

# Cultural Poetics and Social Movements Initiated by Literature



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By

Maryann P. DiEdwardo

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## PREFACE

I have been participating in teaching, writing, editing, presenting, and performing case study research during the pandemic which began in March 2020. At the Second International Conference of Human Rights and Globalization Online, July 1, 2, 3, 2021, at the University of Seville, Spain, I presented a chapter on the film *Roma*, which was also accepted for publication in the Dykinson digital volume.

I shall begin the explanation and argumentation for this book titled *Cultural Poetics: Social Movements Initiated by Literature* by offering background of my peace studies and cultural studies, as well as my interest in cultural poetics and approaching literature through the investigation of cultural landscapes as literary spaces.

Social justice is a thematic presence that we all share when we are able to see that the universe is on the side of justice, a Kingian Principle. Social justice, as being oneself in the world, free from injury and hatred, blessed with hope and joy, is an ultimate journey in the research and writing. I shall strive to be on the side of justice within the writing of a book that acknowledges my striving for peace in my own life and in my service to others. I shall describe my search for social justice as a cultural landscape in the research for this book involving the different dimensions of Christian spirituality, and in particular, Benedictine spirituality, which I relate to civic values and cultural contexts. I use interdisciplinary and hermeneutical study of traditional resources (historical) and contemporary forms of spiritual life (anthropological).

Social movements initiated by literature include the Beat Generation of the 1940s and 1950s which questioned the existence of certain societal elements identified with Jack Kerouac, from a 1948 conversation with fellow Beat poet and author John Clellon Holmes. Other social movements by luminaries such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Flannery O'Connor, Thomas Merton, and Martin Luther King Jr. ask us to reimagine literary works as social criticism; writers are agents of change. As such, we recognize the writing of Bonhoeffer, Merton, and M. L. King Jr. as well as the journaling of Flannery O'Connor as a daily writing practice paramount to a writer's ethic.

But the powerful language and poetics of the works by Flannery O'Connor change us as we experience her inner life. On page 67 of *A Prayer*

*Journal*, the handwritten, darker-inked portion—where she tells of her soulful decision that the journal is not quite a “direct medium for prayer”—astounds us. Flannery O’Connor continues to write that “Prayer is not even as premeditated as this—it is of the moment and this too slow for the moment” in a humanity that reaches our souls (11/4 entry). Thirty-seven pages of printed text represent the actual journal; original text is included at the back of the volume, in O’Connor’s own hand. I argue that my study of *A Prayer Journal* by Flannery O’Connor indicates study of the language of trauma.

The poet Frank Bidart uses narrative strategies. His works of poetry embody the flow of human emotions. The pathos appeals to emotions and feelings and persuades an audience. Bidart’s dramatic monologues are an intrapersonal lens into the inner pain innate in the human emotional experience. Frank Bidart was born in Bakersfield, California, on May 27, 1939. His recent works include *Half-light: Collected Poems 1965–2016*, published in 2017. This book won the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize. He is a messenger of hope for us. His writing is prophetic, motivational, and steadily charges forward with exceptional and theoretical foundations. One can see that the poet Frank Bidart uses mythological theory. He mindfully embraces situations of courage and despair in his conversational poetry. As part of the LGBTQIA community, Bidart inspires equality.

Therefore, through a student-directed pedagogical model with the models of Zora Neale Hurston, Ann Petry, and Ralph Ellison as well as Martin Luther King, and Terence Blanchard, my writing classes fuse into a learning community.

Sincerely,

Dr. Maryann P. DiEdwardo  
Adjunct Professor

Lehigh University Graduate School of Computer Science and Engineering  
and University of Maryland Global Campus



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# INTRODUCTION

Developing in the 18th and 19th centuries among writers such as Jonathan Swift, John Ruskin, and, especially, Matthew Arnold, cultural criticism as it is practiced today has significantly complicated older notions of culture, tradition, and value. While Arnold believed in culture as a force of harmony and social change, cultural critics of the 20th century sought to extend and problematize such definitions.

Theorists like Raymond Williams, Antonio Gramsci, and those connected with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, England, as well as French intellectuals such as Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault, described culture not as a finished product but as a process that joined knowledge to interest and power.

Cultural critics critique the traditional canon and focus their attention on a variety of texts and discourses, tracing the interactions of both through an eclectic mix of interpretive strategies that include elements of economics, psychology, anthropology, sociology, gender studies, and new historicism. In critiquing the traditional canon, cultural critics avoid privileging one cultural product over another and often examine texts that are largely seen as marginal and unimportant in traditional criticism, such as those connected to various forms of pop culture. Essentially cross-disciplinary, cultural criticism and cultural studies have become important tools in theorizing the emergence and importance of postcolonial and multicultural literatures.

Scholars in cultural poetics consider a literary phenomenon, literary work, writer, school, or style as something based on a specific cultural context, and consequently connect its emergence and development with various social and cultural factors.

*Cultural Poetics: Social Movements Initiated by Literature* says it provides a practice of the analysis that outlines these human activities and even admits its own prejudices, giving a more complete understanding of the text than other forms of literary analysis.

Reading literary texts or other texts such as scripts for performances for their political strategies and reading political movements as texts can help us overcome biases that have undermined efforts to combat racism, sexism, and economic inequality. Powerful and with pathos, logos and ethos, these movements are created by such performance as a recent opera.

An historic occasion, the Metropolitan Opera 2021-2022 season features “Fire Shut Up in My Bones” created with a cast of Black actors and written by Terence Blanchard, a Black composer. Historiography records and interprets the same events with a shift in time as a result of many factors. An analysis of a specific topic identifies influential thinkers and reveals the shape of scholarly debates and accomplishments as well.

I am writing critiques about African American authors and poets as well as a composer, who have written works that have made social change, namely Ralph Ellison, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, James Baldwin, Terence Blanchard, as well as Ann Petry and Rita Dove. I also write about Viet Thanh Nguyen, a Vietnamese American novelist’s novel *The Sympathizer*.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 form the theoretical foundation; 4. “Social Movements: Reading to Transgress”; 5. “Ann Petry”; 6. “Ralph Ellison”; 7. “Margaret Atwood: Human Rights”; 8. “Cultural Poetics and Social Movements”; 9. “Intertextuality: African American Literary Heritage”; 10. “Kerouac: Beat Generation”; 11. “Feminist Art Theory”; 12. “Civil Rights, Thomas Merton, and James Baldwin”; 13. “A Canon of Despair: Zora Neale Hurston Poetic Praxis, Sound, Space, and Language”; 14. “Cultural Studies and Global Literature”; 15. “Rita Dove”; 16. “Ready Player One”; 17. “The Critique.”

Cultural poetics, also known as new historicism in America, and cultural materialism in Britain, is a form of literary analysis. Its purpose is to discover the original ideology behind significant historical and biological facts about writers, resources, and the art they create.

My purpose is to present a qualitative research study with a focus on the dynamic territories of cultural norms, and then borders are drawn and redrawn across them.

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# CHAPTER 1

## POSTCOLONIAL, DIASPORA, AND MIGRATION STUDIES

To enhance our learning community as we define and implement cultural poetics with commentary that presents visions of global literary studies, I use compassion and agape love, or unconditional love. Let's attempt to respect our gifts of diversity and peace as we seek understanding through reading and interpreting the past.

To explain postcolonial narratology within the genre of migrant and refugee literature and the lens of post-structuralism, I will analyze Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Sympathizer*. The dual identity of the narrator, as a mole and immigrant, and the Americanization of the Vietnam War in international literature are central themes in the novel *The Sympathizer*. The novel was published forty years to the month after the fall of Saigon, which is the initial scene of the book.

The anonymous narrator is a most imperative, essential, and semiotic methodology. The reader shares the narrator's experiences of place, culture, and state of consciousness, which serves the author's purpose. The meaning of the literary work becomes the relationship of the past and the present. The narrator, the reader, and the author are co-creators. The novel acts as a semiotic sign of the literature of multiculturalism and postcolonialism. Deconstruction argues that language, especially in ideal concepts such as truth and justice, is irreducibly complex, unstable, or impossible to determine. Many debates in continental philosophy surrounding ontology, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, hermeneutics, and philosophy of language refer to Jacques Derrida's beliefs. We shall experience these ideas within character traits of "hidden self" in Viet Thanh Nguyen's novel, *The Sympathizer*. Nguyen writes with superior force of characterization that reveals "hidden self," or interior stream of consciousness.

Because post-structural work is self-critical, post-structural critics even look for ways that texts contradict themselves. The author is displaced as absolute author(ity), and the reader plays a role in interpreting the text and developing meaning (as best as possible) from the text. How does the

work undermine or contradict generally accepted truths? How does the author (or a character) omit, change, or reconstruct memory and identity? The narrator tells us that he has been held under suspicion all his life. The characterization of the anonymous narrator, when he experiences a year in an isolation cell, is dramatically created, as is the entire novel. The book is about the narrator's confession. Thus the layers of creativity and elegant and profound language of the author prevail as semiotic signs of humanity during war. The novel fits the expectations of a number of different novel genres: immigrant, mystery, political, metafiction, dark comedic, historical, spy, and war. The story depicts the anonymous narrator, a North Vietnamese mole in the South Vietnamese army, who stays embedded in a South Vietnamese community in exile in the United States.

Our analysis continues with application of rhetorical conceptual literary terminology. Posteriori in rhetoric logic and philosophy is a belief or proposition if it can only be determined through observation. My induction argument suggests the proposition that *The Sympathizer* is written to observe the war from within the character of the narrator. The specific observed example comes first: the war. Next, the logical argument follows on a universal level that the novel is an experience, a cultural phenomenon, and a sign or semiotic vision. Diaspora study is complex. My readers have so many stories of their great-grandparents fleeing one war to only find another. This study of war is so personal. It is about ourselves and the diasporas of our past that brought us here—to the present. We hold the pain of our ancestors.

Places serve as mythic representation of place as the creator of the story uses literary imagination to artistically craft. Stories are openings into the soul. Paradoxically, poetics which determine that the work speaks the truth for the reader and that truth is within the work serves to aid our analytical look at the way language sparks place. Crucial to the study of individuals, geopolitical concerns, social justice, hunger, and the planet, essays discuss by synthesizing and by thinking about cultural issues.

Methodology includes reflection on personal experiences to share knowledge and curiosity about the poetics of war. In the novel, the ethos of trustworthiness is used to present life stories. Aesthetically comparing and giving a voice to the author's creativity and vision, logos, or reasoning, throughout the novel is useful in the context of the impact of the author's approach. Pathos, emotional or imaginative and potential solutions to global issues are applied to the applications of semiotic visionary language that the narrator uses to discuss his confession and his ultimate future. Historical backing is developed through research. The author ignites the metaphorical sense of humanity and refugee or migrant culture.

## CHAPTER 2

### AESTHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS, PRAXIS, CRITIQUES, AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Through the lens of cultural poetics and semiotics, I signify that social movements are created by literary works. Cultural poetics, also known as the new historicism in America, and cultural materialism in Britain, is a form of literary analysis. Its purpose is to discover the original ideology behind significant historical and biological facts about writers, resources, and the art they create.

Regarding the power of writing, “Aesthetic Consciousness, Praxis, Critiques, and Cultural Landscape” investigates the useful social functionality of literature as well as theoretical processes of the literary scholar. From 2008 to the present, through the practice and theory of interpretation and understanding, this researcher acknowledges the importance of theory. Therefore she implements a hermeneutic framework. Moving toward the goal of praxis, she argues that hermeneutic arcs are useful to organize and interpret information in order to prepare critiques.

Hermeneutics specifically applies to interpretation, usually of Scripture. Exegesis, often used with textual analysis of Scripture, refers to analysis of any text. The intersectionality of hermeneutics, metacognition, and semiotics, as well as cultural poetics specifically to study literature, may also remind us to ponder our cultural heritages. Interpret literature as a social discourse. To prepare for this book and to engage in primary source research for a qualitative research study, this researcher performed a case study research project. The importance, therefore, in experiencing the aesthetic of the writing of poetry is one of literary hermeneutics. Unlike classical philology, literary hermeneutics will not only consider the aesthetic character of the text to be interpreted in an evaluation which follows from interpretation, but rather it will make the aesthetic character a premise of the interpretation itself. Therefore we accept that there is a consciousness of historicity which a contemporary literary hermeneutics accepts (Szondi and Bahti, 20). The future of hermeneutics may be modeled with an understanding of the poetic and aesthetic praxis. The results of my case study reveal that respect for the

history of the poetic vision of Emily Dickinson, reflection on her works, and creative original poetry combine inquiry and systematic methods of interpretation.

My research ethics are rooted in the principles of the Aristotelian philosophy based on art as imitation, the theme of *Poetics*, by Aristotle. Criterion for interpretation through the study and philosophy of Aristotle reflects and questions fundamental assumptions (Malpas et al.). “Poetry Festival Project Case Study” focuses on three attributes of the hermeneutical arc, including text, explanation of the text, and understanding in reflections. For example, imagine new insights into the meaning of the poetry of Emily Dickinson, using applications of reading poetry for healing from grief. In anticipation of exploring reading the poetry of Emily Dickinson as a therapy, one may read poems by Dickinson, reflecting on the poems and writing poetry. After reading the poetry of Emily Dickinson, this researcher wrote reflections based on her own experiences. From the perspective of hermeneutic interpretation, consider the impact of writing journal entries of short reflections and poetry as a methodology to create personal and poetic embodied space, the location where human experience and consciousness take on material and spatial form. Apply a hermeneutic approach to interpret poetry by writing original poetry. The actions of essential criterion of hermeneutic study use text, respect for history of the author of the text, and consider the significance of the text. Perhaps, according to Lorraine Code, editor, in *Feminist Interpretations of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, published by Pennsylvania University Press, 2003, a feminist inquiry offers wider horizons for philosophers ... (337). Methodology in the case study uses the poetry of Dickinson for inquiry and interpretation of the events and conditions of daily life. By doing so, I rely on Plato, who uses hermeneutic knowledge as a spiritual endeavor, revealed and intuitive (Oxford English Dictionary). Support of previous research includes “A Hermeneutics of Contemplative Silence: Paul Ricoeur and the Heart of Meaning” by Michele Therese Kueter Petersen. She joins the hermeneutic process of description, explanation, and interpretation.

Further, researchers write critiques to practice hermeneutic planning. The hermeneutic framework as a prewriting exercise allows us to use critical reading skills to enhance writing activity. Reading to doubt, or exploratory writing, offers reflective writing practices to discover style and personal voice or alternative topics. Thinking about literature through the lens of the hermeneutic arc, with metacognitive activities, may enlighten us to better writing. In fact, this researcher promotes the use of metacognition to begin the outlines and purpose, hermeneutics to approach the research, and, finally, cultural poetics to see the literary work as a social discourse.



Investigating the useful social functionality of literature as well as the theoretical processes of the literary scholar regard the power of writing for cultural change. The most important outcome of hermeneutics and metacognition in writing is cultural poetics which seeks to identify literary works as social discourses. Crafting original poetry and reflections in a journal prepare this researcher to write. The results of the case study reveal that the researcher reinvents her devotion to the study of poetry.

“A Hermeneutic Approach for Conducting Literature Reviews and Literature Searches,” by Sebastian K. Boell and Dubravka Cecez-Kecmanovic, inspires us. The authors propose a hermeneutic framework that integrates analysis and interpretation of literature and the search for literature. Furthermore, the authors explain two circles: the search and acquisition circle and the analysis and interpretation circle (Boell et al.).

Studying previously researched knowledge, whether within Scripture or secular contexts, constitutes a text, a respect for history of the author of the text, and the significance of the text, and understanding approaches to writing about the text. The hermeneutic arc offers us methodology for interpretation. “Hermeneutics, in France as elsewhere abroad, is frequently associated with the work of Paul Ricoeur” (Frey, viii.). In 2011, in *World Applied Sciences Journal* 15 (11): 1623–1629, Ghasemi et al. defined hermeneutics as the science of interpretation. “In the field of education, hermeneutics has played a relatively important role in understanding text” (Ghasemi et al.). The authors cite the hermeneutic method according to Paul Ricoeur. Researchers accomplish understanding by explanation, understanding, and appropriation, which Ricoeur called the “hermeneutic arc.” Explanation explores the nature of the text; understanding explores the question which the text presents; and appropriation expands knowledge and perception. Jeff Malpas and Hans-Helmuth Gander, editors of *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics*, establish hermeneutic origins; explain; ask questions; describe engagements, challenges, and dialogues; and conclude with the future of hermeneutics.

Hermeneutic models not only ask how a particular effect is achieved or why an ending seems right, but also what a particular line of text means and what a literary work tells us about the human condition. Strategies based on metacognition engage memories of readings, life experiences, and imagination. Accordingly, these three patterns compose voice.

Modern hermeneutics includes both verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as semiotics, presuppositions, and pre-understandings. Metacognition is thinking about thinking. John H. Flavell coined the term “metacognition” in the seventies of the last century (Flavell). In the book published in 2013, called *Using Reflection and Metacognition to Improve Student Writing*,

editors Matthew Kaplan, Naomi Silver, Danielle Lavaque-Mantz, and Deborah Meizlish provide a template for a new writing environment. Blended-learning approaches use the three attributes of this hermeneutical practice. As an example, we select the text *Using Reflection and Metacognition to Improve Student Learning*, specifically chapter 8, “Reflection, E-portfolios, and WEPO.” The authors suggest that social pedagogy based on writing and editing in print and online adds valuable experiences for writers. The text is carefully written; examples are adequate. This researcher interprets the evidence that the authors present as valid. Readers also experienced the use of the social pedagogy. A text, a clear explanation of the chapter, focuses on writing in both a word processing program and a website or other online digital format exceeds for the 21st-century writing. This researcher uses storyboard from film to aid the writer in understanding writing and editing in print and online. Film aesthetic provides a backdrop to us as writers. Observe visual imagery that also acts as text. Ethos, logos, and pathos exist within the characters and are also present in the setting; use interpretation to evolve as writers. Write film to practice writing. Writing to write, and writing comes to us within our efficacy through practice and experiences.

In 2017, this researcher published an article titled “Implementing Learning Strategies Based on Metacognition,” in the *Journal of Modern Education Review*. She presented learning strategies based on metacognition, or thinking about thinking. The planning of a writing project “centers upon activities that support preparation to act as cognitive mappers to create new literature of the social network as new voices for a global cultural revolution” (DiEdwardo, 380). Stories that writers create in the new literature of the social network become the new voices for a global cultural literature revolution. By telescoping into a shorter version of oral history, writers succeed in the learning community.

I am pleased to inform you that my session proposal has been approved for inclusion in the 53rd Annual Convention of the Northeast Modern Language Association, which will take place on March 10-13, 2022 in Baltimore, Maryland. Poststructuralism, Deconstruction, and the Novel (Panel) Comparative Literature/World Literatures (non-European Languages, my session focuses on the foundations of the narrative and study of the modern novel as it encompasses multiculturalism and social justice, the development of and critical responses to genres and movements, connections between contemporary sociopolitical events and novelists’ responses, all in order to construct an informed worldview. The novel to poststructuralists is more faithful to the metaphysics of true expression. For Derrida and Foucault, writing is abstract; and it is abstract because it is a function not of

presence but of absence: the reader's absent when the writer's writing and the writer's absent when the reader's reading. For a deconstructionist, then, a writer's circumstances and intentions are indeed a part of the "context" of a text, but context imposes no real cinctures on the text's meaning because meaning in language requires cultivation of absence rather than presence, and involves not the imposition but the erasure of consciousness. Derrida following Heidegger and Foucault see literary language as not a tool but an environment. A writer does not wield language; she is subsumed in it. Language speaks us; writing writes. The Nobel Prize winner Doris Lessing is faithful to the metaphysics of true expression. Her work represents the development of the Modern Novel as a multicultural form and examines historical, cultural and societal foundations as well as the forms of social commentary. We focus on foundations of the narrative and study of the Modern Novel which encompasses multiculturalism and social justice, assess the role of Lessing and others within the development of, and critical responses to, genres and movements. We should examine connections between contemporary sociopolitical events and responses in order to construct an informed worldview.

We should interpret relationships to the #MeToo to contemporary literature to develop and sustain critical and creative thinking skills, including curiosity and skepticism, to achieve ongoing engagement with moral and ethical issues. Further study in the area of critiques utilizes Diigo pages which contain links to books, articles, presentations, and published research. We should coordinate Diigo resources with Google Scholar and library digital researches and pursue broad questions that are fundamental to any efforts in research writing. Who is the author of the text? What period was the text about? How do we interpret the ideas? Hermeneutics has been useful as a way to interpret texts since antiquity and is called the "hermeneutic circle."

The critique is imperative. Hermeneutics discovers the impulse to critique, openness, and ... reasonableness in ethos (Weinsheimer, preface). Critiques engage readers in analyzing key articles by scholars in the field, in blogs, wikis, websites, books, pamphlets, newsletters, or journals, or other material demonstrating techniques of close reading in order to explicate a text with terms of the hermeneuticist, that apply to writing to converse, to analyze, and to use cultural heritage. Writers possess qualities of memory based on human everyday experiences similar to those experiences within literary works they have read. Play podcasts to ignite us for reflection, discovery, and social networking—to motivate. The critique is themed on ideas about the human condition. Create journals as primary sources for essays. Writing based on keen observation and self-discovery is

a part of learning interpretation. Paradigms of research-based internet resources like Diigo are useful to create annotated bibliographies to collect data. Diigo as a resource is based on my own books, articles, presentations, and original published poetry. It lists other poets as well, especially 21st-century new poets.

Hermeneutics includes semiotics to signify transformation. Presuppositions or previously successful or meditative reflective writing, with metacognition as a goal, refers to higher-order thinking, which involves active control over the cognitive processes. Writers plan, evaluate, monitor, embed, inform, and train. In particular, the emphasis of writing online and in print formulates a writer's planning as a semiotic or significant stage of the writing process. Prewriting in an informal journal is metacognitive thinking in action. Metastudy such as a freewriting journal prepares us to write. The E-portfolio suggests that we can collect ideas and reflect on the process of the creation.

Charles Dickens teaches peace through his literature. He is an agent of change who adapts biblical allusions to teach morality. The hermeneutics of Dickens's works is a burgeoning field. His use of the Bible recaptures the essence of Christianity in his book *The Life of Our Lord* (Larson).

This researcher refers to *The Life of Our Lord*, by Charles Dickens, as a way to investigate. The narrative gently tells the reader about the life of Christ and ends with the ultimate sadness of the persecution of Christians. Yet the republished work is illustrated with Victorian-themed pictures to capture the cultural landscape of the Victorian era. The book presents the life of Jesus Christ, rewritten by Dickens for his children. The generous tone that Dickens applies in references to moral code shows radical compassion.

Why do writers write? "Social Justice: Thematic Tool and Paradigm in the Construction of the Novels of Dickens and DiEdwardo" was presented at the Hotel Bethlehem, in April 2010, as part of the Pennsylvania College English Association's spring conference, called "English Studies and Social Justice." The answer is that characters, setting, mood, voice, and themes dynamically bring us to a state of relaxation and vision, to understand truths. Literature is inspirational. My intention is to provide readers with tools to research the use of social justice as a reason to write and a methodology of applying the social justice paradigm for writing. Conclusively, this book seeks to develop empathy.

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## CHAPTER 3

# THE LONELY ISLAND OF THE SELF IN FEMININE PRACTICES IN WRITING: CULTURAL POETICS, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND MODERNITY

“The Lonely Island of the Self in Feminine Practices in Writing: Cultural Poetics, Intersectionality, and Modernity” acts as the transition from my research as a methodology for developing my own sensitivity to feminist practices.

### Cultural Poetics

Cultural poetics tries to identify key images to identify literature as a social text or discourse. Through the lens of cultural poetics and semiotics, in my new book, with a date of publication TBA, I signify the short story “Black Death,” which predates second-wave feminism, as a prelude to Zora Neale Hurston’s Haitian folklore, *Mules and Men* (1935) and *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* (1938). Hurston’s identity as a “literary anthropologist” and her thematic messages rooted in folklore are based in expressions of space and language.

Applicable to the study of Willa Cather, Toni Morrison, and Barbara Ehrenreich, the writing of oneself, the lonely island of the self, represents our search for words to describe situations. I argue that Cather, Morrison, and Ehrenreich apply poetics as a methodology to capture and apply feminine myth as an island of selfhood in the creation of works of fiction and nonfiction, to create the poetics of language essential to the significance of the messages.

First, in her book *My Mortal Enemy*, the significance of Cather’s message is suffering. My readings signify the message of Cather as a writer who designs poetics as the cause of the work. Island of lonely voice and female selfhood are components to the work of Cather. Recent research in

the area of stylometrics explore the ways in which the voice Cather ... in her correspondence differs from the voice she used in her public writing.

Morrison's *Beloved* is a signifier of the importance of the spiritual in writing and language. In fact, Morrison creates the voice of a dead child to represent spirituality through myth. Ultimately, writing is a personal journey determined by the ghost becomes an island place of worship.

Ehrenreich's "What a Cute Universe You Have!" demonstrates poetics of truth of the author. Through nonfiction, her prose use poetics as a basic set of principles. Certainly, the language of Ehrenreich, who describes the late 20th-century American entertainment culture as a "composition of ... tragedies and monster-ridden myths" invites analysis of "our desire to make the awesome adorable [as] spoiling the mysteries of life."

## Intersectionality

Texts such as *Third Wave Agenda*, to *Manifesta*, to *Colonize This!* embody historical and cultural significance. Through the lens of cultural poetic scholars aim at understanding through reading literatures in the cultural connect and social imaginary. New historicism is the study of the poetics of culture. Postfeminism and the third wave are entirely different entities. Rebecca Walker's 1992 essay, "Becoming the Third Wave," documents third-wave issues of intersectionality and identity in America. Intersectionality has received increased attention in part due to the Women's March on Washington. The march's platform is called "Unity Principles," which include the belief that "gender justice is racial justice and economic justice" (Dastagir, Alia. *USA Today*. January 19, 2017). Fourth-wave feminism, beginning as early as 2008, offered immediacy and solidarity to fight for women's rights and to oppose oppression in the realms of equality for women in the workplace, fighting racism, and women in political office. The cultural poetics of feminism was found in feminist blogs such as "Feministing," driving the current fifth-wave movements such as #metoo in 2021.

## Modernism

"Morrison is one of the great portraitists of the orphan in world literature" (Conner). Postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha finds Morrison the epitome of the postnational, postcolonial, ethnic writer. Modernity views the work of art as the new location of the sacred (Conner). Morrison crafts "theology of narrative," as Conner points out in his chapter, "Modernity and the Homeless: Toni Morrison and the Fictions of Modernism," in the 2014 book



*Toni Morrison: Memory and Meaning*, by Adrienne Lanier Seward, Justine Tally, and Carolyn Denard, published by University of Mississippi Press, August 2014. Moreover, central to the study of modernism is “grasping the sacred in the work of art: Morrison’s art brings the sacred into this world” (Conner). Modernism means that period of the early 20th century connected to the First World War, when Morrison states that “alienation is a definition of this century” (Thesis 1–2). “Her novels give eloquent and heartrending representations of this alienation ... the figure of the outcast, the exile.” (Conner).

## Background

Proposed Research, Research Question, Research Methodology, Short Description of Other Research

Research Question: How are feminist ideas in mythic terms appropriate for feminist practices and feminist theory, in the pedagogy of distance-learning methodologies with and about the texts selected by UMUC faculty for the course: Cather’s *My Mortal Enemy*; Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*; and Ehrenreich’s *For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of the Experts’ Advice to Women*; as well as *The Longman Anthology of Women’s Literature*, by Mary K. DeShazer.

Research Methodology: I write MLA-style, research-based empirical studies based on primary sources that I find through archival research, and practice feminine reminiscences to detect messages that decode myths about my study of the assimilation of feminist ideas in mythic terms appropriate for feminist practices, and then extend my inquisition to feminist theory present in the texts selected by UMUC faculty for the course: Cather’s *My Mortal Enemy*; Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*; and Ehrenreich’s *For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of the Experts’ Advice to Women*, as well as *The Longman Anthology of Women’s Literature*, by Mary K. DeShazer.

## Previous Feminist-Related Research

Published Digital Article

DiEdwardo, Maryann. Department of English. Lehigh University. *The Pocahontas Archive, History on Trial*. “Pocahontas as Christy Girl.” 2008. <http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/pocahontas/essays.php?id=2>

## Presentations for Feminism Conferences

“Overcoming Poverty through Journaling.” Feminism in Practice Conference: Reflection, Action, Change. Lehigh University. November 2010.

“Feminist Practice in the Art of Pocahontas, Viewed Through Feminist Art Theory.” Lehigh University. Feminism in Practice Conference, November 15, 2008. Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

I am editor and contributor to a text in 2016, with Cambridge Scholars Press, based on a panel that I designed for the Northeast Modern Language Association. I have been a teacher of African American Literature Course at University of Maryland University College as well.

My research has helped me see that the gaps in the voices of my students in 2012 still haunt with stereotypical imaginings which echo the awkward and, at times, controversial and unprofessional interpretations of the literature they are required to read for English 354. Often, the students, who were not prepared to face the truths of the works that they read, conjured imaginings that left them weak as research writers. Feminist ideals cannot be perpetuated without writing about or representing women, gendered practice, or gendered identity. Certainly, Cather, Morrison, and Ehrenreich represent the historical development of feminism, but to the distance student the concepts only reach as far as my students have developed in their own ideologies.

For instance, in the rubric for English 354, I explain that “the purpose of this paper is to demonstrate your ability to devise a research strategy, to research sources, and critically evaluate these sources, to organize and integrate your findings with your own personal views and knowledge in your own words in a scholarly research paper format. The paper should not be just pieces of information and quotations strung together from different sources. A major part of the paper should be your interpretation of the information collected from varied sources.” *The Longman Anthology of Women’s Literature* acted as a legitimate tool for the distance student, with choices for the critical racial and theoretical components, due to the amount of literature, the choices, and the ability to please varied writers of different backgrounds and cultural milieu.

Themes of stereotypes, gender status, and power suggest that the study of my writing and research into Pocahontas prepared me to teach and to use feminist theory to understand my distance students. For the first assignment, we discussed the writing of Willa Cather. Stereotypes are common in the writing of Cather. In a “welcome letter” for the course, I write the following: “Teaching Willa Cather based on personal memoir style will bring out

passionate pairing of life story mixed with the sentiment and style of Cather. Thesis could be biographically based, analyze a character, analyze literary elements or genre, or show how the writing of Cather echoes your own memoir or your own experience.”

A powerful piece, *The Bluest Eye*, was cathartic to bringing out those students who had experienced abusive situations. On their own, they quietly revealed their experiences in private ways in an area called “workbook journaling in the distance classroom.” Gender status acts as a profound theme in the work of Morrison.

Next, the reality of the lack of power of women in history is forever thrust upon the students as they read Ehrenreich. I thought that this work, of a sociological nature, was a great addition to the class.

To illustrate my students’ writing in the course American Women Writers, I select a portion of a student’s paper with the thesis that mirrors the functionality of the language and the focus as theme. She writes the following: “By analyzing through methods of comparing and contrasting, we are able to withdraw the historical changes in women over the course of time within the United States. In doing so, we can better understand gender roles of women and how they have changed, based on various periods of time and related social movements. While analyzing the work of Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*, we can better appreciate the historical milestones achieved by the female gender throughout history within this country.”

Conclusively, feminist ideas cannot be perpetuated without writing about or representing women, gendered practice, or gendered identity. Core courses such as American Women Writers will promote critical reformulations by which feminism challenges and critical literary discussions can be integrated into research.

Essay from *American Women Writers, Poetics, and the Nature of Gender Study*, chapter 11, by Maryann P. DiEdwardo

My presentation argues the significance of the works of Cather, Morrison, and Ehrenreich as models for cultural change. Literature is a social text or discourse which dynamically interweaves multiple strands. Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* is a signifier of the importance of the spiritual in writing and language. In fact, I suggest postmodern views of these works. Postmodern ideas accept conflict in human affairs. Postmodernism rejects elitism. We reevaluate pop culture. Aesthetically, reality is immediate in both works of Willa Cather and Toni Morrison. Media events in the current 2021 cultural milieu are also postmodernity. I have been writing about the

study of the self through reading literary works. In my book, *Spatializing Social Justice, Literary Critiques*, published by Hamilton Press, 2019, I use seven literary critiques and seven reflections to share my research. I argue that we gain meaning from a critical interpretation of written or printed text.

My model in writing is Hélène Cixous. A visionary, Hélène Cixous (“The Laugh of the Medusa”) realized that we are writing to find ourselves. Applicable to the study of Willa Cather, Toni Morrison, and Barbara Ehrenreich, the writing of oneself represents our search for words to describe situations. Based on the study of Aristotle’s *Poetics* (free online text), a good companion work to interpret “art as imitation,” [8, 10, 24] I argue that Cather, Morrison, and Ehrenreich use language in specific modes of discourse, such as fiction, essay, and dialogue, for the purpose of reaching readers. In doing so, they absolutely attempt to motivate and to teach us. In fact, through the art of poetics as a practice, they capture emotions or actions. Then they apply language as metaphors of our actions, ethics, and attitudes. The works portray the human condition. Cather, Morrison, and Ehrenreich create the poetics of language essential to the significance of the messages. In this context, all three writers portray actions and indicators that are important to us as readers.

First, the significance of the message of Willa Cather is suffering, in her book, *My Mortal Enemy*. My readings signify the message of Cather as a writer who designs poetics as the cause of the work. Recent research in the area of stylometrics explores the ways in which the voice of Cather, in her correspondence, differs from the voice she used in her public writing. Conclusions point to similarities between Cather’s novel, *My Mortal Enemy*, a work noted for both its economy of style and autobiographical features, and her recently published letters (Dimmit et al.). The researchers acknowledge that Cather was very private. She did not want her letters shared with the public. Only recently have her letters finally been published. Arguably, in the model of Hélène Cixous, we suggest that the writing of the work certainly brings a new voice that carries the message of the feminine myth.

As I approach the work of Willa Cather, I reveal the ways that she uses the poetics of mythic language patterns to share the pain of the main character in *My Mortal Enemy*. Poetics in the context of Myra’s last sentence: “Why must I die like this alone with my mortal enemy!” We may envision a mimetic view of the language of Cather. The final words of her main character, who dies alone, claim that she is her own enemy. Death becomes the condition or quality that is transferred with aesthetic action and nature. From poetic theory, we find the words of Cather as the signifier of the message of hopelessness.

Barbara Ehrenreich's article, "What a Cute Universe You Have!" demonstrates the poetics of truth. Through nonfiction, her prose uses poetics as a basic set of principles. We mythically create messages to imagine. Writing about the poetics of myth may work with our imaginations. We may think that we are free or humanitarians on a mission of truth, but Ehrenreich tells us to be cautious of myths.

Interestingly, let us apply the message of the work of Susan Levine, who offers us a lens into the past to re-create the future, through the analysis of language. Levine's literary criticism of the book *The Feminine Mystique*, by Betty Friedan, discusses discontentment among middle-class American women, gender roles, and the author's insights on looking at the past. We may not know that we make assumptions. I agree with Levine. Linguistic tone often manipulates us. We must be determined to find our own truths based on our own experiences.

Perhaps our overview of such second-wave feminists as Zora Neale Hurston (the beginnings of second-wave feminism), Marjorie Shostak (second-wave feminist), and Jean Louise Briggs (the ebb of second-wave feminism) connects the determination of Cather, Morrison, Hurston, and Ehrenreich to engage human dignity for all women.

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