige Banaji, Abby Dubisar, T J Geiger, John Gravener, Laurie Grobman, Joseph Janangelo, Clyde Moneyhun, Sean O'Rourke, Steve Price, Rebekah Sims, and Annette Vee, we welcomed Sweta Baniya, Allison Carr, Erin Lehman, Laurie McMillan, Annie Mendenhall, Jason Palmeri, Sarah Polo, Michael Rifenburg, Anna Sicari, and Sarah Singer, all of whose work with contributors to volume 17 was extensive and superb.

Best of all, we also added the newest contributors to the *YSW* legacy: the incoming editorial team at York College of Pennsylvania, led by Emily Cope, Gabriel Cutrufello, and Kim Fahle Peck, whom I gratefully welcome. I can't possibly be the first journal editor to think, a few years into the job, *what if we can't find anyone else to do this and I wind up never being able to stop?* Happily, not only has a new team stepped up, but I couldn't imagine a better one—capable, enthusiastic, and having more good ideas in a week than I had in five years. (As evidence, see their note on the next page.) *YSW* is in great hands, and I look forward to reading many more years of full-hearted and full-voiced undergraduate research in its pages on their watch.