Method and Its Undoing

Research Methods, Fall 2020

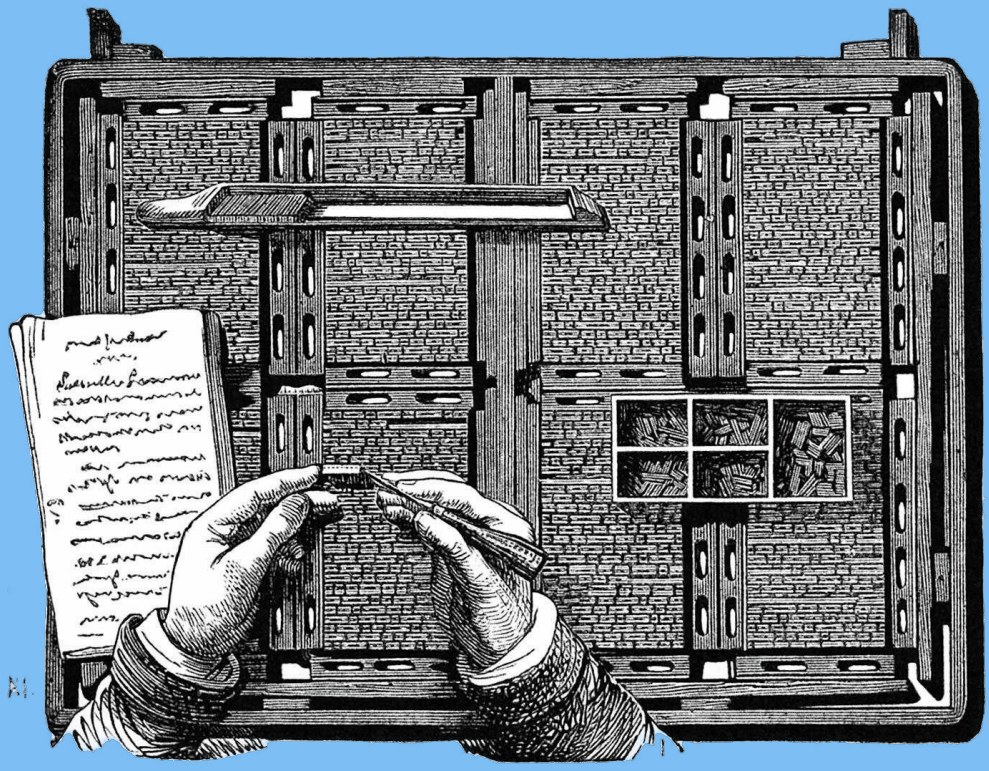

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Table of Contents

Preface

Part 1 (K.C., October 18, 2020)

One challenge of a graduate seminar is the need to think on one's feet. On the one hand, it helps students acquire an agility that will serve them well, whether they enter an academic career or put their degree – and the skills they develop while pursuing it – to use elsewhere. On the other, cultivating this skill risks impeding the type of reflection that difficult, knotty texts demand. I tend to design my courses to develop agility, but it comes at the expense of reflection.

I'm not sure this trade is always worth it. There's the risk, for instance, that students will turn into something akin to what Pierre Bourdieu, in *On Television* (1998), calls "fast-thinkers," his name for a certain type of pseudo-intellectual featured on political talk shows in France in the 1990s who offered intellectual fast-food – "predigested and prethought culture" (29). They were insidious because, by posing as intellectuals, they spared journalists "the trouble of looking for people who really have something to say" (30). Anyone who has gone through graduate school has met one of these people.

For that reason, when the Covid-19 pandemic forced professors to rethink how to run their courses, I took the opportunity to conduct my doctoral seminar on communication method in a new way. This book is the result. It contains the course, which has taken place (and is still taking place as I am writing now) through email, an anachronistic, asynchronous technology generally overlooked as a teaching platform. (I'm putting the essential parts of the syllabus, including our readings and modes of engagement, in the appendix.) In essence, each week my two students and I read a book and perform a close reading of a section that interests us. We then respond to each other's close readings, and I paste everything here.

Why this approach? To put things simply, to encourage the type of engagement we can undertake when we have time to reflect,

but also because I reject the institutionalized distinction between teaching and research. Both are forms of inquiry, in ways that are especially clear in a doctoral seminar. I chose readings that built on each other but were complex enough that I could not monopolize their interpretation. My goal has not been to inculcate methods as such, but to bring students to the point where, as independent researchers and thinkers, they can devise methods for themselves. We gain that capacity in the process of working through ideas. I see the thinking through process even in my own reading – for all my planning beforehand, there are still things I hadn't considered when I put the syllabus together, and I'm constantly returning to earlier points to revise and adjust course. (That's true even of this preface, for example: this paragraph is one whose ideas I arrived at while rereading Ricoeur's *Rule of Metaphor*.)

Thus my goal has been to refashion not just how we talk about method, but how we think about it. I wanted to follow a logic that Julia Kristeva, through Mikhail Bakhtin, attributes to Socrates and Plato:

> According to Bakhtin, Socratic dialogues are characterized by opposition to any official monologism claiming to possess a ready-made truth. Socratic truth ("meaning") is the product of a dialogical relationship among speakers; it is correlational and its relativism appears by virtue of the observers' autonomous points of view. (Kristeva 1986, 51)

It would be an act of hubris to compare myself to Socrates (as the teacher in this course) or Plato (as the instigating author of this book), but the unresolved – and unresolvable – nature of our questions becomes all the clearer for having been developed through our collective dialogue.

My other goal has been to think (with my students) about how our habits of writing, as a physical, embodied act, influence what we think. The readings work to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions

in the field of communication, chief among them the idea that research is either qualitative or quantitative or – for the daring among us – *mixed*. The first half of the seminar develops a humanistic notion of method to challenge the social scientific paradigm that is the source of that assumption (although not all social scientists are so myopic, of course). The second half challenges the hegemonic, Eurocentric mindset out of which both social scientific and humanistic approaches grow by moving away from Cartesian distinctions between the (rational) mind and the (irrational) body. We know the world through more than just our detached observation.

Here is one way the asynchronous, writing-heavy seminar encourages a different type of engagement (which, I hope, will help students find tools for discussing method's conceptual and epistemological underpinnings, which will in turn help them devise ways to answer the questions they pose in their theses). To write as much as we have takes physical as well as mental discipline, and our embodied practice of writing becomes, in Susan Ferguson's words, "a pedagogical practice. [... We] must understand these emergent knowledges 'pedagogically' and take them up as a form of practice if we are to genuinely intervene in dominant structures of knowing" (Ferguson 2018, 326). Moreover, in line with the unresolvable dialogue that this book preserves, we see that embodied writing "necessarily resists the closure and coherence that much traditional academic writing seeks to achieve. One way to decolonize knowledge production through our writing practices [...] is to highlight the provisional nature of writing and the very (embodied) process of coming to know" (Ferguson 2018, 327).

Part 2 (K.C., May 1, 2021)

I'm coming back to this book now, having set it aside for a busy semester. I'm beginning the process of type-setting, although I'm still acquiring those skills. (This book is a practical project in that respect.)

As I reread our exchanges, I see certain paradoxes in the book that they have now become. I'm excited, first of all, by the energy that

came from reading books together. I'm struck by the way our interactions with our readings influenced our interactions with each other, and vice versa. As I read with my students, their interpretations shaped my own, and mine shaped theirs, so that each of us arrived at a different understanding of the various texts than if we had read them on our own. It's an example of stigmergy, or the principle by which "a trace left by an action in a given environment stimulates the completion of a subsequent action in the same environment" (Larrue and Vitali-Rosati 2019, 53).

And yet, this stigmergy is paradoxical, now that we have turned our exchanges into a book. Despite the dynamism of creation as we were engaged in reading together, the content of the seminar—including the syllabus, the books, our jotted notes to ourselves, our messages to each other—is now fixed. It has become a text from which we are now removed. And whereas its potential at the moment of creation was open, its content is now closed. We can imagine a catalog of every word we read, spoke, wrote, or otherwise exchanged. Even if we expand our set of signs beyond words, this set remains finite, if large. This book is not that catalog, but it is the best record of the seminar. It provides clues of our peregrinations, but it cannot capture the movement of our conversation – between readers and books, between participants in our messages to each other – in any exhaustive way. To borrow and image from Henri Bergson, this book, by its very nature, can no more capture the original flow of the course "so far as [it] is moving, than the bridges thrown here and there across the stream follow the water that flows under their arches" (Bergson 1911, 338).

But it *can* at least provide the bridges!

A number of consequences follow from this fixity. For one thing, although we wrote with a sense of intentionality – we were responding to each other, asking each other questions, trying to persuade each other about the soundness of our interpretations – our intentions ceased to be directly knowable at the point where they were no longer grounded in that exchange. In other words, when the class

ended, the seminar-as-text took its fixed form, foreclosing the possibility we enjoyed during the seminar to ask, "What do you *mean*?" In a practical sense, this means that as I reread our exchanges now, I'm sometimes lost, as the context within which our messages to each other were meaningful is no longer accessible. And now that we're making this e-book widely available, I wonder how our potential readers might react to the turns in our conversation—the points where we tried an argument on for size and then changed our minds, or where we misspoke and then corrected ourselves and each other. To be honest, I can imagine some of our potential readers, but not all. Who are they? Perhaps they are my colleagues in the Department of Communication. Perhaps they are people who stumble upon this e-book through an internet search. How might they think about us? Perhaps they are predisposed to think we are fools. Perhaps they are anthropologists who have from a distant land in the far-off future who mistake our book for something more profound than we ever intended.

So what exactly is it that they're reading? According to Paul Ricoeur, on whose work I'm building here, one defining characteristic of a text is its propositional content, or the assertions it makes that A is B or X does Y (see "The Model of The Text," in Ricoeur 1981, 159-183, or chapter 1 in my book *How to Read Like You Mean It*, assuming I succeed in publishing it). In our seminar, that content related largely to method, as one might expect. Implicit in the syllabus (available in the appendix) was the idea that conventional notions of method are insufficient for explaining or even understand the full range of communication phenomena. Perhaps that was my overriding proposition. But of course, we spoke about other things, too. I learned more about medical interpretation and Chinese film than I expected. The content was wide-ranging, subject only to our wandering interests and reactions as we read books and wrote emails to each other.

And that content is characterized by ostensive references (i.e. to elements of our shared world, in this case, the Winter 2020 semester in Ottawa, Ontario, characterized by the Covid-19

pandemic), and by non-ostensive references (i.e. to the world of the books we read, but which we did not physically occupy) (Ricoeur 1981, 103, 167–170). That is one difference between this book during the time we were actively creating it and at the point where our unknown readers encounter it now. Once the class was over and its form fixed, all the references lost their ostensive quality. All our references in this book are now to a world we do not share because the moment we shared it has passed.

As I write this, however, I suspect that this book still has the potential to surprise. As Ricoeur points out, readers engage with texts – even those whose form is fixed – in ways that mimic how they engage with active interlocutors. He speaks of *appropriation*, a term we explored near the end of the semester (chapters 5 and 9). He's referring to the work we undertake when reading a text that, like this book, has a fixed form and whose author is not present. To appropriate a work is "'to make one's own' what was initially 'alien'," and it's a process that "takes the place of the answer in the dialogical situation" (Ricoeur 1981, 147). In that respect, it's what has the potential to transform written discourse into an event, like what my students and I experienced as we conversed about method in communication.

But enough of that – this is a preface, no more. We work through these ideas throughout the book, and I needn't belabour them here. I do want to say, however, how grateful I am to my students and coauthors for their willingness to engage in this experiment. I'm pleased with how it turned out.

1. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*

Why Aristotle's *Rhetoric*? (K.C., September 12, 2020)

As I put this seminar together, I had a specific goal in mind: I wanted to claim a place for humanities-oriented research in the Department of Communication at the University of Ottawa. My PhD is in communication *arts* (rather than communication *tout court*), and the work I do draws as much on the philosophy of language as on anything else. My colleagues (whose work I admire) have different backgrounds, and if I want humanistic work to have a place here, I need to justify it methodologically in terms they find legible. Hence this class.

We're beginning with Aristotle's *Rhetoric* for a few reasons. First, it's a foundational text in (European) philosophy of language. (We'll address the Eurocentric aspects of this course as we work through the material. It's an important point to engage.) It is also, in its own way, a text on method — it describes strategies for persuading others, built on an identifiable epistemology and logic. In a very practical sense, it addresses tools students will need to persuade their readers — me, their evaluation committees, peer reviewers, other scholars, etc. Every act of scholarship is also an act of persuasion. As we write, we employ tools that make us appear credible, tools that Aristotle identifies as ethos, pathos, and logos.

Where does Aristotle fit in the course overall? His argument draws our attention to the role of language as it works hand-in-hand with logic (which he is also careful to define). Paul Ricoeur, whose works we are building up to, begins *The Rule of Metaphor* (Ricoeur 2003) with a discussion of Aristotle, especially his analysis of metaphor. (I'll return to metaphor below.) The *Rhetoric* is divided into three books. Book 1 is about definitions. "Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of

persuasion" (Aristotle 1994b, book 1, part 2 [6]). (Since we're using an e-text, I'll cite Aristotle by book and part, but I'll put in square brackets the page numbers from the PDF I distribute to everyone.) Key passages concern the means of persuasion (book 1, part 2 [7]), which relate to appeals to modes of reasoning (logos), to character (ethos), and to listeners' emotions (pathos). (The translation we're using doesn't give the Greek terms, but others do, and they're commonly identified that way.) Other key passages are about enthymemes (a form of deductive reasoning – Aristotle calls them rhetorical syllogisms) and examples (a form of inductive reasoning) (book 1, parts 1-2, [4, 8]). The rest of the book is about definitions.

You'll find Aristotle reductive, to say the least. At one point in book 1 he is defining the term *noble*, and he makes the offhand comment, "one quality or action is nobler than another if it is that of a naturally finer being: thus a man's will be nobler than a woman's" (book 1, part 9 [38]). It will be worth asking how we determine what has value in his thought and what is too dated (or misogynistic) to be redeemed.

Book 2 is about the types of arguments that different people find persuasive. You'll likely find his reasoning here reductive, too. Ricoeur (2003, 33) compares book 2 to a form of "popular psychology"; he's thinking of Kant, but even if you dress the description up with references to German Idealist philosophy, it's still reminiscent of a 1980s-era self-help book. Here, too, it would be worth discussing what we retain and what we let go, not to mention the criteria by which we make those evaluations. (I have, however, used this section of the *Rhetoric* to productive ends elsewhere – see Conway 2020a, 76-80.)

Finally, book 3 is about style. It's rooted in the Greek oratory tradition, a fact that limits its direct applicability to contemporary times. But it's also in book 3 where Aristotle discusses metaphor. Metaphor is a rhetorical trope, or figure of speech, that compares two things based on their resemblance to each other. (Kenneth Burke [1941, 421-2], a 20th century rhetorical theorist, describes metaphor

as "a device for seeing something *in terms of* something else. It brings out the thisness of a that, or the thatness of a this." More on Burke's take on tropes below.) In the *Poetics*, Aristotle defines metaphor as "the application of an alien name by transference either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy, that is, proportion" (Aristotle 1994a, section 3, part 21). In other words, we have a metaphor when we use the name of a group to describe a member of that group, or inversely, the name of a member to describe the group, or the name of a member of one group to name another, or an analogy (*X* is to *Y* as *A* is to *B*). Ricoeur will find in this description (and in *Rhetoric*, book 3, parts 2 and 11 [137-41, 151-5]) two ways to interpret metaphor — as a riddle (an approach he will reject), and as an unresolvable tension between things that are simultaneously similar and dissimilar. That "tension model" will prove especially valuable as a critique of (and supplement to) social scientific notions of method.

(A note on tropes: Burke [1941] identifies four types — metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony — all of which use words to convey something other than their literal meaning. It's the transfer of meaning from literal to figurative that is the defining characteristic of a trope. His definitions: metonymy consists in conveying "some incorporeal or intangible state in terms of the corporeal or tangible" [424]; synecdoche is a substitution of the "part for the whole [or the] whole for the part" [426]; irony is the use of a word to mean its opposite so that, in Burke's abstract language, "what goes forth as A returns as non-A" [438]. I present these definitions here because the puzzle of figurative language — how speakers and listeners, or writers and readers, recognize that this shift is taking place — will be a central theme throughout the course, and although I haven't assigned Burke's essay, his definitions have been influential in 20th century rhetorical theory.)

One key point to pay attention to here (in addition to those mentioned above) is Aristotle's discussion of the relationship between proof and probability (especially book 1, part 15 [60-7]). The tools he

uses, especially enthymemes and examples, are grounded not in an epistemology of verifiability or falsifiability, but of argumentation. (This should not be surprising, given his definition of rhetoric quoted above.) His notion of probability stands in contrast to ideas people have in more social-scientific fields, where probability is a calculable function of a given data set, which allows a researcher to make predictive claims with an identifiable rate of accuracy. That's the definition of a *p*-value, for instance – it's a ratio indicating how many results of a similar type a person will receive if running a test a certain number of times. A *p*-value of .05, for instance, indicates that 19 times out of 20, the result will be as predicted. Aristotle, in contrast, is focused on the causes of things that have already happened – how likely it is that a person accused of a crime actually committed it, for instance. (The section I cite above is about persuasion in a courtroom.) This difference – the backward-looking probability of interpretation *vs.* the forward-looking probability of social scientific predictions – will be one of the key points where alternatives to the quantitative-qualitative dichotomy present themselves.

Close reading (Z.Z., September 17, 2020)

Before discussing *Rhetoric* academically, I would like to explain Aristotle's three modes of persuasion from another perspective – the real-life context of the social deduction game *Werewolf*. The techniques in public oratories that Aristotle mentions also apply to the game. Assuming that Aristotle plays the role of the werewolf (the killer) in the game, he will demonstrate his superior abilities in the three characters for a good man, which inspire his confidence: good sense, good moral character, and good will (Aristotle 1994b, [68]). [NOTE 1]

The first is to understand human character and goodness (Aristotle 1994b, [7]) – the good moral character (*Ethos)*. After the night when an innocent villager is killed, Aristotle the Werewolf, who mingles among civilians, will speak to entice us to believe that he is a good and moral man. To prove his credibility, he will describe himself

in three ways: wise, i.e., he has a sober judgment and grasps the state of the game; virtuous, i.e., he is of high moral standard and trustworthy; and kind, i.e., he has a friendly attitude towards others.

The second is to understand the emotions (Aristotle 1994b, [7]) – the good will (*Pathos)*, which refers to the persuasion by appealing to the audience's emotions. In the dire situation of the death of villagers, Aristotle the Werewolf is still able to express through his eloquent speech: his rage at the killer (even though it was himself), his compassion for the villagers who are killed, and his concern for the current situation. He is capable of fully engaging the feelings of the other survivors and convincing them that he is not the werewolf.

The last one is to reason logically (Aristotle 1994b, [7]) – the good sense (*Logos*). In the final stage of the game, when the remaining villagers are already confused by the chaotic situation, Aristotle the Werewolf remains high rationality. Through his induction and deduction, he confuses the others with the seemingly true but actually false proposition that Aristotle is not the werewolf.

At last, with *Ethos*, *Pathos*, and *Logos* working in tandem, the villagers mistakenly vote for another innocent civilian, and Aristotle wins the game – with his arts of persuasion. This art is also vital in academia, since what we do is to state and defend our views – same with public speech.

While Aristotle deals more with "pure persuasion" in his work, it is rational and reasonable to shift his demonstrations to the academic perspective since we are persuading others to accept our notions. According to Aristotle, rhetoric and dialectic are to maintain one's statements and defend themselves and attack others (2). Under his oratory classification, forensic speaking, which attacks or defends somebody (13), is similar to the essence of academic articles – but maybe in a more civilized approach. All the scholarly articles begin with the idea that draws people's attention. This new notion is then backed up by the other researches, during which we also propose our disagreement with others. Writing an academic article is essentially a process of interacting with others, which is similar to Aristotle's 'non-

technical' means of persuasion. After generating an original idea, we tend to look up for predecessors' contributions in this area, namely *written law* in Aristotle's words. Even though their works may not perfectly match to ours, we adopt their central notion – the universal law – and "insist on its greater equity and justice" ([61]) to make use of them. When it comes to another concept "witness," it links to one of the essential academic articles' criteria – credibility. If a triumph is desirable, credible witnesses – i.e., credible sources – play a significant role in it. It is through the interaction with others' opinions – refer to ourselves or to our opponent ([63]) – that we gradually build our persuasive and convincing arguments. As Aristotle states, "conclusions must be drawn from premisses that do the same" ([10]). The article is probably unreliable if the author divorces himself from reality and does his work alone. Furthermore, it will constitute academic fraud if the sources are (already) proven wrong. Therefore, the whole article can be regarded as the court, where we try to hold our ground and convince others. As Jamie Dow (2015) explains, "Aristotle [...] [saw] rhetoric as an expertise in producing 'proofs' – understood as 'proper grounds for conviction'" (9). Our articles and speeches are composed by hundreds of small "proofs," with which we constitute a robust discourse and convince others. Although Aristotle's writing may not initially intend for academic purposes, I regard the first part of the book as a metaphor for doing academic research. Since the written article is the extension of spoken language, the context of *Rhetoric* perfectly fits into the academic sphere.

Aristotle also talks about the style of language in *Rhetoric.* As a member of the humanities-research area, when writing academic articles, one of the most distinguishing features which set us apart from natural science is that more or less, we need to take the audience's ability of understanding into account. Our mission is to communicate with others rather than building barriers to knowledge. After an obscure and tedious reading, our job is to conciliate the listener – to grant them a sense of accomplishment, instead of

puzzling them. First of all, research ought to be neutral and objective without preconceived notions. Here, Aristotle uses a metaphor of judge and argues, "he must decide for himself all such points as the law-giver has not already defined for him" ([2]). In my opinion, it is the best outcome that readers can have their understanding after the reading, and what we do is to help them to stimulate this process. Furthermore, instead of listing tough formulas and equations, human-oriented research should go for a natural speaking rather than artificially. The former is always more understandable and persuasive ([138]) to the general public. As Aristotle states, "We must use, as our modes of persuasion and argument, notions possessed by everybody" ([5]). He further states the impact of style in Book III, where he demonstrates that "style to be good must be clear" ([137]). The language must be appropriate and clear ([137-8]) in either speeches or academic articles. Generally speaking, our research's value does not lie in how much specific terms we have used, but how much impact it has on society. As a result, it is necessary to ensure our knowledge is "instruct-able" rather than puzzling.

We should not be afraid of debating, either through written or spoken language. "Things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites" (Aristotle 1994b, [4]). The more rebuttal there is, the more precise the truth becomes. Therefore, one ought to be bold enough to defend himself with speech and reason ([5]), showing the speaker's character that makes him more credible and persuasive ([7]).

Metaphor, according to Charteris-Black (2011), is an effective means to develop persuasive arguments by applying what is familiar and already experienced, no new topics to demonstrate rational thinking (35). One of the other metaphors in the first part, for example, is that Aristotle reckons it is superfluous to distinguish actions according to the doers' ages, moral states, or the like ([44]). I regard it as a warning bell that informs us to see the essence – namely the other seven causes – through the phenomenon. Beyond the superfluous phenomenons, we need to dig deeper into the meaning

behind it. One example that comes to my mind is the concept of "motherland." The connection between "motherland" and "mother" is, in my opinion, a very representative metaphor in the construction of the nation-state and the education of patriotism. As a metaphorical structure, it maps the relationship between the individual and the country through blood relations, which further constructs the state's legitimacy and shapes citizens' national identity. This metaphor breaks an empty and abstract concept into another solid and acceptable one, which even young children are able to conceive. What's more, this metaphorical concept transforms human ethics into political ethics and has an important political function. As for the film *Hors la Lois*, I state in my MRP that the protagonists' mother is more than a human figure, but a metaphorical representation of Algeria's homeland. As a result, the mother's calling for fighting for Algerian independence is essentially the appeals from Algeria. Thus, on the one hand, metaphor can make an abstract concept concrete; on the other hand, to read a metaphor is also vital in understanding.

At last, the Aristotle's definition of *noble*, where he determines that a man's will be nobler than a woman's ([38]). I would say, this "seemingly absurd" statement presents the limitation of the Athenian democracy in which Aristotle lives. Since women were excluded from the citizenry, it is not surprising that Aristotle, born and raised in such an environment, would make such a statement. For instance, if a person has been deprived of his political rights due to a crime, but somehow, he still enjoys his political rights, it is utterly strange. At least, for Aristotle, man, as a citizen, is naturally nobler than a woman who does not own political privileges. Therefore, we need to treat Aristotle's notions dialectically.

My understanding of *Rhetoric* (M.I., September 18, 2020)

I was first introduced to some of Aristotle's philosophy and ideas in my high school years in my philosophy classes. To be honest, although I found some of his ideas intriguing, I didn't specifically

enjoy reading them. At that time, I found his ideas far-fetched and not easy to grasp, to say the least. This time my experience is different but challenging. So, I find *Rhetoric* interesting, and Aristotle tries to be credible and persuasive throughout the three books. He provides many examples to explain his ideas and vision of rhetoric. Aristotle develops in his book the guidelines of the oratory speech, linking rhetoric to dialectic. He provides the foundations of persuasive speech and explains its effectiveness as much by eloquence as by its relevance to the mind of the audience.

Rhetoric is the art of persuasion. Aristotle defines it as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (book 1, part 2 [6]). Also, according to him, persuasion is determined by three elements: the character of the speaker, his capacity to stimulate the emotions of the audience in order to persuade them, and the speech itself. Therefore, the three factors of rhetoric are the aptitude for reasoning, the knowledge of human psychology, and the ability to stimulate emotions. Aristotle clearly states this by confirming that "the orator must not only try to make the argument of his speech demonstrative and worthy of belief; he must also make his own character look right and put his hearers, who are to decide, into the right frame of mind" (book 2, part 1 [67]). Aristotle views persuasion as a matter of demonstration and in this respect, he considers it as an enthymeme which is a type of syllogism. This latter is the focus of dialectic (book 1, part 1 [3]).

Aristotle distinguishes three types of oratory branches: political, forensic, and ceremonial. Each type of them has not only a different purpose but is also associated with a different time (book 1, part 3 [13]). Furthermore, Aristotle confirms that each kind of rhetoric has its own appropriate style (book 3, part 12 [163]). Despite the ambiguity associated with the persuasive objective of the speech, the relationship between the speaker and audience is based on trust and honesty. Aristotle claims that it is necessary to be virtuous in order to convince. Also, in the first book, Aristotle justifies why he considers rhetoric to be useful by supporting that "things that are true

and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites, so that if the decisions of judges are not what they ought to be, the defeat must be due to the speakers themselves, and they must be blamed accordingly" (book 1, part 1 [5]). So, we understand that rhetoric has a great benefit in the judicial system, and also Aristotle confirms that persuasion must be used to advocate for good and utility: "These, then, are the sources from which we must derive our means of persuasion about Good and Utility" (book 1, part 6 [27]).

In book 3, Aristotle explained that a speech is composed of two parts. In the first part, one should introduce the case and in the second part should provide arguments to prove it (book 3, part 13 [166]). In addition, Aristotle highlights the importance of style in the rhetoric discourse. The art of expression, as he mentioned in book 3, is an integral part of the rhetoric speech. Aristotle states that "Style to be good must be clear" (book 3, part 2 [137]). He also asked to "avoid ambiguities" (book 3, part 5 [145]) unless they are used deliberately. Moreover, he encourages the use of a natural speech as he considers it persuasive (book 3, part 2 [138]). He also asks to use metaphor to add more eloquence and make our speech more attractive. For him, metaphor "gives style clearness, charm, and distinction as nothing else can." Also, he asked not to neglect the importance of the intonation and the tone of a voice in delivering a given message especially in poetry (book 3, part 1 [136]).

I was surprised, to say the least, to know that he doesn't want a slave to use a fine language. He said, "it is not quite appropriate that fine language should be used by a slave or a very young man" (book 3, part 1 [138]). I think in saying so, he means that the fine language is only meant to be used by people who belong to a certain social class and who have a certain age. Otherwise, the audience won't believe them, and communication will fail in this case. I find this statement not compatible with his endeavors to promote good, utility and justice.

In this part, I would like to emphasise that people make use of different types of figure of speech spontaneously. As a matter of fact,

people in their daily lives tend to adopt a different choice of language to communicate certain ideas and messages using a different and indirect style of language. For example, if you go to Marrakech, Morocco, you will find the majority of people use euphemism, irony, metaphor daily in a natural way and I am sure that so many of them wouldn't even know it is a different style of language or figure of speech as they consider them an intrinsic part of their language. To give a concrete example, in many Arab countries, to inform someone about the death of a person, Arabs, like many other nations, tend to avoid mentioning the word dead and they would prefer to say, he gave you his life meaning he passed away. Also, hyperbole is commonly used to exaggerate a given information. For instance, when talking about a very handsome man, you may hear French people saying "il est beau comme un dieu, he is beautiful like God." Likewise, in Egypt, a beautiful woman is always compared to the moon. So, *beautiful like the moon* is a phrase widely used in the Egyptian culture. In this respect, I would agree with Aristotle's definition of metaphor as mentioned above. Also, it is true that metaphors provide the best frame to convey new ideas or as Aristotle puts it "it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of something fresh" (book 3, part 10 [155]).

In every culture, you will find proverbs, humors, jokes that are frequently used by people in their daily conversation to convey different messages and in many cases to persuade one another to adopt a certain behavior. With this in mind, I think every person who lives in a society, in learning his mother language, he learns automatically, provided he is exposed of course, many idiomatic expressions, jokes, proverbs and other expressions which he can use to communicate daily in different contexts. Therefore, I am wondering if it is legitimate to consider that there are two types of rhetoric styles, one accessible to everyone that one can learn naturally while learning his/her mother tongue and culture, and this can be considered an innate art of rhetoric. A second level of formal rhetoric which should be learnt indeed. This type is mainly used by "the elite" of a given society such as the intellectual people, politicians and lawyers.

Response to Zixuan (K.C., September 18, 2020)

I applaud any response that begins by comparing Aristotle to a werewolf. One of the most productive forms of reading, in my opinion, is what I describe elsewhere (Conway 2020, 6) a "wilful and strategic misreading" or a strategy of "reading against the interpretations people have had [of a text] before" (22–3). What you've done is create a parallax view — you've observed the same configuration of ideas but from an angle that reveals new relationships. Interestingly, in your example, you highlight a use of rhetoric that Aristotle would likely critique as "sophist," meaning making use of the tools of persuasion but in bad faith.

One aspect I especially like is the way your argument adopts the structure of a metaphor (by way of an analogy): *Aristotle's mode of persuasion is to Antiquity as the werewolf's mode of persuasion is to the game.* That metaphor places us as readers in a point of interpretive limbo: in a literal sense, it's not true (Aristotle did not turn into a wolf at the full moon), but in a figurative sense, it causes us to re-examine the implications of Aristotle's argument.

I have two questions, though. First, you contend (drawing on Book III of the *Rhetoric*) that humanities research should be written with the reader in mind. That argument follows well from the idea of research as persuasion, as you argue through your reading of Book I of the *Rhetoric.* But is that always the case? Consider, for instance, the aphoristic mode of writing you find in Nietzsche, or Marshall McLuhan, or even people like Jacques Derrida. Is there value in the complexity of their style?

On an interpretive note, I'm puzzled by the assertion that you attribute to Aristotle, according to which ist is "superfluous to distinguish actions according to the doers' ages, moral states, or the like." I think book II of the *Rhetoric* is about precisely the opposite, namely that to persuade people, we need to take into account the role of age, moral state, etc., which is why (according to Aristotle) arguing

with a young man is different from arguing with an old man. Can you say more about what you mean here?

Response to Maryame (K.C., September 19, 2020)

You raise a number of valuable questions in your summary of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, which I'd like to follow up on here. First is a question that I have come to answer differently the more I teach, namely, how does — or how should — our emotional response to a book shape the use we make of it? When I was a student, if I had a negative reaction to a book (or even a neutral reaction, as you describe in your first paragraph), I would dismiss its ideas as having no value. Now I care less about my emotional reaction, although loving or hating a book certainly shapes (and is shaped by) my interpretation of the ideas it presents. There's no neutral reading. But the value of a negative response, in particular, is that it can lead to discussions of content when we follow up with the question, why does this book make us angry, or leave us feeling indifferent?

A second question follows up, indirectly at least, on my comment about Aristotle's misogyny and racism (e.g., in his off-hand comment about the speech of men being more noble than that of women). Zixuan observed that we need to contextualize a philosopher's ideas within the time they were writing. Is there a second approach we might take, namely to ask how that time, with its biases we no longer share, also shape the rest of a philosopher's thought, including those points where the misogyny and racism are not clear? For instance, does Aristotle's approach toward women or slaves (the example you cite) also shape his notions of ethos, pathos, and logos?

Finally, I'm intrigued by your question at the end about whether there might be "two types of rhetoric styles" — one that everyone learns as a matter of being enculturated, and one that is more formal and "should be learnt indeed." Ricoeur (in *The Rule of*

Metaphor – I'll have to come back later and insert a reference) will speak of living and dead metaphors. Those that become so routinized that they cease to function as metaphor (the idea of having "passed," for example) are dead metaphors, whereas those that retain their figurative quality are living. His argument is that language takes on the structure of metaphor, but that little of it is still alive. Your examples, though, suggest that dead metaphors have the potential to become alive for people learning a new language. It's one of the challenges – and delights – of learning a new language, when you start to pick up on metaphors. "La goutte d'eau qui fait déborder la vase" ("The drop of water that made the vase overflow") has always struck me as so much more vivid than its nonsensical English equivalent, "the straw that broke the camel's back." (Poor camel!)

Response to Zixuan (M.I., September 20, 2020)

I appreciated your idea of comparing Aristotle to a werewolf. I found your first part quite interesting. In my culture, we have a famous saying that several people have shared on their social media recently. "Do not trust anyone just because you liked his speech, as life has become a manifestation, some people have a shadow that is bigger than their real size." As a matter of fact, I think Aristotle, even if he is werewolf (metaphorically speaking), has succeeded in persuading the majority of us about the importance of his book, *Rhetoric*, as it has become a reference which is widely used by researches and in academic institutions nowadays. I view Aristotle as someone who has an incredible mastery of the art of communication. He knows what kind of behavior should be used; the type of language required to persuade a given audience at a given time.

Your sentence, "It is through the interaction with others' opinions – refer to ourselves or to our opponent ([63]) – that we gradually build our persuasive and convincing arguments," caught my attention. Do you think that Aristotle is someone who encourages

interaction with the audience? Personally, I understood his vision of rhetoric as a one-way communication and I didn't think that he wanted to create a two-way communication. To persuade a particular audience, he suggests targeting first and foremost the emotions of this audience. He said, "the orator must not only try to make the argument of his speech demonstrative and worthy of belief; he must also make his own character look right and put his hearers, who are to decide, into the right frame of mind. (book 2, part 1 [67]).

So, to me, his persuasion is based on stimulating the emotions of his audience and getting them emotionally engaged. As an interesting note, in his book, he uses the word *emotions* over twenty times. Having said that, I don't want to claim that he is asking to overlook reason.

Response to Maryame (Z.Z., September 21, 2020)

It is very intriguing to read Maryame's close reading as she analyzed the euphemism with the examples of everyday language, which are quite different from the academic ones.

The first thing I find interesting is Aristotle's description of "slaves are inappropriate to use fine language." I agree with Maryame's idea that Aristotle means that because slaves are not trustworthy enough to persuade others. I think this opinion, along with his notion that men are nobler than women, all roots from Athenian democracy. At that time, both women and slaves were not considered as "citizens." Therefore, Aristotle, who grew up in a noble environment, tends to think they are not qualified to use a fine language. Only the educated men (citizens), who are the elites in the society, are convincing.

Maryame's example of the euphemism in everyday language also catches my attention. Similar to Arabic, we also have a similar expression in Chinese, describing someone who has passed away. Instead of stating directly, "he died," a more acceptable term is "he travelled to the west with a crane." Since Buddhism exerted a strong

influence on ancient China, "the west" in this expression refers to *Sukhavati* (Western Paradise). Crane, in traditional Chinese culture, is a representation of long life. As a result, this expression's subtext is that he has lived long enough and now goes to Paradise to enjoy his next stage of life. Euphemism has become an undetachable part of our language, and people are unconsciously using it in our daily life. On the other hand, after more than two thousand years of Aristotle's notion, people have adopted the skill to switch between different communication methods on different occasions.

I also agree with Maryame's categorization of two levels of rhetoric. Everyone can tell a joke, which is the first level of rhetoric. But to know how to tell an appropriate joke or master the art of the language is another knowledge. Just like not everyone is capable of becoming the host of a talk show.

To answer Maryame's question of whether Aristotle is someone who encourages interaction with the audience. I would say it is true. However, in this two-way communication, two sides are not equal. In Gramsci's term, there is a *hegemony* in this dialogue. That's to say, one side will try whatever he can – in Aristotle's case, it is the art of rhetoric – to persuade the other. Because there is a strong side in the conversation, the communication seems one-way and without interaction.

Response to Kyle (M.I., September 21, 2020)

In your close reading, you have put forward several interesting ideas. After reading Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, I came to the same conclusion as you, I did find his reasoning reductive in several instances. This is partly because he seems to have his own interpretation of virtue. Thus, expectedly, his opinions and vision are questionable. First, we seem all to agree about this one, the degree of nobility he attributes to women is a sign of "misogyny and racism" as you have put it. Second, even if he belongs to a different era and has had a different education, depriving "the slaves" from using the fine language is unacceptable.

To me, this proves only that he is racist – here too – as he didn't consider them to be equal to other human beings. Last, he claimed that fine language is not meant to be used by the young people either. I don't endorse his opinion here too as if the younger generations are not initiated and encouraged to use this language early in their lives, how are they going to master it once they become old? I believe that the learning process should start very early and through practice, young children can learn from adults this art. As we say, practice makes perfect.

On a different note, I found that Aristotle in his book used repetition as a strategy of persuasion. I believe he did it on purpose to persuade us, his readers. Also, we shouldn't forget that he worked as a teacher and he even tutored – I have read – Alexander the Great. Therefore, no wonder he resorts to repetition many times as usually teachers repeat to highlight the importance of an idea, insisting on a given idea helps students to remember it.

Last – I want to answer here some of your questions you raised in your reply to my close reading. I think my reaction to Aristotle's ideas when I was in high school was indifference. I really didn't remember them as I found them complicated and not catchy. Hence, you are right in your assumptions, as we become mature, we tend to put aside our emotions and initial thoughts, set back and read the book. Now, I force myself, not to judge the book by its cover. Indeed, our reading will always be impacted by our backgrounds, beliefs and value system. Accordingly, I assume that Aristotle's opinion about women and slaves has certainly shaped his notions of ethos, pathos and logos. As I mentioned earlier, we tend to judge things based on our value system. To me, in hindsight, I view Aristotle as a great philosopher and thinker. A fortiori, I don't understand why someone – like him – who has challenged so many old ideas and concepts, developed theories was not interested just to question – I didn't expect him to defend them – the status of women and slaves in his society.

Note

1. Following the convention established above, page numbers in brackets refer to the PDF version of the *Rhetoric* we shared in class, created from the HTML version referred to in the bibliography.

2. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*

The *langue-parole* dialectic as coiled spring (K.C., September 22, 2020)

I've read this book a half dozen times. The first time was for a seminar on the history of linguistics, and my task was to identify the points where Saussure (or, more properly, the students who compiled the book after his death) contradicted himself. The value of that exercise was the insight it provided into the *Course*, which since then has appeared to me as a tightly wound spring. Saussure works to establish linguistic structure (instantiated in *langue*, by his terms) as the basis for linguistic study, but to do so, he must constantly push against language's social aspects (instantiated in acts of *parole*, again by his terms): they push back. Put another way, the degree to which he must insist on the foundational status of *langue* reveals the degree to which the idea of *parole* provides resistance. (The ideas of *langue* and *parole*, along with the third term *langage*, do not map neatly into English. Of the two translations of the *Course* in English, Baskin's — which we're using here — is better, I think, because he at least preserves the French in some places, and as a result, and because many scholars read the *Course* in its original French, the terms *langue* and *parole* have insinuated themselves into English. Saussure himself observes these challenges in his observations about German, also on p. 14.)

This dialectic is clear in at least two ways, and it has important implications for the books leading up to Ricoeur's work on metaphor, hermeneutics, and the human sciences. First, it is clear in those places where Saussure defines his terms. Consider, for instance, where he defines *langue* by saying, in part, what it is *not* (a mode of negative definition he will exploit later when talking about signs and their component parts): "In separating language from speaking [i.e., *langue*

from *parole* – KC], we are at the same time separating: (1) what is social from what is individual; and (2) what is essential from what is accessory and more or less accidental" (Saussure 1959, 14). He follows up with four characteristics of language (*langue*):

> 1) Language is a well-defined object in the heterogeneous mass of speech facts. ("Elle [la langue] est un objet bien défini dans l'ensemble hétérogène des faits de langage.")
>
> 2) Language, unlike speaking, is something we can study separately. ("La langue, distincte de la parole, est un objet qu'on peut étudier séparément.")
>
> 3) Whereas speech is heterogeneous, language, as defined, is homogeneous. It is a system of signs in which the only essential thing is the union of meanings and sound-images, and in which both parts of the sign are psychological. ("Tandis que le langage est hétérogène, la langue ainsi délimitée est de nature homogène : c'est un système de signes où il n'y a d'essentiel que l'union du sens et de l'image acoustique, et où les deux parties du signe sont également psychiques.")
>
> 4) Language is concrete, no less so than speaking [...]. ("La langue n'est pas moins que la parole un objet de nature concrète [...].") (Saussure 1959, 14–15; Saussure 1916/1997, 31–2)

These distinctions are not new to Saussure. In fact, they follow in a long tradition within the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften* in German, *sciences humaines* in French) of distinguishing between two modes of analysis: *Erklären*, or the act of explaining structure (whether grammatical, social or historical), and *Verstehen*, or the act of trying to understand an utterance, text, or other form of expression from the

utterer's point of view. Structure (represented by *langue* in Saussure's case) makes expression (*parole*) possible, but we cannot know it directly. Instead, we can know it only through expression. (See Schleiermacher [1985] for a well known expression of this distinction from within the German tradition. Our reading for next week, J.L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*, will focus on expression, to provide a counterweight to Saussure's focus on structure.)

The second place this dialectic is manifest is between the first half of the *Course*, where Saussure argues that the proper object of study is *langue* (which, by virtue of being a structure, must be studied synchronically, or at one point in time), and the second half, where he investigates different forms of expression and the changes that a language (*une langue*) undergoes over time (a diachronic approach), or the way a language takes divergent forms in different places (a geographic approach).

On one level, his need even to investigate language diachronically or geographically reveals the aspects of language that cannot be apprehended through a synchronic, *langue*-oriented approach. In other words, despite his assertion that "language [*langue* – KC] [is] the norm of all other manifestations of speech" (9; see p. 7–11 for a broader development of this argument), it is insufficient, on its own, as a basis for linguistic study.

On a more granular level, the insufficiency of *langue* becomes clear in Saussure's efforts to define, for example, synchronic units, or what makes a word recognizable when used in different situations. How do I know that when I say a word, and you repeat it, that we're saying the same word? To answer that question is to identify what makes a word a unit identical to itself. Saussure gives an example:

> When *Gentlemen!* is repeated several times during a lecture, the listener has the feeling that the same expression is being used each time, and yet variations in utterance and intonation make for appreciable phonic differences in diverse contexts [...]

> [Besides] the feeling of identity persists even though there is no absolute identity between one *Gentleman!* and the next from a semantic viewpoint either. (Saussure 1959, 108)

By this account, we recognize the word "Gentleman" as the same word each time it is repeated. I would argue, however, that it signifies something slightly different each time. The first time it is meant to attract the listeners' attention; the second time, to call them to focus on what the speaker is about to say; the third time, to reproach them (perhaps) for failing to have listened before being called to order. From one use to the next, the word evokes slightly different ideas for listeners, something that becomes apparent when we ask not where the word lies within the structure established by *langue*, but how the speaker conveys a sense of the action that they want their listeners to take. (Austin's distinction between *locutionary*, *illocutionary*, and *perlocutionary* forces will help us refine this argument.)

Close reading (Z.Z., September 24, 2020)

This is my first time reading about linguistics, and I found it quite challenging. In fact, I was not sure what connection there is between the linguistic study and our communicational studies (even after I finish writing this close reading, I am still not convinced). My initial assumption is that to study linguistics, we can figure out the origin of the language to be more efficient and artistic (just like if we master the art of rhetoric) when dealing with others. However, after reading the book, I have something else in mind: the study of linguistics is more than communicational, but also somewhat political.

The first thing I want to discuss is Saussure's definition of the characteristics of language. The reason why has something to do with my mother tongue – Chinese. There is always a debate among Chinese scholars that whether the name of the language should be defined as "語" (*yu*, literal meaning "language") or "文" (*wen*, literal meaning "words"). That is to say, whether students should learn "英語

(*ying yu*)" or "英文 (*ying wen*)" (both of them refer to English). This question seems absurd, but I want to propose my opinion towards this question in the light of Saussure's notions.

In my perspective, I prefer the use of "language" rather than "words." "Word" is a symbol, and as it passes through the vocal organs, it becomes sound. However, these symbols or sounds alone will not exert any significance because they can form any language (Saussure 2011, 73). For example, there are characters in both Chinese and Japanese (though they have different names, in Chinese, it is called *hanzi*, while *kanji* in Japanese); there is the word "metre" in both English and French. If judging merely from words (symbols), sometimes it is hard to distinguish them. In order to be meaningful, it needs to be merged into the system of language. As Saussure argues, we cannot reduce language to sound (8). In fact, I think it is reasonable to classify *yu* as *langage* and *wen* as *langue*, as the latter is only a definite part of the former (9). To learn *langue*, we are learning the sets of vocal or written symbols, grammar and parole; to learn *langage*, we are learning a way to communicate our thoughts and emotions, to express ourselves in relation to the qualities of style. Besides, when we are learning *langage*, we are also learning the culture behind the langue itself – language is something many-sided, heterogeneous and straddling several different areas simultaneously (ibid). As Saussure indicates, the English language is both a social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty (ibid.). As a result, I think *wen* cannot fully represent *yu*, and it is in accord with linguistic rules to use *yu*. However, with the tension between China and Taiwan, this debate has gone far beyond linguistic scope, but becomes a political issue. Choosing either *wen* or *yu* means a surrender to the other ideology (which I think is pathetic).

I am also interested in Saussure's notion of the mutability of the sign. I take the example of modern Chinese and classical Chinese. The classical Chinese was widely used in written documents before the 1910s, after which the modern Chinese uniformed the spoken and

written language. Even though modern Chinese uses the same characters with the classical Chinese, which had been developed for more than two thousand years, the signified of the characters (signs) has been completely changed. For example, when we make the signifier of 走 (*zou*), its signified in the modern Chinese is "to run," while in the classical Chinese is "to walk." The reason for this change might be political – the New Culture Movement from 1910s which demands a revolution in old culture; it might be social – the need to lower the difficulties of learning Chinese; it also might be cultural– the success of novels written in the spoken Chinese such as *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Journey to the West*, and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* stimulate this transition. These indicators all contribute to the shift in the relationship between the signified and the signifier (Saussure 2011, 75).

However, there is also the immutability. Nowadays, there are two variations of Chinese: Simplified Chinese and Traditional Chinese. The way of written (sign) is more or less different from each other. But they are express the same meaning, i.e. their signified is the same.

The next thing that catches my attention is the signified and signifier. In my opinion, the concept of signified and signifier is often associated with power nowadays. I want to combine these concepts with my media studies: Stuart Hall's (1980) reception theory of "encoding" and "decoding." Basically, Hall believes that media products are encoded with ideas by the producers who make them. When a media product is made, the producers will put certain ideas into it to convey a particular message, i.e. to "encode" the message. They hope the audience can understand the message, i.e. to "decode" that message. I want to put it into the context of racism during COVID-19. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, Donald Trump has been trying to stigmatize COVID-19 and call it the "Chinese Virus" or "Wuhan Virus." Here, I argue that Trump attempts to disrupt and control the process of encoding and decoding – to establish a false connection between the signified and signifier. Many times, Trump

claimed in public that COVID-19 is originated from China, and therefore it is a Chinese Virus. Thus, Trump encoded his racism into his message. When people receive his message and decode, their discussions may deviate from the pure scientific scope because their signifier points to another entirely different signified – racism. While the original connection behind the sign COVID-19 is "virus (signifier) - natural science (signified)," Trump more or less successfully distorts the sign and establishes a new connection "virus (signifier) - China (signified)." With social media, this notion spreads rapidly to the whole world, and Chinese, or even the East Asian community, are in the centre of discrimination.[NOTE 1]

Similarly, if we look at Huawei's 5G technology, the normal connection between signifier (5G) and signified (technology) is also disturbed. After the U.S. claim that Huawei's technology is insecure, a certain number of people's reaction towards the signifier "5G" or "Huawei" points to another signified, which is probably "spy," "insecurity," "red power," etc. If using Edward Said's Orientalism, I contend Huawei is classified as "other" from other companies. By exerting power and disturbing the linguistic connection, Washington successfully detaches Huawei from other technology companies, and isolates it as what Said calls "other." As a result, an estrangement is made, which leads to people's distrust towards it.

Another example is also about Trump. After the outbreak of the COVID-19, Trump rapidly asserted that "the coronavirus would go away."[NOTE 2] Until September 16, Trump has said this statement a total of 34 times! Similarly, Trump is trying to encode the real message, which is the severity of the coronavirus, as a simple, "it would go away." Therefore, when people are decoding his message, the signifier of COVID-19 in people's heads refers to the signified of "mild" rather than severity. My assumption is that probably this can account for the recent anti-mask protests in the States or in Montreal and Ottawa. They probably think the threat to life cannot be compared to the freedom of not wearing masks, which is influenced by the wrong perception from the media.

After analyzing these examples, I realized that linguistic study is not merely linguistic, but sometimes it also serves for politics. With their power and the help of media, some politicians can distort people's notion towards a particular thing by creating a false pair of signifier and signified.

My key takeaways from de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (M.I., September 25, 2020)

From Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* I came across several thought-provoking concepts that I would like to discuss in my close reading. As a starting point, de Saussure defined language as "a system of signs" (Saussure 1916/1959, 16). He viewed each linguistic sign as a combination of two entities, a sound image and a concept, and he suggested to call them a *signifier* and a *signified* respectively: "I propose to retain the word *sign* [*signe*] to designate the whole and to replace *concept* and *sound-image* respectively by *signified* [*signifié*] and signifier [*signifiant*]; the last two terms have the advantage of indicating opposition that separates them from each other and from the whole of which they are parts" (67). Also, Saussure suggested that signs are arbitrary and conventional. To put it simply, there is no natural or obvious relation between the word image (or the signifier) and the physical reality associated with it (the signified) (69). The relationship is merely arbitrary and culturally constructed. In this matter, he said, "the sign is arbitrary, it follows no law other than that of tradition, and because it is based on tradition, it is arbitrary" (74). Then, signs are also based on convention (68). In other words, people in their daily interaction with each other, they have established certain rules that govern their communication. For instance, people of a given community know by heart what expression(s) should be used to congratulate a newly married couple, someone on his birthday or how to express condolences. These expressions are an intrinsic part of their culture. It is important to mention here that some non-verbal signs are also conventional. Saussure viewed language as "both a social

product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty" (9). It is also "the heritage of the preceding period" (74), meaning a language is transmitted from one generation to the other.

Saussure made an important distinction between another two key concepts: la langue and la parole. La langue is the frame/ structure of a language, it is the set of rules of a given language (grammar, conjugation, punctuation, syntax...) that one should learn. Each language has its own rules. Saussure said that "language is something acquired and conventional" (9), whereas *la parole* is the act of speaking. In Saussure's words, it is "the executive side" (13). *La parole* is a personal act (14). He also confirmed the social and individual dimensions of speech (9) and considered the psychological part a pivotal element in this act.

On a different note, Saussure recommended two approaches to study language. The first approach is called synchronic. The focus of this approach is on the study of language at a given time without taking into account its history. The second approach is diachronic, here the objective is to study the evolution and changes of language over time. In this case, history is an important element.

In what follows, we would like to shed light on the impact of colonisation on language and speech and question what might be the best approach to study the changes in a given language over a certain period of time. Let us consider for example the Algerian dialect. In fact, the French colonisation has marked the history of Algeria and has influenced its linguistic identity. Today, if you hear the Algerian people speaking their Algerian dialect, you will be surprised to notice the amount of French words used in their conversation. This is a typical situation of code-switching. This latter happens when a speaker switches between two or more languages, dialects, or varieties in the same exchange. Thus, if you speak French, you may be able to understand a few sentences in Algerian dialect. Of course, this change in the Algerian's dialect didn't happen overnight. As a matter of fact,

the French colonisation has lasted over 130 years (1830-1962). So, this change in the Algerian's *parole* was gradual but radical.

Unlike the Algerian dialect, Classical Arabic or the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) was not really impacted by these circumstances. This is due, in my opinion, to two factors. First, people in their daily lives speak the Algerian dialect not MSA. Before colonisation, MSA was the only language of instruction in schools and it was used in formal settings such as in conferences, in the court, in mainstream media, in formal debates and also in mosques. Few years after the invasion of Algeria, France imposed French as the language of instruction in schools and the official language in the Algerian administration. Consequently, French became the only language used in schools and in the different administrations. Thus, the constant interaction for decades between the French and the Algerian dialect gave birth to the current Algerian dialect.

Saussure claimed that "language changes, or rather evolves, under the influence of all the forces which can affect either sounds or meanings" (74). I made an assumption earlier that the Arabic language was not really impacted, because in this period, the French didn't allow the Algerians to learn Arabic in schools. In doing this, indeed they have deprived them from learning the standard version of their mother tongue. However, I believe, although this was not their intention, they have helped indirectly to preserve the identity of the Arabic language. It is worth mentioning that right after independence, the Algerian government engaged in a movement of Arabization in an effort to restore the Algerian linguistic identity. For this purpose, Arabic was chosen as the predominant, and in some cases the only, language of instruction. To help the Algerian government, hundreds of Arabic teachers from the Arab world moved to Algeria to work as teachers. Yet, the Arabization movement didn't yield the desired results due to so many internal and external factors.

Finally, I am curious to know the opinion of linguists about whether they have analyzed the evolution of code-switching in the Algerian dialect over time. Would they choose a synchronic or

diachronic approach? I would personally suggest a combination of these two approaches as this could help them analyze when, how and why Algerians resort to code-switching and is this irreversible phenomenon. I believe it is important to study the evolution of code switching over time. A synchronic study might be useful to study for example the dialect before the French invasion, during the occupation and after independence. Undeniably, a diachronic analysis will require a longer period of time than the synchronic one.

Response to Zixuan (K.C., September 26, 2020)

I appreciate the richness of your close reading, especially the discussion of the *langue/parole/langage* distinction in Chinese.

There's a great deal I'd like to respond to, but I will focus on your question about the connection between Saussure's *Course* and our seminar in communication. There are in fact two links. The first is that of semiotics, the field Saussure proposes (but does not develop). "*A science that studies the life of signs within society* is conceivable," he writes; "it would be part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it *semiology* (from Greek *sēmeîon* 'sign'). Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them" (1959, 16, original emphasis). Semiotics (as we tend to call the field in English) would take linguistics as its model (Saussure 1959, 68).

Later theorists would take up this idea and Saussure's structuralist approach — Claude Lévi-Strauss (1961) in anthropology, Louis Althusser (1971) in political philosophy, and in communication studies, Roland Barthes (1972). (For an entirely different approach to semiotics, drawn from the American Pragmatist tradition, see the work of Charles Peirce [1940].) Stuart Hall (1980), in turn, draws heavily on Barthes in "Encoding/Decoding" when he talks about codes. Thus you've provided a partial answer to your question in your intuition about the relevance of Hall — the conversation that moves from Saussure to Barthes to Hall (each modifying what the one before had to say).

The second link – perhaps the more fundamental in this course – is more conceptual. Saussure describes what he perceives as the most basic building blocks of communication, the mechanisms by which something (a signifier in his case) comes to stand in for or refer to something else (a signified). (For a very different configuration of these mechanisms, see Peirce [1940].) However, certain notions, such as the idea that words are defined by what they are not (we recognize the signifier *cat* because it is not *hat* or *mat* or *cot* or *car*), blind us to other dimensions of communication. As I wrote in my close reading above, the forcefulness of Saussure's insistence that *langue* is the proper object of linguistics alerts us to the elements of communication his model causes us to exclude, namely, those having to do with actual, embodied acts taking place in specific historical contexts. (That's a lot to exclude.) Our reading for this coming week, *How to Do Things with Words* by the philosopher of language J.L. Austin, will provide us with a complementary set of tools to examine precisely those circumstances. (At the same time, Austin gives us little with respect to the mechanics of meaning-making. He does not provide answers to some of the questions Saussure asks.)

On a concluding note, your examples related to Trump provide a neat demonstration of the way power (which exists outside of Saussure's system of *langue*) functions in influencing communication. That's Hall's insight, too, although I think we can go further by linking Trump's efforts to privilege one meaning over another back to Aristotle. These acts are forms of invention, but not in ways Aristotle predicted. Reading the *Rhetoric* through the lens of Hall, linked as he is to Barthes and Saussure, helps us expand the set of tools Aristotle provides.

Response to Maryame (K.C., September 27, 2020)

You've presented a valuable summary of Saussure's key terms and their relation to each other (*langue*/*parole*, *signifier*/*signified*, *synchronic*/

diachronic, etc.). I think it will prove useful when we move on to Ricoeur, especially *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences.*

Your discussion of the Algerian dialect of Arabic provides a clear demonstration of the relationship between the second half of the *Course in General Linguistics* (which, *en passant*, few people read) and the first half (which is where most people stop). (I would point out, though, that what you're describing is not an example of *parole* but instead the evolution of the system – *langue* – itself. Examples of *parole* would be specific utterances, rather than the system that makes them possible. The change you describe, especially the incorporation of French words, seems systemic.)

In so doing, you've identified two important blindspots – those of power and identity – which find no place in Saussure's analysis. Because he is interested primarily in the systems that make the exchange of meaning possible, Saussure neglects the conditions in which meaning is exchanged. Thus we must look elsewhere for tools to describe the effects of the policies of French colonization before Algerian independence or Arabization after. At the level of discourse (i.e. the spoken and unspoken rules governing what can be said, in addition to the things people say), Foucault provides such tools in *L'ordre du discours*, among other places (Foucault 1971). Edward Said, whom Zixuan mentions, puts those tools to use in his work on Orientalism.

Response to Maryame (Z.Z, September 27, 2020)

It is interesting to see the relation between French and Modern Standard Arabic in Algerian. From my personal experience, as I spent three months in Morocco, I think the choice of languages in North African countries deals more or less with power and identity. If you speak fluent French, you will be regarded as a well-educated person or an intelligentsia. Some Moroccan domestic companies also brand themselves mainly in French to make a high-end impression.

Language is also closely associated with power in Taiwan. Since Taiwan was colonized by Japan during World War II, the language is also deeply influenced. The connection between signifier and signified is also disturbed. For example, nowadays, lots of words in Taiwan are literally taken from Japanese kanji without translation and adaptation. They also "abandoned" some authentic way of Chinese expression but turned to the Japanese style. As a result, when a Chinese and a Taiwanese are talking, even though they have the same signified in mind, it points to entirely different signifiers. It might be the result of colonization. But in my opinion, it is because of the cultural hegemony from Japan. While the native culture is relatively weak, the Japanese culture soon dominates the Taiwanese market, makes people appeal to it, and in the end, build their recognition towards it. Moreover, this cultural hegemony imposes influence on the basis of daily communication – the language.

Back to Saussure's statement that "language changes, or rather evolves, under the influence of all the forces which can affect either sounds or meanings" (70), I would say that, after the Industrial Revolution, one of most important forces is colonialism or power. As Kyle said, though Saussure's work does not directly relate to it, power is still vital in the process of the exchange of its meaning. But I will take a step forward to say that the power even changes the language itself to make it less pure, which influences people's identity. Just as the French to the Arabic in North Africa, and the Japanese to the Chinese in Taiwan.

Response to Kyle (Z.Z., September 27, 2020)

I agree with Maryame's opinion that your close reading is conceptual-oriented and deals more with the whole book. It helped me a lot in directing my reading as you mentioned several important concepts such as la langue, *la parole* and *le langage*. My close reading acts as part of my response to these concepts and your reading.

I am also intrigued by the example of "gentleman" you raised. It reminds me of the meaning of "OK," whose meaning varies under

different tones and contexts. As a result, it is interesting to see how the same signifier points to the various signified.

However, one of the problems in my mind is that you mention in your syllabus that the topic of Saussure's work is structuralism. I wonder what this means. In my understanding, the word "language" can be broken down into several segments such as *la langue*, *la parole* and *le langage*. So, is "to dissolve a complex concept into smaller parts then analyze" stands for the term structuralism? Or is it a term that you use in a specific linguistic context?

Response to Kyle (M.I., September 27, 2020)

I found your close reading quite informative. Thank you for your response to my close reading. In fact, the *langue/parole* dichotomy is very intriguing but confusing. To me, I understood *langue* as the set of rules of a given language and *la parole* as the practical usage of *langue*, meaning the act of speaking it. This is why I provided the example of the Algerian dialect. I will review these concepts once again.

I have a question regarding these concepts of *langue* and *parole*. Based on the characteristics of each one of them, would you advise the learners of a given language to focus more on *langue* or *parole*?

Response to Zixuan (M.I., September 27, 2020)

You brought up several interesting ideas and examples in your close reading. I would like to provide my personal opinion about some of them. As a starting point, I think communication and linguistics – which is the scientific study of languages – are closely related. One of my professors kept repeating that linguists have the capacity, thanks to their knowledge – to learn languages easily. This was his way to increase our interests in linguistics.

Second, I do endorse your idea that politics and linguistics are connected. Some politicians indeed use language and words to influence public opinion to promote a specific political agenda. In doing so, sometimes they tend to change the meaning of words or

create new connotations. The objective is to captivate the attention of the media and to manipulate the audience's mind and create a certain reaction. Elspeth Gustason in her article "Rhetoric: How politicians manipulate language and the media to shape public thought" talks about the art of political rhetoric and defines it as "the ability to manipulate the connotations of language without changing its denotation, and thus persuade the public to a specific set of ideas in a political environment" (Gustavson 2007, 29). She also suggested replacing political rhetoric by the word "framing" which denotes "how politicians use linguistic cues to define the political boundaries within which a policy will be considered" (Gustavson 2007, 29). In her article, she brought up several examples that show how language was used to manipulate people's minds. For instance, the use of "climate change" instead of "global warming", as well as the repeated use of the word "terror" after 9/11 by the Bush administration to persuade the U.S public about the necessity to wage a war against Iraq to disarm Saddam Hussein and thus protect them and the world from the coming danger. "Once you start using 'terror' to describe all such actions, it becomes much easier to construct a symbolic link between suicide bombers and countries... US government officials regularly called Saddam Hussein's Iraq a 'terror state'; and al-Queda's weapon was 'terror' as well as 'terrorism' ... and so going into Iraq was a relevant part of the 'war on terror'" (Poole, as cited in Gustabvson 2007, 28).

In addition, political decision makers not only use language to influence people, but they also have the ability to change the status of dialect to a language. Of course, linguists may suggest based on their studies that it is time to change the status of a given language from a variety of a language to a standard language. "A language is a dialect with an army and a navy" is a famous saying of Max Weinreich. Thus, for a dialect to be recognized as a language, a political decision is necessary. By the same token, a political decision is needed to nominate a language as an official language of a given country. In Morocco, for example, Tamazigh, which is the Amazigh language

spoken by the country's first inhabitants for over 2000 years, was only recognized by the Moroccan constitution as an official language in 2011.

Further responses (M.I., September 27, 2020)

To Kyle: The second point I want to highlight has to do with the impact of intonation in determining the meaning of words. Your explanation regarding the use of the word gentleman in different contexts illustrate well this idea. We can find similar examples in every language, as the meaning of each word is determined not only by its context but also by the speaker's tone of voice and his intonation. I observed, in several situations that some people avoid intimidating one another, they tend to use the opposite words to convey the real meaning. For instance, a woman pushing a stroller who told a man who didn't hold the door for her "you are a gentleman, thank you!"

To Zixuan: It is interesting to know your opinion about the use of French in Morocco. French, as you know, is widely used in different Moroccan administrations; it is also the language promoted by "the elite." Plus, it is now a part of the Moroccan culture. However, over the last decade or so, English is gaining ground and more and more people want it to be the first foreign language. This is simply because it is the lingua franca of the world. Now, I am not sure if this is possible as both of you have mentioned this matter is about power and identity.

Response to Zixuan (K.C., September 28, 2020)

A quick follow up (since I can't help myself – I always have more questions), when you write, "As a result, when a Chinese and a Taiwanese are talking, even though they have the same signified in mind, it points to entirely different signifiers," would it be more accurate to say, "...even though they have the same signified in mind, they use different signifiers"?

Also, I really like the comparisons that you and Maryame have developed between different language pairs. One of the pleasures of a course like this, for me as the professor, is the insight that students bring. I do have one note of caution, though – you speak of languages being "less pure," but already the idea of linguistic purity is in question, given the multiple examples both you and Maryame give. If anything, they demonstrate the ongoing processes of hybridization through language contact. The idea of a "pure" language is a symptom of the imposition of power, as one group imposes its language on the people around them.

With respect to structuralism, the term has a narrow and a broad sense. Narrowly speaking, it refers to the branch of linguistics inaugurated by Saussure in the *Course in General Linguistics*. Saussure's focus on *langue* as structure, where terms are defined only in opposition to other terms (English speakers recognize "cat" because it is not "mat" or "hat," or "cot" or "car"). Broadly speaking, "structuralism" refers to the application of Saussure's model to other fields, especially anthropology and literary studies. The key idea scholars adopted was that of, well, structure within meaning-making systems, where terms derive their meaning from the differences with respect to other terms.

Response to Maryame (K.C., September 28, 2020)

With respect to *langue* and *parole*, this is how I typically describe them to my undergraduates. *Langue* consists essentially in two things – a mental dictionary or lexicon, and a mental grammar book about how to combine words in meaningful ways. *Parole* consists in the things you say – the specific sentences you put together. The structure of *langue* makes the acts of *parole* possible, while acts of *parole* make it possible inductively to describe the structure itself.

In that respect, language learners typically learn both *langue* and *parole* together. Learning a *langue* consists in learning conjugations, pronunciations, etc. (Je conjugue. Tu conjugues. Il/elle/

on conjugue. Nous conjuguons. Vous conjuguez. Ils/elles conjuguent. Oh, how many times I practiced that...) In my experience, though, people who focus more on speaking learn more quickly than those who memorize rules well. (I'm an excellent rule memorizer, but speaking French did not come naturally to me.)

Notes

1. See, for instance, https://globalnews.ca/news/7091118/coronavirus-racism-chinese-canadians/.
2. Link: https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/34-times-trump-said-the-coronavirus-would-go-away/2020/04/30/d2593312-9593-4ec2-aff7-72c1438fca0e_video.html.

3. J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*

Austin, Saussure, Aristotle, and the paradoxes of communication method (K.C., September 30, 2020)

If there's one statement that clearly distinguishes Austin from Saussure, it's his insistence that "we must consider the total situation in which the utterance is issued – the total speech-act – if we are to see the parallel between statements and performative utterances [...]" (1962, 52). It's reflective of the approach he takes in his lectures, where he tries – and fails – to use grammar (or, more broadly, linguistic structure) to say what makes *stating* something different from using words to *do* something. (He admits that he's trying to fail when he declares – and I smiled when I read this line – "I must explain again that we are floundering here. To feel the firm ground of prejudice slipping away is exhilarating, but it brings its revenges" [61].)

In contrast to Saussure, Austin pulls us squarely into the realm of the utterance (or *parole*). In some ways, he also pulls us back to Aristotle, who emphasizes the contingent nature of communication: remember that Aristotle defines rhetoric as "the faculty of observing *in any given case*" – or the context of speaking – "the available means of persuasion" (Aristotle 1994b, book 1, part 2 [6], emphasis added). Of course, Aristotle is also trying to provide a set of systematic principles to guide speakers in any situation they might encounter, and in that respect, he resembles Saussure. We end up with a configuration of thinkers something like this:

Aristotle
/ \
Saussure – Austin

They are linked by concerns about general structure and the specific speech acts that structure makes possible.

* * *

Last week Zixuan asked what Saussure's linguistics had to do with communication. It's a valid question, one I want to anticipate here. Why read a philosopher of language, in particular in a class on *method*? To answer that question, I want to pose a few more, all of which relate to what method — that is, a set of tools shaped by our ontological, epistemological, and axiomatic presuppositions about our object of study — accomplishes in the field of communication. To wit:

- *What is our object of study?* In the most basic sense, I've been treating it as the transmission of information, following models such as the sender-message-receiver circuit that developed within the cybernetic tradition of communication theory (e.g., Weaver 1949). There are other models, of course. James Carey (2009), for instance, highlights the role of ritualized communication in establishing a sense of community. I'll return to that idea below.

- *By what means is information transmitted?* Here's where methodological considerations are clearest. People (and machines and animals and...?) transmit information through complex utterances that can be broken down into smaller and smaller units, until we arrive at the most basic — the sign. Hence the tools Saussure provides.

- *How do we observe this transmission of information?* Here's where the dialectic between structure and utterance (or *langue* and *parole*) is at play. We need a framework for identifying and observing signs. Saussure's network of negatively defined terms provides one such frame. There are others (I keep

pointing toward Peirce [1940]), but Saussure's has been so influential that we must deal with it first. Also, that's what Ricoeur will do, especially in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences.*

• *How do we observe the effects or implications of this transmission?* The structure/utterance dialectic is at play here, too. If we're interested in the transmission of information but ask only what tools make it possible, we miss most everything that communication scholars have been concerned with. It's one thing to have a mental dictionary and grammar book that allow us to put together statements; it's another to actually put them together. How do we know whether the receiver understands the message? How do we observe the receiver's response, which could range from something as simple as an acknowledgment that the message was received to something whose complexity exceeds my ability even to imagine it? Austin's tools — his ideas of the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary dimensions of speech — give us a starting point.

But we're still faced with an important paradox, to which we'll be turning our attention in the next few weeks. Simply put, to describe how people put signs together into utterances, we must use the same signs, put together into utterances in the same way. To be a bit more concrete, consider a question I pose above: how do we know whether a receiver has understood a message? To answer that question, we *as researchers* must understand the message. How else can we gauge the receiver's understanding? But now we must turn the initial question back on ourselves. How do we know that we *as receivers* understand it in the first place? The truth is, there is always uncertainty. Research in communication, where the interpretation of messages is concerned, is never certain.

Hence the value of other models of communication, such as Carey's ritual model, which focuses our attention on dimensions other

than the transmission of information. Hence also the value of hermeneutics, to which we will be turning next week and the week thereafter.

Doing things with words: The use of speech act theory in public service announcements (Z.Z., October 1, 2020)

In the 1930s, the logical positivist philosophers began to discuss the meaning and validity of linguistic expressions, arguing that any statement that cannot be proven true or false is a false statement and a meaningless proposition. J.L. Austin takes issue with the logical positivist view of language and refutes the erroneous empirical view that statements are meaningless if they have no truth value. He challenges the old notion that a statement can only be to describe some state of affairs or to state some facts (Austin 1962, 1). The use of language is not limited to the composition of words and sentences, but also behaviour, i.e. "*illocutionary act.*" He further points out that "it does not describe or inform [...] but is used for, or in, the doing of something" (56). Moreover, it is an act – speech act. Austin further classifies two utterances: *constative* and *performative.* A *constative utterance* is making a statement (6): to describe an event, a process or status. Its significant characteristic is being true or false (46). A *performative utterance*, on the other hand, is performing actions (21); thus, there is no difference between true or false as speaking itself is an action. In his example of "I bet you sixpence, it will rain tomorrow" (36), Austin thinks it is abortive (ibid.) because it does not describe or report anything; thus, there is no true or false. The speaker of this sentence is using words to make a bet, i.e., *illocutionary act*, which I will discuss in the following paragraph. A sentence or an utterance that performs an action is *performative sentence* or *performative utterance* (6). Austin, furthermore, divides the *performative utterance* into *explicit performative* (e.g., the performative verb "command" in the sentence, "I command you to write a 1000-word article") and *inexplicit performative* (e.g. "Write a 1000-word article" which does not have any

performative verb). But he later corrects his idea and reckons that "the performative is not altogether so obviously distinct from the constative" (67). As long as the speaker is serious about what he is saying, he is doing an illocutionary act – whether constative or performative.

Public Service Announcements (PSA) are a means of communicating a message related to the welfare of the people, or a helpful and healthy activity, or a decree, a consensus, a notion to gain people's approval, or a reasonable way of life, all of which are related to the interests of the society and the public. The characteristics of a PSA demand its slogan must be designated to raise the public's concern for various social issues so that the public can understand them, and the public can take action in terms of dealing with these issues. As a result, I think it is rational to study PSA's language with Austin's speech act theory.

Constative utterance and performative utterance

Consider two examples:

1. For your family's and your health, please do not smoke.
2. Your life is like me, getting shorter and shorter.

There is a distinct discrepancy in the way of expression between the above two advertisements. In my opinion, the first sentence is a typical example of "saying can make it so." It directly uses admonitory language to inform the public of the health risk of smoking and their families and urge them to take action. It belongs to what Austin classifies as an *implicit performative.* This type of advertising slogan uses imperative sentences to put a certain amount of psychological pressure on people and achieves the intended purpose of the advertisement, which is to make people aware of the risks of smoking and quit in the end. The second advertisement belongs to Austin's definition of constative utterance, where the speaker promises the truthfulness of the proposition he is expressing,

that is, he believes in the truthfulness of what he is saying. This is a less preachy way of expressing the truth, and it brings out the consciousness of the audience.

Locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act

Austin, furthermore, abstracts three dimensions of the speech act theory: *locutionary act*, *illocutionary act* and *perlocutionary act*. *Locutionary act* means to say something meaningful in accordance with linguistic conventions; *illocutionary act* means to give meaningful words an "illocutionary force" (Austin 1962, 99); *perlocutionary act* means to exert some effects of doing something on the audience with *locutionary act* and *illocutionary act*. In terms of PSA, the *locutionary act* refers to the literal meaning of the advertisement; the *illocutionary act* refers to the reflection of the advertiser's communicative purpose; the *perlocutionary act* refers to the audiences' awareness and their collaborative act. I will take the example of a tobacco advertisement in the 1950s (figure 2).

Gentleman: "Mind if I smoke?"
Lady: "Care if I die?"

The gentleman's real intention behind the communication is to get the other to agree to his behaviour of smoking. If the lady relents, then it is a *perlocutionary act*. In this case, the lady is seemingly questioning the gentleman or a *locutionary act*. However, her intention is an *illocutionary act*, which urges the gentleman to quit smoking. If the gentleman agrees, again, it is a *perlocutionary act*.

Judging from the whole PSA, the *locutionary act* is the expression of doubts in the minds of both gentleman and lady; the aim of *illocutionary act* is clear: to persuade its audience to quit smoking; ultimately, the public perceives and actively participates in quitting smoking, which is the act of the *perlocutionary act*. The apparently relaxing tone of the interlocutor's voice in this PSA has a

powerful strength, which is *the power of words and actions.*

In conclusion, I personally reckon that Austin's speech act theory is more or less similar to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as their aim is identical – to communicate, maybe also to persuade, with others more effectively. The essence of communication probably hides in the philosophy of language.

To say things, words alone are not enough (M.I., October 2, 2020)

For Austin, words do not only transmit information or describe the world but are also acts that help transform it. Austin starts by differentiating two types of statement: constative/descriptive and performative. Constative statements are either true or false: they describe a reality or provide information. Performatives, on the other hand, are related to action and are either effective or ineffective and are therefore neither true, nor false. However, the conditions that constitute the speech act can be true or false. In this regard, it is important to mention briefly some of the conditions that should be met for the speech act to take place. First, it is important to ensure that the conventional procedures are respected and conducted by the right person in the appropriate circumstances. Second, participants must execute the procedure correctly and fully. Third, sincerity is an important criterion, participants should have the right intention and act accordingly. It appears that the context is very important for the "'happy' functioning of a performative act" (Austin 1962, 14). Having good intentions is also fundamental for Austin.

What is appealing in this book is that Austin does not present the results of his research, but rather conducts this research in front of his students and us – the readers. Throughout the book, Austin is suggesting hypotheses, testing them and backing down when they turn out to be irrelevant. Accordingly, when he couldn't find a clear distinction between constative and performative statements, he admits that there are perhaps tight connections between these two types "stating is performing an act" (139). As a result, Austin put

forward an alternative model to describe the speech act. This model is composed of three dimensions.

- The locutionary dimension has to do with the literal basic meaning of the utterance. This is similar to a constative statement as it is concerned with the production of a sense and meaning. Most statements can have a locutionary meaning. Consider for example the statement, "it is so cold in here."

- The illocutionary dimension indicates the intention that one must have when saying an utterance. A speaker may perform an illocutionary act to make a request, an offer, promise, explain. For instance, in saying "it is cold in here," the speaker is making an indirect request for someone to turn on the heat or to close the window. It is important to note that an illocutionary act may have more than one meaning.

- The perlocutionary dimension, as Austin puts it, "is the achieving of certain effects by saying something" (120). The focus is to produce the intended effect. In our example above, the intended effect is achieved when someone turns on the heat or closes the window.

Austin's concept of locutionary act reminds us of Saussure's concepts signifier/signified. Both of them refer to a meaning linked to a reference: "saying we perform a locutionary act, which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense" (108).

If we were to compare between Saussure and Austin's books, Saussure focused on the conventional association between a signifier and signified and stresses that the relationship between them is arbitrary. Austin highlights the importance of convention and intentions in a speech act as cited above. However, he admits that they

may hinder communication and create ambiguity: "difficulties about conventions and intentions must arise in deciding upon the correct description whether of a locution or of an illocution: deliberate, or unintentional, ambiguity of meaning or reference is perhaps as common as deliberate or unintentional failure to make plain 'how our words are to be taken' (in the illocutionary sense)" (115n1). Conversely, he didn't suggest any feasible solution to minimize this ambiguity.

Both Aristotle and Austin are interested in creating a given effect on the audience. Aristotle is using the art of rhetoric for the sake of persuasion. Austin is using speech to create the desired effect on the hearer/audience. He admits that "an effect must be achieved on the audience if the illocutionary act is to be carried out" (115-116).

In what follows, let us discuss some of the points that Austin doesn't consider in his total speech act. To start with, Austin mentions in his book that illocutionary and perlocutionary acts can be performed through non-verbal communication, but he insists that they should be conventional: "there cannot be an illocutionary act unless the means employed are conventional, and so the means for achieving its ends non-verbally must be conventional" (118). Implicitly he confirms that the speech act cannot take place in a situation involving people from different cultures as they have different non-verbal communication and no shared convention. So, how should people communicate in these situations? Imagine a French person – who is proud that his national football team won the World Cup for the second time in 2018 – asks an American about his opinion about his football team. The American responded with the OK sign (touching the thumb and index finger to make a circle). The French person, shocked from his behavior, decided to leave immediately. This is indeed only one example of misunderstanding caused by non-verbal communication. In fact, this hand sign is interpreted as ok for Americans but for the French it means 0. So, the French person thought that he was saying to him that his team is zero.

Hence, since non-verbal gestures may mean different significations in different cultures, how can we avoid misunderstanding? How can the speaker verify if the receiver understands the intended message and vice-versa?

Then, although one statement can have different layers of meaning, Austin doesn't question the role of culture in shaping the intention and understanding of all participants, and the role of the receiver in understanding the message and executing the intended action. Also, Austin, in analyzing performatives, overlooks jokes, poetry, insinuating and swearing. Why? In telling jokes, aren't we doing something? For example, a comedian can criticize politicians in his country by telling jokes about them. He may do so to increase awareness about their level of corruption and to call for a change. In fact, jokes are a powerful means of communication and people have the ability to filter the serious message out of them. In addition, jokes can have a lasting impact as people not only can remember them but also they participate in diffusing them.

On a similar note, Austin says "the perlocutionary act deals with the consequences "some of which may be "unintentional" (106). With this in mind, how can we determine the intended perlocutionary act? And can we monitor the unintentional consequences of a speech act? And how can we ensure that the achieved effect (produced effect by the hearer) is compatible with the intended one (the speaker's initial intention)?

For all the reasons mentioned above, I think, to do things, words alone are not always enough.

Response to Zixuan (K.C., October 3, 2020)

I like this use of Austin's categories to explicate two public service announcements (or, as I think might actually be the case, one PSA and one contemporary meme – the second follows a style of faux-retro "advertisements" popular in the 1990s). One of the tasks of communication theory (which we're exploring here, as it's intimately linked to method) is to describe the world through which we navigate.

If theory cannot describe objects in the world – PSAs, for instance – then it has no value. (On an unrelated note, what's the source of these images? It's necessary to cite them as you would cite any other text.)

As a way to talk about the relation between theory and method, I'd like to explore your final paragraph a bit further. Speech act theory, you contend, is "more or less similar to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as their aim is identical." Is it identical, though? Similar, certainly (as I note in my close reading), but there are important differences. Aristotle was addressing a very different audience – in principle, he was reaching out to students of rhetoric, or anyone who wanted to learn the art of persuasion. Austin was addressing philosophers, as well as the immediate audience of the talks he delivered that became *How to Do Things with Words.* And although both are concerned with contingent acts of speech, Aristotle is also offering a classification system more akin to Austin's failed attempt to use grammar to distinguish between constative and performative statements.

To get a sense of what I mean, consider how Austin might read Aristotle's discussion of forensic rhetoric. Aristotle gives an example of a case where there are no witnesses and lawyers had to argue that "the judges must decide from what is probable; that this is meant by 'giving a verdict in accordance with one's honest opinion'; that probabilities cannot be bribed to mislead the court; and that probabilities are never convicted of perjury" (Aristotle 1994b, book 1, part 15 [63]). It seems to me that Aristotle focuses mostly on the locutionary aspects of the lawyers' arguments – how to put words together in a way to be persuasive – but leaves the illocutionary dimension unexplored. And yet it's at the level of illocutionary force that their argument operates, if they are successful: they are making an implied (or perhaps even explicit) appeal to the judge to adopt their line of reasoning. (Whether or not the judge finds in their favour is the perlocutionary dimension of their exchange.)

Where method is concerned, Aristotle and Austin provide us with complementary theoretical tools to use as lenses through which to observe different acts of communication, to give a relatively

concise description of the relation between theory and method. We could, for instance, use Aristotle's tools to provide a rich description of the locutionary dimensions of the lawyers' acts of invention, and Austin's tools to describe their illocutionary force.

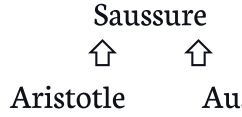
Response to Kyle (M.I., October 4, 2020)

Your comparison between Aristotle, Saussure and Austin is relevant and attention-grabbing.

Saussure provides the structure of the language. Everything in life follows a system, a discourse requires a structure so does any utterance. Hence, I find that Austin and Aristotle share more things in common. First, they both use speech to get something or reach a specific objective. For Aristotle the objective is to persuade the public, and for Austin is to accomplish the intended perlocutionary act. Second, neither attribute a given role to the hearer/receiver in their approach. They aren't interested to have his or her feedback, for example. In a way, the receiver is passive and doesn't have a voice.

After giving it some thought, I think Austin takes for granted the ability of the hearer to interpret the message (illocutionary act) and execute it (perform the action/the perlocutionary act). This is because he assumes that both the speaker and the hearer should have the same reference and adhere to the same conventions. So, he trusts that the hearer will be able to understand the implicit message of the utterance.

I have a question that has to do with your configuration. If the three philosophers (Saussure is primarily a linguist, but he is also considered to be a philosopher) lived in the same era and have published their books in the same year, will you change your configuration? Personally, I will opt for the following one:



The rationale behind it is that I view Saussure as the one who set up the structure of language. So, both Aristotle and Austin will need to apply it to come up with rhetorical speech and speech act theory respectively.

Response to Zixuan (M.I., October 4, 2020)

Speech act theory can be applied to any communication situation. Your tobacco advertisement is interesting as the lady – who was the hearer initially – has an active voice and she responded with a locutionary act that had a strong intended meaning. By saying, "Care if I die?" she made it clear that she interpreted the message correctly but couldn't approve the request (to allow him to smoke).

As you know, I am interested in second language acquisition and I think that the speech act theory could be a useful strategy for second language learning. Turn-taking conversations between native speakers and language learners in second language classrooms can be a great exercise. In this context, I am interested to know how foreign or second language learners interpret and perform different speech acts in the target language. Do they apply the same conventional rules of their mother cultures? Do they rely on their intercultural knowledge? How can we avoid misunderstanding in intercultural situations?

Last, although Austin doesn't find a clear-cut distinction between constative and performative statements using linguistic tools, I found that his distinction between explicit performatives and implicit performatives important concepts to explore for language learners. Thus, in my opinion, Austin's theory can help students in language classrooms understand the different meanings of a given expression or exchange.

Response to Maryame (K.C., October 4, 2020)

I agree completely that what makes this book appealing is the fact that Austin shows his work, so to speak, in much the same way as my math teachers had me show my work in high school. In fact, it was as I read

How to Do Things with Words this summer that I first began to think about organizing CMN8101 along the lines that we're now following. The written format, and the resulting book that I'm compiling, are the way we show our work, but with one important difference: Austin knew where he was going, I'm sure, whereas in this class, our destination remains open-ended.

I like the way you've brought culture and its attendant contexts into your analysis of Austin. The distinguishing feature of Austin's analysis is the way it is anchored in contingent situations, in contrast to Saussure and his focus on the systems that make communication possible. Austin's conceptual tools, I think, can also help us understand non-verbal communication or gestures, which tend to be more polysemic. Your example of the "okay"/"zero" sign is nice because, within the different cultural contexts, the signs tend to indicate a very restricted range of meanings. (Although the "okay" sign has taken on a new meaning in the wacky world of U.S. politics, where it has been adopted in the past six months by white nationalists. I'd never use the gesture any more for that reason.) Your example actually presents a related form of confusion at the verbal level, namely the word "football." Americans, of course, call the game "soccer." Many would be utterly confused by the French person's question because they would think "NFL" (the professional league of American football) rather than "soccer." In either case, though, we can identify locutionary acts (the flashing of the sign you describe), illocutionary acts (the intent to demonstrate approval), and perlocutionary acts (the French person who leaves because of the miscommunication, although that's certainly not the American's intended effect).

Even more interesting, however, is your question about jokes. Jokes rely on the rhetorical trope of irony, or the act of saying one thing but meaning another. Irony complicates the idea of illocutionary force because the words a person says carry contradictory meanings. The question of intention is equally complicated. When two people are together and one tells a joke, that

person can clarify what they meant if it appears the second person doesn't get the joke. (Even then, the joke-teller has already used language in such a way as to cast their words into doubt. Explaining "this is what I meant!" can be a fraught exercise, depending on whether the joke-hearer believes the joke-teller.) But when the two people are not together, the joke-teller's intention is obscured still further.

Response to Kyle (Z.Z., October 4, 2020)

I am interested in your question about how we researchers/receivers understand the correct message.

In my opinion, I think to answer this question, we need to turn to Saussure's theory of signifier and signified because it deals more with the process of receiving messages. As I mentioned in my previous close-reading, the process of obtaining the message is prone to be affected by power. I agree with Maryame's notion that Austin assumes both the speaker and listener have the same reference to the same convention, so they can perform the reasonable illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act. However, this is the ideal situation, which, in my personal opinion, is usually impossible to find in the real world. As you stated in the text, the prerequisite of interpreting signs into utterances is that "we must use the same signs and put them together into utterances in the same way." I suppose that as soon as people start communicating there will be a disparity in information. Therefore, it is more than challenging to communicate at the same level.

To inform an objective message, I would say we have to receive messages from different sources to not be affected by a single voice. But I am looking forward to the following readings as I might have different opinions on that.

To answer your question about my statement that Austin's and Aristotle's aims are more or less identical: probably the word "identical" is less accurate here. In my opinion, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* aims at persuading others more effectively. As for Austin's speech act theory, he claims that we hide a particular message within our parole,

and it needs the others' decoding to figure out what we really mean. Indeed, their methods are different as Aristotle is more explicit, and Austin is implicit. But I guess they all contend with the art of communication – how to make our words serve our aim better.

Response to Maryame (Z.Z., October 4, 2020)

It is fascinating to perceive the speech act theory in the context of foreign language acquisition. Since you have replied to me with several questions, I think I can answer them and regard it partly as my response to your reading.

According to my personal experience, when I was learning English, we tend to apply our conventional rules to it. It was probably because my hometown was a small town, so there were not so many foreign cultural elements we could refer to. So at the beginning period, we often did literal translations of what we had in mind. Thus, it became "Chinglish."

I always contend that it is necessary to use our mother tongue to teach foreign languages at the beginner level. Because we are clueless about the language and its culture, we are ignorant of teachers' speech acts. The communication between teachers and students will fail our expectations. After students reach an intermediate level when they have a certain knowledge of the meaning behind the language, the speech act can play its role in language learning.

4. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*

We've reached the crux: metaphor as the basic structure of language (K.C., October 8, 2020)

I read Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor* this summer after reading a passage in a book by Sarah Maitland (2017) called *What Is Cultural Translation?* (I highly recommend this book as an overview and application of Ricoeur, if you're so inclined.) Maitland writes:

> It is impossible to coin a new metaphor without being aware of what one is doing, and, in turn, the new metaphor creates a mystery for the reader unfamiliar with it. [...] To declare [...] that "Achilles is a lion", to adopt Ricoeur's own example, is to say that something or someone both *is* and is *not* that to which they are actively being compared [...]. By referencing a world it represents mimetically, yet simultaneously does not re-create, language contains its own othering. In this sense, a sign is a negative truth, since it can only stand "for" something if it is *not* the thing itself. [...] Ricoeur's point is that words have no "proper" meaning on their own and meaning cannot be said to "belong" to them. They are simply empty vessels and do not carry any meaning in themselves, for language always opens outwards and gestures towards something beyond itself and beyond the world of the speaker. (41–42)

Until now, however, I haven't taken the time to flesh out the implications of Maitland's observation. Those implications are what I hope to sketch here, drawing on passages from *The Rule of Metaphor.* This space is too short for a fully developed argument, but I hope, at

the very least, to do two things: establish signposts to find my way back here again, and show how Ricoeur's account of metaphor challenges social scientific modes of inquiry. (My explanation should also show how I chose and arranged readings for this course.)

In short, I think Maitland is arguing that the *signifier/signified* relationship – both in the narrow sense proposed by Saussure and in broader senses fleshed out by later semiotic theorists (e.g., Barthes 1972; Kristeva 1969, 1986) – has the structure of a metaphor. Consider how Ricoeur interprets the *Rhetoric* and (especially) the *Poetics* of Aristotle. Ricoeur writes that for Aristotle,

> metaphor is not one figure among others, but the transference principle common to all of them. If one's guideline is the notion of "schema" or "realm" rather than that of "figure," a first group will include all transfers from one realm to another, non-intersecting realm [...]. (Ricoeur 1975/2003, 280)

(He goes on to discuss cases where transfers take place within a realm.)

Without invoking Saussure, Maitland points out something fundamental about the *signifier/signified* pair. The first (as *sound-image*) always points away from itself toward the second (as *concept*) (Saussure 1916/1959, 66). The link is arbitrary (67-68), but – this is a point Saussure presupposes but does not explore – it is also defined by movement.

What's the nature of this movement? If the sound-image is "the psychological imprint of the sound" we associate with a sign, and the object is that which the sound-image evokes in the form of a set of "associations sanctioned by [our] language" (66-67), then we are dealing with different realms. It is not a sound-image pointing to a sound-image, nor a concept pointing to a concept, but one pointing to the other. The transfer from one realm to another – that's Aristotle's metaphor.

Before I go too far, I want to raise an important objection. Perhaps I'm splitting hairs. Perhaps there is only one realm, and we're

moving within it, as "both terms involved in the linguistic sign" – the signifier and signified, or the sound-image and object – "are psychological" (Saussure 1916/1959, 65). Fair enough. But what happens when we exit the world of structure and *langue* and enter that of actual examples of speech or *parole*? As Austin shows, a structural account of language cannot explain language-in-use, or its illocutionary and perlocutionary qualities. When we speak, we make reference to the world outside our psyches. Surely now we are dealing with more than one realm! (Someday when I expand this argument, I'll turn to Peirce [1940], too, because the vocabulary he provides gives us tools to deal with reference-in-the-world.)

We arrive here at one of the crucial points of our seminar. Ricoeur observes a paradox in the first study in *The Rule of Metaphor*: "There is no non-metaphorical standpoint from which one could look upon metaphor, and all other figures for that matter, as if they were a game played before one's eyes" (Ricoeur 1975/2003, 19). In other words, to talk about metaphor, we must resort to metaphor. What I'm proposing is that this idea is symptomatic of a broader phenomenon: to talk about language, we must resort to metaphor. Or better: to talk, we have only metaphor at our disposal.

What are the implications for communication method? The idea that language, at its most basic structure, operates metaphorically challenges the a priori faith that many social scientists have in their ability to use language to describe the world. To the degree that they treat words as transparent, they fail to see the poetic dimensions of language, even in its everyday use. I mean "poetic" here in its older sense, from the Greek *poiêsis*, meaning "creation": "But the creative dimension is inseparable from the referential movement," Ricoeur (1975/2003, 44) writes. "*Mimêsis* is *poiêsis*, and *poiêsis* is *mimêsis*." In other words, imitation (*mimêsis*) is never just imitation, but instead – for tragedy in Aristotle's case, but generalizable to more than just tragedy – an act of creation, "a 'process,' the process of 'forming each of the six parts of the tragedy,' from plot through spectacle" (43).

Ricoeur is summarizing the *Poetics*, but Aristotle's discussion of rhetorical invention involves a similar process.

What does this mean in a practical sense? Words always evoke more than we mean to evoke when we use them: they create an excess of meaning. I'll say more about this in my close reading of *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences.*

The metaphor and a good metaphor (Z.Z., October 8, 2020)

After reading the designated sections, I think Ricoeur's work is a kind of deep dive into the masterpieces we have read. Ricoeur explored the concept of metaphor (as indicated in the book title), with the association with Austin's speech act theory and Saussure's signifier-signified theory. It is also a good complement that Ricoeur associates Aristotle's *Rhetoric* with *Poetics* as metaphor serves two functions – argumentative function and mimetic function (Ricoeur 2003, 13).

In the third study, Ricoeur explores the correlation between semiotics and semantics. I would like to analogize these two concepts to economic studies: semiotics is like microeconomics as it focuses on signs, which is the fundamental units of language (Ricoeur 2003, 77); semantics tends to be more like macroeconomics as in concentrates on sentences, which is the primary constituents of discourse (ibid.). Therefore, it is important to identify our research corpus (is it a broad or narrow scope), then choose the appropriate method. However, when it comes to the correlation between semiotics and semantics, I am not entirely convinced by Strawson's conclusion that "semiotics has the generic or universal function and semantics the view to the singular" (82). Indeed, the lower-level words constitute the higher-level sentence – these integrators are adaptive to different "occasions." To some extent, words are a prerequisite of sentences – semiotics has a universal function over semantics. Nevertheless, I tend to stand with Ricoeur's opinion that "words have no proper meaning because no

meaning can be said to 'belong' to them, and they do not possess any meaning in themselves" (89). In my perspective, although the sentence is realized in words (77), the words per se are unable to convey a complete and concrete message, which is only possible when integrated into sentences. It is discourse, taken as a whole, that carries the meaning (89). Furthermore, one word can have multiple meanings in various contexts, so it is not easy to distinguish a particular part that overwhelms the other. I suppose a holistic method will benefit — to take semiotics and semantics as a whole when analyzing as they are influencing each other.

Another thing that draws my attention is the contrast between metaphor and simile. Metaphor, according to Ricoeur, is a process of borrowing (*allotrios*) and a concept that is opposed to the proper meaning (Ricoeur 2003, 18). As a result, when we are doing a metaphor, we are doing three things at a time:

> 1. deviating from the ordinary usage of a word;
> 2. borrowing another concept — Aristotle's word is *phora* — from somewhere else;
> 3. adapting the meaning of the substitution to the original word. (21)

What comes to my mind, associating with my digital humanity studies, is that there are massive metaphors in our computer systems. For example, the word "document." When making a computer document, we are borrowing the concept of a document in the real world — we make fixed, permanent, immutable records. For example, when we talk about the action of "saving," we deviate from this abstract concept but borrow a concrete concept in our daily life — a floppy disk since we always save our documents in it. Then we adopt the concept of "floppy disk" to "save." (It might be a little bit different from the reading as it is an icon rather than speech. But an icon is also a sign, which I think is rational to bring this into our discussion.) We also borrow the concept of "slide show" and apply it to presentation

software. There are many more vivid instances such as Recycle Bin, Network Neighbourhood, etc.

However, my question is, *what is a good metaphor?* The answer to this question is somehow subjective. Ricoeur (maybe also Aristotle) thinks that a good metaphor "combines clarity, virtue, and the appropriateness" (36–7). The most ambiguous point that Ricoeur puts forward, in my opinion, is the clarity. Clarity, which also incorporates embellishment and unusual, is a touchstone for metaphor (36). However, in my perspective, the characteristic of clarity is, to some extent, self-contradictory. If someone pursues a refreshing metaphor, he builds some unique connections with other words that are less common to embellish them; therefore, others will spend more time understanding this metaphor when confronted with it. Furthermore, when circulating this notion, more time will be spent in explaining it, too. It is also stated in the book that "in deviating from ordinary usage, metaphor, together with all the other unusual expressions, also abandons clarity and makes 'the language appear more stately'" (ibid.).

For example, in *Awakening China*, Fitzgerald mentions Napoleon's metaphor towards China, "Behold the Chinese Empire. Let it sleep, for when this dragon wakes, the world will tremble" (viii). This sentence is a metaphor for the Qing Dynasty (around 300 years ago), implying that China still has its influence globally but has been left behind by western countries. A similar usage can also be seen in Byrne's article, "China: The Dragon Awakes" (1993). In Chinese, the dragon symbolizes power and auspiciousness. We deem ourselves "the descendants of the dragon"; all emperors also have dragons embroidered on their clothes as if they were the "Chosen One by God." As a result, Chinese people will be more than happy to be described as "dragon." However, in western culture, the dragon is a symbol of evil. So in the western context, Napoleon seems to be warning the West to be aware of the rise of China, as it would bring about disaster for us (ironically, something similar to the situation nowadays). Personally, I think it is a clear metaphor because it is in accord with the image of a dragon. Nevertheless, is it an appropriate and virtuous one, as it has

entirely different connotations in different cultural contexts? Do you think it necessary for an excellent metaphor to satisfy all three conditions that Ricoeur proposes?

We can also turn to the example of the save icon on the computer. No one will ever doubt its success of this metaphor as it establishes a simpler connection between an abstract concept and a concrete thing. It was successful and, by all means, a good metaphor. But is it still good enough nowadays? As floppy disks are obsolete, the new generation probably knows nothing about the floppy disks, not to say the icon's history. Will the metaphor for "saving" be something else?

My other question is about metaphor and simile. According to Ricoeur, simile, which is a metaphor, appeals less to hearers towards the idea (28). To what extent do you agree with this notion? Personally I think simile is more acceptable as it is more straightforward than the latter. The keyword "like" is helping the hearers to establish a connection between two things.

Metaphor is a valuable linguistic device for any language (M.I., October 9, 2020)

Paul Ricoeur in his book *The Rule of Metaphor* is using several terminologies that we have seen in previous readings. For instance, he is making use of the concepts of signifier/signified, sense and reference, locutionary/illocutionary act, speech act theory, and the difference between the constative and the performative statements. In his reflection on metaphor, throughout the book, he starts frequently from the contribution of other authors such as Max Black, Richards and Beardsley. He presents and analyzes their works and then provides his opinions about the different concepts and ideas. Similarly, in several instances, he recalls Aristotle's ideas about rhetoric and metaphors.

In my close reading, I will bring to your attention some of the ideas that caught my attention. As a starting point, Ricoeur does not

agree with Aristotle's vision of metaphor. He insists that metaphor is not only an ornament that makes a language look attractive, but metaphor communicates important and new information and thus should be considered as a cognitive device "any reduction of metaphor to a mere 'ornament' [...], one must say that metaphor bears information because it 'redescribes' reality" (Ricoeur 2003, 24). Ricoeur, in defending metaphor, attacks rhetoric and considers it as dealing with superficial matters: "rhetoric condemned itself to treating nothing but superficial problems – whereas metaphor penetrates to the very depths of verbal interaction" (92). For Lakoff and Johnson, "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 5).

Ricoeur says that Aristotle and Fontanier provide "a nominal" definition of the metaphor which focuses on the noun or name, confirming that the words convey the effect of the metaphorical meaning, which explains why the traditional rhetorical definition cannot be disregarded (75). However, Ricoeur considers metaphor as a statement, not as a word. What is important to examine in a metaphorical statement is how meaning is constructed. In fact, not all the words are used metaphorically, which is one of the important characteristics of metaphorical statement: "this balance of meaning between the statement and the word is the condition of its principal feature, the contrast within a single statement between one word that is taken metaphorically and another that is not" (97).

One of the interesting concepts I found in this work is the role of metaphor in enriching the language. Language evolves with evolution of its linguistic community. Therefore, the creation of new metaphors is a great indicator that a language is flourishing. For Ricoeur, the innovation or creation of new meaning can be viewed as a linguistic creation. And if it is endorsed by the majority of the linguistic community, "it can become a common meaning and add to the polysemy of lexical entities, thus contributing to the history of the language as code or system" (115).

Another interesting observation about Ricoeur's book is that he himself is using metaphors to talk about metaphor. For instance, he puts forward the idea that a metaphor is a semantic event which "takes place at the point where several semantic fields intersect. It is because of this construction that all the words, taken together, make sense. Then, and only then, the metaphorical twist is at once an event and a meaning, an event that means or signifies, an emergent meaning created by language" (114). In other words, metaphor is an event that has a meaning since it exists only in the present context. This definition only applies to living metaphors.

Ricoeur explains that there are three types of tensions that are observed at the level of meaning inherent in a statement. The first type of tension is noticed within the statement "between tenor and vehicle, between focus and frame, between principal subject and secondary subject [...]." The second tension is between the literal interpretation that dies because of its semantic impertinence and the metaphorical interpretation "whose sense emerges from non-sense." The last type of tension is in the "relational function of the copula": "between identity and difference in the interplay of resemblance" (292). To minimize this tension exhibited in the verb *to be*, Ricoeur stresses the importance of maintaining the 'is not' within the 'is' in the copula in any metaphorical statement.

Ricoeur tries also to explain how metaphor is also linked to images. He uses different terms that were used by other authors. The fusion between sense and sensa is one of them. Hester referred first to the "association in memory between words and the images of their referents; historical and cultural conventions" (250). This explanation is more psychological than semantic. Wittgenstein suggests an important concept of "seeing as": "Seeing as is an intuitive experience-act by which one selects from the quasi-sensory mass of imagery one has on reading metaphor the relevant aspects of such imagery" (252). So, this notion of "seeing as" is connecting the sense and image of poetic metaphor (251). For Ricoeur, this notion of "seeing as" designates the non-verbal mediation of the metaphorical statement

"with this acknowledgment, semantics finds its frontier; and, in so doing, it accomplishes its task" (254).

How is the meaning created? Ricoeur talks about the role of the reader to find out the connotations of the modifier that are likely to be meaningful. Ricoeur confirms that "no speaker ever completely exhausts the connotative possibilities of his words" (111). With this in mind, how can we guess the right meaning of a metaphorical phrase? And how can we avoid misunderstanding? Especially with words that have polysemic meanings? Two principles help here. The first one is the principle of congruence which consists in selecting which connotations and secondary meanings can fit in the total context. The second one is the principle of plenitude and it is interested in all the possible range of connotations that can fit in the context (ibid). This might be confusing for the reader/hearer, but this latter can rely on the shared conventional knowledge and his or her sense to interpret the meaning of a given metaphor – the context is also very important to consider – correctly. It is important to mention that in every culture, there are conventional metaphors that are widely used by the community. For example, time is running out, the snow is a white blanket, life is highway...

What I like about metaphors is that they help us to associate an image to a word. In doing so, we can minimize the ambiguity of words and create a rapprochement between the vague concepts of a language and reality. I think metaphors can reveal much information about how one perceives the world, the other and the self. Metaphors are thus an important figure of speech that can help us communicate better with one another. I would like to conclude by a quote by Neil Postman who also uses a metaphor to speak about metaphor: "metaphor is not an ornament. It is an organ of perception. Through metaphors, we see the world as one thing or another."

Response to Zixuan (K.C., October 11, 2020)

Your discussion of the semiotics/semantics distinction is on target in the way it identifies the structural relationship between them:

semiotics is concerned with individual signs, while semantics is concerned with sentences. In *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, Ricoeur picks up that distinction again, but he takes it further, arguing that the sentence is more than the sum of the signs that make it up. The polysemy of the signs that make up a sentence – the fact that words always mean more than a speaker intends – never disappears, but the sentence works to tame it. When two people are talking, they can try to contain that polysemy by explaining, "No, that's not exactly what I meant – what I really meant was..." In written discourse, however, they can't, a point that will become the basis for Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach (and the humanistic method I designed this seminar to explore). (That idea of "No, what I really meant was..." is central in my book *The Art of Communication in a Polarized World*.)

Your example about the metaphors related to computers shows in a very concrete what I tried to express more abstractly in my close reading. If, as I argue, the structure of language is the structure of metaphor, then what we find when we examine language are words that point to other words – *document* describes a set of 1s and 0s on a drive, which itself might be dematerialized in the "cloud" (another metaphor), but we make sense of those 1s and 0s by referring to something more familiar made of paper. (But even that use is metaphorical. Professor Google tells me that the etymology of *document* is *docere*, meaning to teach. We understand the paper with signs written on it by referring back to the teachers who created it.)

As for a *good* metaphor? Ay, there's the rub. In many ways, your examples are those of living and dead metaphors, which in some ways brings us back to the etymological example above. We no longer hear "teacher" when we say *document* because, at that level, the metaphor is so routinized as to no longer be metaphor. The clarity you evoke seems to be that of living metaphor. Perhaps "good" is not the right measure. I'd ask instead, which metaphors are most productive of new meaning? In which metaphors do we still encounter the electric tension between the literal *is not* and the metaphorical *is*?

Response to Maryame (K.C., October 11, 2020)

You provide a useful overview here of Ricoeur's approach to metaphor. Indeed, I'm finding your close readings to provide very valuable summaries of the readings, which serve as a basis for the questions you pose. Thank you for that work. If this collaborative book has value in the future (and I hope it does), those summaries will be part of what creates that value.

The most interesting question you raise here (for me, at least) comes near the end, where you ask about the "right" meaning of a metaphorical phrase and the effort it takes to avoid misunderstanding. On the one hand, Ricoeur will address a similar question in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (briefly, when we're talking to each other, we can work to avoid misunderstanding by clarifying what we mean, but when we're writing, we can't). On the other, I'm wondering in how wide a range of situations the idea of the "right" interpretation is applicable. It's entirely possible that in most situations we're looking to convey the "right" interpretation, but my interest has long been in those situations where the ability to hold contradictory ideas together – both the "right" and "wrong" interpretation, if those words make sense here – matters more. I have no idea how to quantify that measure, however, which leads me to the question I'd be inclined to ask: in what situations is ambiguity valuable?

(On an interpretive note, I'm not sure that Ricoeur disagrees with Aristotle *tout court*, but rather that he finds in Aristotle two competing notions of metaphor, which allow him to develop the substitution and tension models in the final studies. It's through the act of ennobling common speech, as Aristotle describes writes, that metaphor creates new meaning. I also interpret Ricoeur's discussion of rhetoric as being about the way the study or field of rhetoric developed historically, in particular in French universities. One of the challenges of this type book, however, with its magisterial approach, is distinguishing the subtleties between Ricoeur's different modes of quoted speech.)

Response to Maryame (Z.Z., October 11, 2020)

You are doing an excellent summary of Ricoeur's work. It is quite informative.

I think Ricoeur's attitude towards rhetoric and metaphor is interesting and intriguing. I am glad you bring up this point, as I did not mention this in my close reading. He admits that metaphor has a rhetorical function, which is amputated from treatise on argumentation (13). My question is why Ricoeur considers rhetoric as something superficial since it is part of metaphor. It is a rhetorical function, as well as poetic function, that makes metaphor what it is. In my opinion, when making a metaphor, we still need to obey the rhetorical fundamentals so that the metaphor itself is reasonable and persuasive. I think rhetoric also deals with the verbal interaction, but in a broader sense – not with words, but with sentences or even paragraphs. Rhetoric lubricates the correlation between words and their contexts to make the general more rationale. So personally, I do not entirely buy Ricoeur's argument.

I agree that metaphors can enrich the language. As I said in my close reading, metaphor can also familiarize people with a new-born abstract concept ("My Computer" is way better than "Disk/File Manager," and "Network neighbourhood" is more understandable than "Shared Computers"). In this process, language itself is evolving and expanding its applicability because it uses pre-existing concepts to express something new. So it does contribute to the polysemy of lexical entities.

I also think metaphor is quite restricted to a specific area and culture. The hidden prerequisite of Ricoeur's first principle of metaphor is, in my perspective, that people share the same understanding of the connotations and the secondary meaning. For example, Chinese speakers can hardly guess the meaning of the metaphor "a rain check" because it never appears in the Chinese context. English speakers can never get the hang of "give you some colours to see" (meaning "I will hit you") vice versa. Hence, to figure

out the meaning of a metaphor in different languages is also a pleasure.

Response to Kyle (Z.Z., October 11, 2020)

Your mention of Maitland's book *What Is Cultural Translation?* helps me understand Ricoeur's idea better.

As Ricoeur says that words have no "proper" meaning on their own, can we say that every word is a metaphor to the meaning they actually represent? We can associate Ricoeur's notion with Saussure's signifier/signified. We need special training, or we need someone to teach us that this particular signifier refers to that designated signified. For example, we create a correlation between the word "apple" and that specific kind of fruit. My question is also related to your argument that "to talk about language, we must resort to metaphor." Can we say "apple" is initially "meaningless"? And the reason why we think it meaningful is that we regard the word "apple" as a metaphor to the notion of that kind of fruit. My assumption may be more reasonable when we learn a new language. One who has never learn Chinese will not know the meaning of "凯尔" is Kyle. In other words, can we say that the essence of learning a foreign language is actually learning the correlation between different metaphors and the meaning behind the signs?

With respect to the title of Maitland's book, what on earth is cultural translation? As I mentioned in my response to Maryame, metaphor is restricted closely to a special culture. So what is the best solution to translate when coming across the metaphor such as "a rain check" or even "some colours to see"? How can we be unsure whether the metaphor or the language will not be misunderstood in the world nowadays?

Response to Kyle (M.I., October 11, 2020)

I am interested in translation, so I am definitely going to read the book of Sarah Maitland. Thank you so much for suggesting it.

In your close reading, you mentioned several important ideas. In reading the passage of Sarah Maitland, we can enumerate several interesting ideas that deserve, in my opinion, to be brought up. First, the mystery that a metaphor contains this is what is appealing to the reader or hearer. This mystery catches our attention and makes up think of the possible interpretation of this metaphor. Second, the existence of the two possibilities "is" and "is not" in a metaphorical phrase might be confusing for us readers. Metaphor is an essential linguistic strategy that one can resort to when one cannot find a direct way to express an idea. Metaphor attributes new meaning to a word. So, words embrace other meanings when they are used metaphorically, finding meaning beyond their intrinsic meaning. Ricoeur's opinion about words is, for me at least, questionable. To me each word has an intrinsic meaning attached to it, but its meaning becomes vocal and active only in a given context. So, by examining the context one can decode the meaning of a given word.

Your phrase "to talk, we have only metaphor at our disposal" is also catchy and leads one to question it. I find metaphor a useful device to communicate especially about difficult notions. Sometimes, we use metaphor to help our hearer understands easily the meaning of certain concepts. Edelman suggested that "Metaphor and myths are devices for simplifying and giving meaning to complex and bewildering sets of observations that evoke concern" (as cited in Mio 1997, 117). Also, Lakoff and Johnson claims that "abstract concepts are not complete without metaphors. For example, love is not love without metaphors of magic, attraction, madness, union, nurturance, and so on" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 272). Therefore, metaphors are an important tool to simplify complex concepts and make them concrete and easy for the hearers.

To conclude, I believe that every metaphor has a literal and figurative meaning. To figure out the meaning of a metaphor, I personally tend to observe carefully the context of the whole utterance to find cues that will help me first to dismiss all non-

probable interpretations. In doing so, I am usually left with the one possible interpretation.

Response to Zixuan (M.I., October 11, 2020)

Your close reading is very interesting, thank you. Your question about why does simile appeal less to the hearer than metaphor? is a great one but not an easy and I don't think you will find a clear-cut answer to it. As every individual is different and some people may prefer to use explicit comparison (simile) rather than implicit comparison (metaphor). Others may use simile thinking it requires less effort to interpret them. On the contrary, metaphor is in indirect way and one needs to think to find the adequate interpretation.

On another note, a metaphor is qualified as "good" or effective, in my opinion, when it accomplishes its function. Edelman considers political metaphors to be effective when they are used to justify courses of action especially in times of high public anxiety (as cited in Mio 1997, 118). He also suggested that in politics, it is not important to use new metaphors to stir the public opinion but to use simple metaphors that can be repeated easily and thus "become symbolic or coded speech" (as cited in Mio 1997, 119).

To sum up, the world of metaphor is a labyrinth and it is still a hot topic for research. The good news is that in every culture, you will find people who use it spontaneously in their daily lives. I personally love using them because a metaphor is a concise language.

Further responses (K.C., October 12, 2020)

One of the joys of this class is the thoughtful exchange. Never have I had students read so carefully. By the same token, one of the challenges is that I don't have time to reply in as deep a way as I would like. So I'm going to sketch out some brief ideas here. (Since both of you mentioned translation, Maitland's book is great because of the way she looks beyond the rewriting of texts in new languages. My

book *The Art of Communication in a Polarized World* addresses a similar set of themes. Actually, all my work does, although *Art* provides the most theoretical account of how meaning transforms in discourse.)

I would caution against the idea of "intrinsic" meaning. One way to think about this is to hearken back to Saussure's idea that the link between the signifier and signified is arbitrary. Another way is to pay close attention to the idea that (as Maryame writes) "by examining the context one can decode the meaning of a given word." I think what Maryame is referring to here would be akin to authorial intent — we can use context to discern, to greater or lesser degrees, what a speaker wants to say. But there's a limit there, too, in that words always evoke more for listeners than speakers intend, in part because speakers and listeners have different life experiences. There's always an idiosyncratic dimension to meaning.

That limit becomes more acute the more distance there is between a speaker (or writer) and a listener (or reader). When two people are in the same room, one can try to correct the misunderstandings of the other. But what if they're not? What if the author has died, and all we have are the texts they left? The problem is that even our access to the context in which they wrote is mediated. Consider the challenge a religious scholar faces, for instance, in interpreting a foundational text. This is a central theme in hermeneutics. If I wanted, say, to understand the Bible as its authors understood it, I have to recognize that my interpretive horizon is different from theirs (assuming I can even identify who exactly the authors were). They used words differently than I do — *logos* in the book of John, for instance, evokes something very different from *word*, as it is usually translated in English.

Of course, I can make a study of those differences. How, I might ask, did the author of the book of John conceptualize *logos*? Well, I might read what contemporary writers said about it. But they'll be using words differently than me, too. So I might read what medieval authors said about it, but there, too, we use words to mean different things. The problem is infinitely recursive: try as I might,

the best I can do is gain an approximate sense of the context. (In a nutshell, this is what H.-G. Gadamer [2004] calls "historically effected consciousness" in *Truth and Method*.)

If that's all I can do, then there's no way for me to grasp the intrinsic sense of a word. (What would "intrinsic" mean in such a situation? Intrinsic for whom? These questions get us back to the problem of authorial intent.) Which leads me to reformulate a question both of you pose in different ways. Rather than asking what makes a *good* metaphor, or how we use metaphor to express new (unambiguous) ideas, I'd ask, how does the tension between the literal and figurative senses of a metaphor help us see something new? If this idea of metaphor is a hammer, what constitutes the nail?

5. Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*

The explanation and interpretation on imaginary world (Z.Z., October 15, 2020)

The first thing I feel fascinated by is Ricoeur's thesis on the "imaginary" world (111) brought up through words. Ricoeur argues that the world is represented by writing in lieu of the world presented by speech, but this imaginary world is itself a creation of literature (ibid.). Ricoeur's notion reminds me of the novel collection *Call to Arms* written by Xun Lu. I can still remember that when I was reading these stories, I thought that what Lu was describing was something that really happened to him, and they were realistic. It was not until later that I was told that all of them were fictionalized. The reason why I was unable to distinguish the reality and the imaginary world created by Lu is the anonymous narrator "I" throughout the novel. Despite that, other factors still play an important role: the setting of the story in his hometown, the fact that "I" am of a similar age to the author, etc.; one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the stories in this collection is that Lu uses the first pronoun for all the narratives. As a result, it was the subject of speech who deceived me. I was dragged into the world where the words become words for themselves (110). In the interpretation process, I situate myself in the "hometown," which Lu creates and in the closure of this place (115). The "closure of the narrative" (118) shows that it is difficult for readers to detach themselves from the context, but they unconsciously emerge into it. According to Ricoeur, it is not Lu but the works that serve as a speaker (111). Furthermore, the (physical and temporal) distance between Lu and his readers adds to its credibility. Our interpretation makes the realization of the words possible. However, is Lu standing beside the text and gazing at his readers? I would

probably hold a negative attitude and propose every "I" in different stories instituted by the text and make the conversation with readers. My question is, why does Ricoeur say that the text is the very place where the author appears?

If we look back a little, it is also interesting to see Ricoeur's discussion on the relation between text and discourse. In Ricoeur's view, speech, or discourse, can return to its reality, which turns towards the real reference (110). On the contrary, text is a fixed inscription of discourse that enables the latter to be conserved (107-8). Different texts are also interconnected as each text is free to enter into relation with all the other texts (110). This can be analogized to our academic writing since the essence of writing an academic article is a dialogue with others. As a result, we need to cite others' work, and, therefore, we have references. We can incorporate infinite sources from elsewhere as we wish (but unnecessary). Just as Kyle always says at the end of the email exchange, "I wish I had more time to develop them." According to my understanding, when dealing with texts, we can bring in as many other "parallel spaces" – in Ricoeur's term, reality – as we wish. This is hard to achieve with speech because it is not fixed, and it is more instantaneous.

Another point I feel puzzled by is Ricoeur's contention that reading is not a dialogue with the author through his work but an exchange of questions and answers (108). Why is there no communication in this process (ibid.)? Why does he think the author's relation and the book are complete and intact only after the author is dead (109)? My understanding is that because we are not exchanging opinions with the author himself when reading the book (108), we need to get rid of the author's influence on the book as much as possible. If the author is alive, he might change his thesis under the influence of his readers. As a consequence, it is not "fixed."

The two fundamental attitudes in regard to a text – explanation and interpretation – are further discussed. While traditionally, the correlation between two methods is "confronting one another in the act of reading" (Ricoeur 1981, 111), I tend to stand

with Ricoeur's proposition that two methods are indefinitely opposed and reconciled (126). Although, personally, I prefer the interpretative reading.

The modern definition of explanation stems from the perspective of language (Ricoeur 1981, 119). Hence, in my understanding, the explanation requires more reading of the words themselves, rather than bringing in other references. It is more objective as the words are fixed on paper, and the readers cannot deviate too much from the texts. However, it seems my notion towards explanation is more or less shifted from Ricoeur's, as he explains later that to explain is to bring out the internal relations of dependence which constitute the statics of the text (123). Since the nature of explanation requires us to concentrate more on the linguistic aspects, how do you understand Ricoeur's expression "to bring out the structure"? Do you think either his or mine is contradictory to the essence of explanation?

Interpretation, on the contrary, is to appropriate the intention of the text (123), and to follow the path of thought opened up by the text, to place oneself en route towards the orient of the text (ibid.). Its subjectivity originates from its characteristic of the reflective philosophy or, in Ricoeur's words, the "concrete reflection" (ibid). As, I suppose, reading is subjective, and this subjectivity is the reader himself (121). Unlike the rigorously linguistic method of explanation, readers can incorporate more external sources in interpreting as long as they are beneficial in reading the text, which is the embodiment of its subjectivity.

Speaking of appropriate, I am a supporter of historicism (but I am not against the *Logical Investigation*, either) because it is, to some extent, akin to the base/superstructure theory in Marxism. Both emphasize the importance of society, or in the Marxist term, base. The historicism contends that it is essential to consider a text as the expression of certain socio-cultural needs (Ricoeur 1981, 146), which is similar to Georgei Plekhanov's notion that "When a work distorts reality, it is a failure" (Milner 1994, 54). It can also be applied to the

Zhdanovist notion that art is expected to reflect the material use. Before I deviate too far from the topic, I want to reiterate the significance of historical background because each notion is brought to table, combining the social realities of the time. For example, Lazarsfeld and Morton proposed propaganda and considered it threatening, where the communication is a mode of domination (Mills and Barlow 2012, 140). They have this notion due to the Nazis and Fascism during World War II. However, we can always argue whether propaganda always poses a negative effect on today's society. Hence, to interpret a certain notion while not considering its historical background is unfair.

How to interpret a text? (M.I., October 16, 2020)

In reading a text or a discourse, one unconsciously engages in a process of interpretation. This is not a straightforward process as several factors may intervene in shaping the meaning of a text in question. Ricoeur in his book emphasizes that the writing-reading relation is different from the speaking-hearing relation partly because the reader is unidentified for the text. Ricoeur claims that "all discourse is realised as an event; all discourse is understood as meaning" (Ricoeur 1981, 96). In fact, the questions of understanding a text, of how to gain access to the world of the work and the mind of the author are central in all interpretation theories.

In my close reading, I will introduce a few concepts and elements that were mentioned in Ricoeur's book, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, that will help us as readers to interpret a given text. It is important to mention that hermeneutics aims to describe any efforts at understanding and interpreting any written or verbal communication. Hence, hermeneutics deals with the methodology of interpretation. In studying hermeneutics, Ricoeur is clearly favoring an ontological approach because "hermeneutics is not a reflection on the human

sciences, but an explanation of the ontological ground upon which these sciences can be constructed" (15).

To interpret a text, one may follow different theories of interpretation. For example, Schleiermacher suggests two types of interpretation: grammatical interpretation and technical interpretation. The former deals with the characteristic of discourse. The latter deals with "the singularity, indeed to the genius, of the writer's message" (7). The problem with these two types is that they cannot be applied at the same time; the focus should be exclusively either on the language or the individual author. Also, Schleiermarcher suggests Romantic hermeneutics, which aims to "understand an author as well as and even better than he understands himself" (6). This approach focuses on the writer's intention and knowing his inner psychic state.

Ricoeur strives to suggest another alternative to both theories. He suggests considering the text as a "worldless and authorless object." So, here the focus should be on the structure of the text. The text here is considered as a simple system of signs (*langue*) and (the speech) part is overlooked (114-115).

Dilthey, in interpreting a text, makes a clear distinction between the two terms *explanation* and *understanding*. These terms cannot exist together. In natural sciences the scientist suggests a hypothesis and tests it. So, the natural sciences are explanatory sciences and require observation and explanation. Human sciences, on the hand, calls for understanding the mental life of the individual. In this case, to understand the writer, we connect with his mind indirectly through his writing. We rely on our shared life and human experiences. Interpretation is then a subcategory of understanding "inner life [as] given in external signs which can be perceived and understood as signs of another mental life" (112). Ricoeur rejects this separation; for him, understanding and explanation tend to overlap and to rely on each other. He thinks of understanding as understanding a text as a whole. Neither the whole text nor any individual part can be understood without reference to one another;

and hence, it is a circle. Explanation is about revealing the range of propositions and meanings. In other words, another interesting way to understand or interpret a text is to apply the principle of hermeneutic circle. To do so, one needs to take a piece of discourse that has a message, divide it into smaller parts, take each of these parts and relate it back to the whole work. By going through the hermeneutic circle, one gains a higher level of understanding of the discourse. This circle stresses that the meaning of a text must be found within its cultural, historical, and literary context. Ricoeur confirms that "the correlation between explanation and understanding, between understanding and explanation, is the 'hermeneutical circle'" (183).

Ricoeur argues that the introduction of reference in literary texts provides a different approach to the concept of interpretation:

> It implies that the meaning of a text lies not behind the text, but in front of it. The meaning is not something hidden, but something disclosed. What gives rise to understanding is that which points towards a possible world by means of the non-ostensive references of the text. [...] Disclosure plays the equivalent role in written texts as ostensive references play in spoken language. (139)

Thus, interpretation relies on the understanding of the suggested worlds that are opened up by the non-ostensive references of the text. This notion of understanding the proposed world is essential in the interpretation process. To understand is not to project oneself into the text; it is to receive an enlarged self from the apprehension of proposed worlds which are the genuine object of interpretation (144–145).

It is important to mention that the interpretation effort takes shape gradually. In other words, understanding starts with a guess and in interpreting a given discourse. We tend usually to test our guesses, to look for validation. In fact, we move from "naive interpretations to critical interpretations, from surface interpretations to depth

interpretations. However, it is depth interpretation which gives meaning to the whole process" (182).

I find that some of Ricoeur's statements questionable. For example, he says, "I like to say that to read a book is to consider its author as already dead and the book as posthumous. For it is when the author is dead that the relation to the book becomes complete and, as it were, intact" (109). To what extent this statement is plausible? I personally believe that the relation between an author and a book doesn't end with the author's death. He himself admits later on that it is very hard to disassociate between the meaning of a discourse and the intention of the author.

I remember, during my high school years, before reading a piece of literature be it a poem or a novel. The first assignment the teacher asks is to study the biography of the author in an attempt to find elements in his life/world that may help us-readers interpret the work. So, in a sense by understanding the world of the author, we can grasp the meaning of his book. Therefore, "interpretation concerns essentially the power of the work to reveal a world, then the relation of the reader to the text is essentially his relation to the kind of world which the text presents" (144).

If we ask a group of students to interpret the same discourse, I am sure that they will come up with different interpretations. Does this plethora of interpretations benefit or harm the piece of work? One of my professors used to say that some readers may come up with interpretations that are unknown to the author himself. With this in mind, in interpreting a text do we create a new meaning for the text. If so, is this a positive thing? An added value for the text? Aren't we simply destroying the text and causing it to lose its relevant meaning?

Explaining *erklären*, understanding *verstehen* (K.C., October 16, 2020)

I want to flesh out one of Ricoeur's key points. The "central problem" of hermeneutics, he says, is "the opposition, disastrous in my view,

between explanation and understanding" (Ricoeur 1981, 3). When he says "explanation," he is referring to a specific idea within German philosophy, namely *erklären*; when he says "understanding," he is referring to *verstehen* (see, e.g., 179–80). The challenge, of course, is the way these terms function outside a logic of translation: in a general sense, *erklären* translates as *declare*, *explain*, *state*, *announce*, and that's only the beginning (according to linguee.com). But its specific meaning within the hermeneutical tradition is tied to the history of its use from Johann Martin Chladenius through Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey to Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer. In that respect, words like *declare* or *explain* cannot capture its meaning: they do not evoke the same history. (The same is true of *verstehen*.)

So how do we reconstruct the meaning of "explanation" (standing in for, but not translating, *erklären*) and "understanding" (standing in for, but again not translating, *verstehen*)?[NOTE 1] One approach is through a close reading of Ricoeur's argument. He repeats the terms enough that we can pick up clues about how others have used them. He writes, for instance:

> From one point of view, the understanding of metaphor can serve as a guide to the understanding of longer texts, such as a literary work. This point of view is that of explanation; it concerns only that aspect of meaning which we have called "sense", that is, the immanent pattern of discourse. From another point of view, the understanding of a work taken as a whole gives the key to metaphor. This other point of view is that of interpretation proper; it develops the aspect of meaning which we have called "reference", that is, the intentional orientation towards a world and the reflexive orientation towards the self. (133)

Or later:

> I want now to show in what way "explanation" (*erklären*) requires "understanding" (*verstehen*) and brings forth in a new way the inner dialectic which constitutes "interpretation" as a whole. [...] To understand a text is to follow its movement from sense to reference, from what it says, to what it talks about. (180)

Another approach is to go back to the philosophers who developed these terms. Here I turn to *The Hermeneutics Reader*, edited by Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (1985). (I read it this summer, so often, in fact, that my then-five-year-old son learned the word *hermeneutics*. In the citations that follow, I'll refer back to the essays as anthologized in the *Reader*, rather than cite each essay individually.) In the table below, I indicate the dimensions of *erklären* and *verstehen* investigated by a series of German philosophers, as well as the people we have read in this seminar to whom Ricoeur responds:

Context	Authors	*Erklären*	*Verstehen*
German philosophers	Friedrich Schleiermacher	grammar	psychology
	Wilhelm von Humboldt	historical facts	historical imagination
	Johann Gustav Droyson	technological analysis	psychological analysis
	Wilhelm Dilthey	objective mind	individual mind
People on whom Ricoeur draws	Ferdinand de Saussure	*langue*	*parole*
	J.L. Austin	grammar	speech-act theory

Of the German philosophers, the most famous are Schleiermacher, Humboldt, and Dilthey. (I should note that my list stops artificially. I should also include Heidegger and Gadamer, but I ran out of time in my reading, and my memories of Gadamer from my graduate school days are too vague to incorporate here. It's worth noting, though, how frequently those five names show up in Ricoeur's work.) To be clear, the terms in each column are not synonyms for *erklären* or *verstehen.* Instead, they are the terms each philosopher, linguist, or theorist used to discuss the approaches of *erklären* and *verstehen* — they are pieces that contribute to a conceptual whole.

Consider Schleiermacher, who came to hermeneutics through Protestant theology. For him, grammatical analysis concerns the language that every act of speaking presupposes, while psychological analysis concerns the act of speaking itself. "Accordingly," he states,

> each person represents one locus where a given language takes shape in a particular way, and his speech can be understood only in the context of the totality of the language. But then too he is a person who is a constantly developing spirit and his speaking can be understood as only one moment in this development in relation to all others. (*Hermeneutics Reader,* 75)

The parallels with Saussure (and Austin) should be clear, although, in contrast to Saussure, Schleiermacher emphasizes the act of speaking over the system that makes it possible. He sees two steps in understanding a text: the "objective-historical," where we consider "the statement in [its] relation to the language as a whole," and the "subjective-historical," where we ask "how the statement, as a fact in the person's mind, has emerged" (83). Schleiermacher thought that speakers were generally unaware of their objective-historical circumstances and that, by consciously establishing that context, the practitioner of hermeneutics could come to "understand the text as well as and then even better than its author" (83).

Or consider Dilthey, who asked how we encounter (his word

was "apprehend") the world through experience. (His answer to that question would influence later thinkers too, especially Heidegger.) He proposed two ideas, the first of which he called the "objective mind," or "the manifold forms in which what individuals hold in common have objectified themselves in the world of the senses" (*Hermeneutics Reader*, 155). In other words, he saw the world as people came intersubjectively to understand it as stable. The second idea was that of individual experience, where people came to know and describe the "objective mind" from their own perspective. Like Schleiermacher, he was interested in the dialectic between objective mind and individual experience. He writes:

> The unique contribution of understand in the human studies [I suspect his word was *Geisteswissenschaften*, which Ricoeur translates as *sciences humaines* or, in English, *human sciences*] lies in this; the object mind and the power of the individual together determine the mind-constructed world. History rests on the understanding of these two. (158)

These are only two examples from the longer list in my table. How do they help us explain *erklären* and understand *verstehen*? In effect, what I've done here is move through the hermeneutic circle Ricoeur (and those on whom he builds) has established. To explain these terms, I've sought to understand the context in which they emerged, the synchronic snapshots of their use at different points in their evolution. To understand them, we can read Ricoeur's text against this context. But we do not stop at that level of reading. We go further by appropriating the texts — by giving ourselves over to the new world they open up.

But that is a close reading for another time.

Response to Zixuan and Maryame (K.C., October 17, 2020)

Thank you both for such thoughtful responses. I've been very pleased by your engagement with the texts, and this week is no exception.

Rather than respond to both of you independently, I'm going to write something a bit longer that (1) responds to key issues both of you raise, especially with respect to the status of the author, and (2) connects the dots between readings to show how Ricoeur, building on everyone we've read so far, challenges the epistemological basis for a range of methods that are frequently taken for granted in communication. (That was my intention when I was first mapping out my response to *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, but I took a detour instead through ideas related to *erklären* and *verstehen* in the history of hermeneutics, putting hermeneutic method into practice.)

(1) The status and role of the author

One point both of you raised was Ricoeur's unorthodox approach to authorship. Zixuan asks about the dialogic relationship (such as it is) between author and reader, a point that Maryame echoes. What does Ricoeur mean when he says that he imagines that a book's author is dead? Maryame also gives the example of her approach in high school of learning something about the author's biography in order to imagine the author's intent and thus better to grasp the author's intended meaning.

Indeed, Ricoeur's move — his appeal to the idea of distanciation (in a dialectical relationship with appropriation) — marks a fundamental break not only with historical approaches to interpretation, but also with common sense ideas of the purpose of texts. In effect, the questions you pose are very much the ones that scholars would ask if they adopted a more conventional hermeneutic approach. I think my *erklären/verstehen* example follows an approach along these more conventional lines — to interpret a text, we might first seek to understand its historical context, before turning to the authors working within it. (For what it's worth, the more I read of Schleiermacher & Co., the more I think Ricoeur overstates his point about overcoming the opposition between explanation and understanding. Although Schleiermacher & Co. attribute interpretive authority differently — they appeal to the author's intention, but Ricoeur does not — they're still very dialectical in their approach.)

The problem, as I see it, relates to ideas of intention (a term with a rich history in phenomenology, especially in the works of Husserl). One challenge is suggested in the following thought experiment. We might imagine that an author chooses words to express their intention, which they then commit to written form. (That's one common sense way to understand how texts work.) But those words, by virtue of their long history of use, will evoke different things for different people. It's their basic polysemic structure. Any time two people read the same text but interpret it differently, we see how polysemy is operating. In fact, this will happen with any sufficiently complex text. (As Zixuan intuits, even though I always wish I could say more, even if I did, I wouldn't exhaust what I have to say.)

So how do we determine which interpretation matches that of the author? Imagine we could ask the author, and the author says, "Well, what I really meant was..." Here's the paradox: however the author finishes that sentence, it will be subject to the *same* problem. The same two people might interpret the author's explanation about what they meant differently. So maybe they ask what the author meant in their explanation of what they meant, and the author responds, "Well, what I really meant was..." No matter how many explanations the author gives, each one will still evoke different things for our two readers. Through this process, the author and readers might refine their understanding of the text, but the readers will never arrive at a definitive answer to the question, *what did the author mean*? (Hence the criterion of probability in the evaluation of competing interpretations. Which does the text itself best support?)

But what about the author? Might *they* know that they meant? Maybe not. Here's the second challenge, where debates about intention in phenomenology matter. This response isn't the place to explore their subtleties, especially since Husserl (and others — I just know Husserl the best) provides a more rigorous, technical definition of "intention" than what common sense provides. But the key question I would ask is whether we ever know even our own minds

completely. Perhaps I think my intention in saying or writing something is one thing, but I'm motivated by psychological factors of which I'm not even aware. The operation of the mind is not something we can know easily or directly through observation.

(2) Method in the human sciences

Hence why Ricoeur (1981, 109) writes, "Sometimes I like to say that to read a book is to consider its author as already and and the book as posthumous." He's shifting interpretive authority away from the author and their intention (which is fundamentally unknowable to us, and possibly even to the author) to the texts themselves (and the world they open up, as Zixuan shows).

This move — this challenge to the author's authority — is not original to Ricoeur. Michel Foucault (1971) makes a related move when he identifies the idea of the author as a device for controlling discourse (e.g., when someone makes an appeal to "what the author meant" as a way to disqualify competing interpretations). So does Roland Barthes (1977), who declares the "death of the author" precisely to challenge the interpretive authority we attribute to the author.

If the author is not the source of meaning, then, who or what is? For Ricoeur, it's the text itself. It exists in a knowable state. Texts provide a set of words in a stable order (sometimes more stable than others, but stable enough). To interpret them, we employ the hermeneutic circle that Maryame traces out. We make guesses to explain a text, and we validate them by referring back to the text itself, along the lines in figure 5.1.

Effectively, we have shifted the terms of the dialectic. Rather than *erklären* (in its different dimensions and approaches, such as the one proposed by Saussure), the objective dimension of our analysis derives from the text itself — the words arranged in their more-or-less stable form, available to anyone who can read them. And rather than *verstehen* (in its different dimensions and approaches, too, such as that of Austin), the subjective dimension is what we bring to

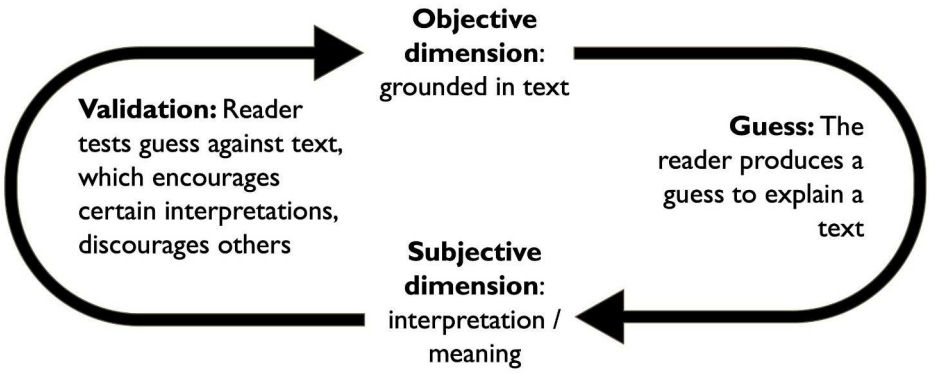


Figure 5.1. The objective and subjective dimensions of textual interpretation, according to Ricoeur

interpretation, the meaning we make of the words we have before us. (See Ricoeur [1981, 165–74] for a detailed working through of this argument.)

The reward for our efforts is the world that a text opens up. Zixuan gives the example of Xun Lu's *Call to Arms*. Ricoeur (1981, 163) gives the example of the

> the "world" of Greece [e.g. in Homer], not to designate for those who lived them, but to designate the non-situational references which outlive the effacement of the first and henceforth are offered as possible modes of being, as symbolic dimensions of our being-in-the-world.

My kids are enthralled with Harry Potter, and I have long loved *Star Trek* – these also make good examples. I like these examples because they also help us grasp intuitively what appropriation – the dialectic counterpart of distanciation – feels like. We make these worlds our own. We inhabit them. They are not our inventions because they grow out of the texts we read (or watch, I suppose, in the case of *Star Trek*). They offer a type of freedom, not by removing constraints (we are still tied in our interpretation to the texts

themselves), but in the barriers they remove so we can travel into them in the first place. (When we read the manuscript to my book *How to Read Like You Mean It* in week 10, I plan to say more about appropriation.)

Where does this leave more familiar social scientific method? The metaphorical dimension of language (which I wrote about in response to *The Rule of Metaphor*) suggests that even statements intended as objective observation contain within them a metaphorical *is* and a literal *is not.* As much as technical language, which appears value-free, works to limit the range of ways readers or listeners might interpret a statement, it cannot eliminate ambiguity entirely. There is always room for competing interpretations. This is especially true when researchers try to attribute meanings to actions: to go from an action to a meaning is to transfer "from one realm to another, non-intersecting realm" (Ricoeur 1975/2003, 280). Hence, it's metaphor, as I wrote last week.

There is, of course, still more I'd like to say, especially with respect to what conventional social scientific method can reveal about metaphor. Whatever the challenge metaphor poses to social scientific method, the inverse is also true. But I've already said enough for a "short" response!

Response to Kyle and Maryame (Z.Z. October 17, 2020)

Thank you for both of your close readings. I think I will do the same thing as Kyle did to respond to both of you in one to make it less redundant. (Kyle, you can always bring us some incredibly rich thoughts from other books. That's probably what we are going to learn during our training.)

After reading your critical opinions towards Ricoeur, I want to rechallenge his thought again (I feel that I am especially suspicious about his notion). Although I am with him that we should not separate the explanation and understanding when reading, I question his argument that the meaning is in front of the text, and it is

something disclosed. By saying this, Ricoeur assumes that the author encloses an "orthodox" underlying notion in his text. That's to say, there is only one correct understanding of the text.

However, this is not appropriate, and, at least in my opinion, it is even contradictory with the notion of "interpretation." We interpret a text based on our knowledge and various references, which is entirely different among scholars. How can we expect that two scholars reach the same conclusion – not to say this is probably plagiarism nowadays? I would say, we are probably dealing with a "Schrödinger's disclosure " – what is enclosed beneath the text is in constant change while we are adopting different methods to interpret it. Even a minor change in the approach might lead us to an entirely different conclusion. As a result, you never know what you will get, not to say to find out the author's orthodox interpretation.

Furthermore, as Kyle points out, we might imagine the author's intention through the words. "But those words, by virtue of their long history of use, will evoke different things for different people." Even if we ask the author himself, he might come up with a different conclusion from the time when he finished the book. Hence, in the process of interpreting, I contend that the author and reader are two independent concepts. The author may encode certain ideas in his text, but it is our readers' freedom to decode these underlying notions.

Response to Kyle (M.I., October 18, 2020)

Thank you very much Kyle for your close reading. As usual, you have explained several key concepts. The dialectic between explanation and understanding is indeed an important key term that has captured my attention alongs with the concept of intention. If we observe the communication between doctors and patients, we will find that misunderstanding often occurs because there is a gap between what the doctor says/describes/explains and what the patient understands. In fact, patients seem to struggle to understand doctors' message as most of the time, doctors use a concise language which is full of medical terminology. Also, doctors tend to apply the principle of

distanciation when communicating with the patient, perhaps in an attempt to stay objective and not to get emotionally involved. Indeed, many doctors fail to do so as their human side takes precedence over the professional attitude. Patients, on the other hand, struggle to understand the different information regarding their health issues. I find that patient, often in shock, refuses to accept his illness at first. But then, they try to discover and gain access to this world – appropriation, by asking direct questions to the doctor, looking for information online or seeking a second medical opinion. The objective is to understand better their health problem and know how to recover from it.

According to Schleiermacher, "there is hermeneutics where there is misunderstanding" (quoted in Ricoeur 1981, 6). So, when we communicate our main concern is to avoid misunderstanding. With this in mind, it is relevant to mention that one of the main challenges in translation and interpretation is the potential loss in meaning. When we communicate, we use verbal and non-verbal signs. Words and non-verbal gestures in one language may be understood differently in another language. For me the translator's job is difficult especially when there is no communication with the author as a translator can't ask for validation or explanation. On the opposite, an interpreter is privileged as he can ask both sides, when in doubt, to repeat, confirm, clarify their ideas. In interpretation, non-verbal communication is extremely important to take into account as it helps the interpreter both to understand and communicate the message. However, what I like, sometimes I dislike it for the same reason, about translating a text, is that there is always room to improve your translation, you can always go back to your text, change words. Luckily, in interpretation you can't really do that as your job as an interpreter ends with the end of your assignment.

In a perfect world, to avoid these problems related to misunderstanding especially in writing, we can ask each author when writing a book to submit an interpretation guide. This will give readers clues and guide them in their interpretation process.

Response to Zixuan (M.I., October 18, 2020)

What I like about your close reading is that you always invite us to your world. Thank you for giving us an exposure to the Chinese culture. We can all relate to your experience with the novel collection *Call to Arms*. This is appropriation, as Kyle mentioned: you joined this world so for you everything seems real. I had a similar experience when I was a child, whenever I read a small novel for children or watched a cartoon, for me this is my world. This is where I want to belong, and I remember that I was very sad whenever the end of the novel or of the cartoon didn't meet my expectations. This is a very positive thing that has enriched our experience. However, when I read your close reading, I thought, I couldn't avoid it (sorry), of the stories we hear and read online about children whose behavior have changed after watching or playing violent video games. Some of them unfortunately have even passed away or put an end to their life after playing harmful electronic games. I think these violent games use psychological means to manipulate children. Isn't this a case of appropriation? Children join this harmful world and quit their real world. How can we help children figure out how to dissociate themselves from this imaginary world? As this world might be dangerous. How this world of addicted games manipulates the children?

Further responses (K.C., October 18, 2020)

Zixuan: I think one problem is Ricoeur's rather opaque spatial metaphor. In what way is meaning "in front of a text"? It's interesting that you interpret it through another spatial metaphor, namely an "underlying" meaning. But the idea that there is only one correct understanding of the text runs contrary to Ricoeur's idea of distanciation and appropriation, I think. Consider this description of appropriation: "Ultimately, what I appropriate is a proposed world. The latter is not *behind* the text, as a hidden intention would be, but *in front of* it, as that which the work unfolds, discovers, reveals. Henceforth, to understand is *to understand oneself in front of the text*" (Ricoeur 1981, 106). By placing the reader in front of the text, in the

same place as the world that reveals itself, he is emphasizing the relationship between reader and text, rather than emphasizing the world as such. The relationship between reader, text, and world is dynamic, which suggests to me that Ricoeur is not looking for a fixed, discoverable meaning. (Even if such a meaning existed, it is always distanced from us as readers.)

In that respect, I think you're in agreement with Ricoeur, in that you both are open to the possibility of diverging interpretations. Where you differ, I think, is in the status you attribute to the text. While there is not necessarily one "correct" interpretation, a text supports certain interpretations better than others. Ricoeur has bracketed off the author and the author's intention. In contrast to prior hermeneutic philosophers, he is not interested in what the author thought. He's interested instead in what the text *says*.

Maryame: I have a book to recommend: Lawrence Venuti's (2019) *Contra Instrumentalism*, in which he argues against an instrumentalist model of translation (premised on the idea that translations transfer meaning from one language and cultural context to another) and in favour of a hermeneutic model of translation (premised on the idea that translation is an inherently interpretive act). The book is even more polemical than most of what Venuti writes, but he explores themes very similar to what you evoke.

Note

1. This idea of a word that stands in for but does not translate another has been well explored in translation studies. Jacques Derrida, for instance, famously used *la relève* to translate the Hegelian notion of *Aufhebung*, and writers in English often leave *la relève* untranslated (see Derrida 1999; Venuti 2003). Ironically, perhaps, most anglophone scholars familiar with Derrida would also be familiar with Hegel and his idea of *Aufhebung*, which translators often render as sublimation. But there, too, sublimation stands in for, but arguably does not translate, *Aufhebung*. For further reading, see Lezra (2017) and Conway (2020b).

6. Selections from *Sharing Breath*, edited by Sheila Batacharya and Yuk-Lin Renita Wong

Know your body, know your power (Z.Z., October 23, 2020)

Surprisingly, we come across one of the most mysterious Chinese elements – Qigong – in our reading. While personally, though being a native Chinese, I support neither *Qigong* (as it is too esoteric and mysterious) nor TCM (as it is mostly based on experience rather than theoretical science), I find Ng's brand-new interpretation of decolonization fascinating. Ng provides several contexts to illustrate her notion. In terms of Canadian society, "colonization" refers to white male supremacy (Ng 2018, 35). In the university, it is the power relation between the classroom and the institution between the teacher and the students and that among students (ibid.). In Ng's notion, since power plays are enacted and physically absorbed by people, they are embodied – in other words, we have taken it for granted (36). Therefore, we are manipulated and bearing the hegemony exerted by power. The essence of Ng's definition of decolonization is that we ought to engage ourselves to free from ideas and ideology (51).

What interests me most in this part is the correlation between common sense and power. According to Gramsci and Leys, common-sense thinking is also powerful (or more precisely, "influenced by power") as it originates from hegemonic ideas that shape how we act and think (41). Thus, common-sense ideas are, to some extent, distorted. A lie repeated thousands of times will probably become the truth (this saying might be a little exaggerated). This is a reminder to

us as we need to stay alert on everything. We are making progress partly owing to the suspicion towards the natural, automatic and unconscious things in the world, which is in accord with Ng's notion of decolonization.

In the next chapter, Leon and Nadeau further discuss the embodied knowing in the context of the Indigenous world. While I will not focus too much on the text itself due to my limited knowledge of the Canadian Indigenous issue, I do find a connection between the text and my Arab-Canadian studies. I want to talk about the topic of "difference." Nadeau contends that difference is vital in the process of embodying as it is the distinction of our identity (Leon and Nadeau 2018, 58). From my point of view, the difference is the origin of numerous issues and conflicts: different colours, status, political philosophies, etc. Due to the discrepancies, we have an imbalance of power. According to Said's *Orientalism*, the dominator deems the dominated as "other" (Said 1995). Instead of self-assimilation, what Nadeau contends is that we should obtain this difference. The dominated may be eager to eliminate the discrepancy (Leon and Nadeau 2018, 58) out of a desire not to be identified as "other." However, this process suggests that the dominated have yielded to the dominator; furthermore, the complexity of the discrepancy is diminished. Said also proposes that, due to the imbalance of power, the dominator will speak for and represent the dominated (Said 1995, 6). When it comes to indigenous studies, we tend to understand them in English or even judge them based on our values, implying they have to be assimilated like us. On the contrary, Leon and Nadeau adopt a series of local protocols to understand Indigenous people by learning their language, revealing their respect towards the indigenous culture and the difference.

This also reminds me of my research area – Arab-Canadian cinema studies. I want to find out how the double (sometimes even multiple) identities will influence their creations. Do they give in to the dominant culture and hide their personalities? Or do they face the differences directly and seek common ground with different values?

Actually, my research can be extended beyond the Arab-Canadian cinemas, but all transcultural products are all confronting the same question: difference or assimilation.

I will stop here for a while and table a new thesis (it may seem radical): in my opinion, there is no cultural adaption but assimilation. The incentive for us to adapt to the culture is the underlying notion of power: we think we are the "other" to the native culture. Motivated by a desire to escape this strangeness and under the exotic culture's pressure, we assimilate our culture in the end. Ngugi wa Thiong'o expresses something similar to "the cultural bomb," which "annihilate[s] a people's belief in their names, languages, environment, unity, capacities and themselves" (Stewart 2018, 281).

Stewart also discusses poetry in the context of embodiment. Poetry deepens Stewart's embodied inquiry owing to its ability to work with visceral experience and the unconscious through language (Stewart 2018, 291). In my understanding, is Stewart implying that there is also a sort of "domination" in other styles as she later states, "poetry can be [...] a response to colonization and oppression, and possibly a tool for decolonization" (293–4). For example, for novels, there has to be the beginning, the climax, and the ending; for prose, you still need a hidden clue among the lines. As a result, you are unconsciously following the rules set up by the predecessors — again, there is dominated and dominator. On the contrary, as for poetry, it is more flexible with forms, spaces, the arrangement of words, patterns, etc. (ibid.) compared to other styles. Therefore, poetry is more suitable for expressing what is felt and what truly reflects the author's state of mind — more embodying (I am unsure if I can use it in this way). Since poetry constantly associates with metaphor, it can help us approach topics that are not safe (292) because we are no longer dealing with sensitive topics directly. In all, poetry is an ideal means to get away from the dominion, either the realistic one or an abstract one, and make us express freely.

The potential benefits of embodied learning (M.I., October 23, 2020)

There are different ways of learning and teaching in academic contexts. Roxana Ng clearly states at the beginning of her article that she is unsatisfied with the existing methods of teaching that considered education as disembodied. Educators focus on the mind and disregard completely the role of the body and spirit in the production and quest for knowledge. In her article, she enumerates several benefits of embodied learning. She confirms that this connection of both the bodies and minds injects excitement in the process of teaching and learning (Ng 2018, 36).

Ng develops a method of teaching that combines both the mind, body, emotion and spirit (37). This later will be known as embodied learning which was integrated into her academic teaching. A definition of this key term seems necessary at first. Embodied learning is "a process of becoming attuned to sentient-social experience – that is, of learning to be aware of, and responsive to, our lived experience as jointly constituted through sentient and social relations" (5). In other words, embodied learning suggests a holistic approach to education that calls for the participation of the mind, the body, the emotions and spirits. Ng is interested in how our interpretation of the bodily knowledge shapes our behavior and our perception of the world and how this bodily experience participates in the construction of knowledge (8).

One of the significant goals of embodied learning is to decolonize teaching and learning. For Ng, applying embodied learning through the use of Qi Gong and TCM in her teaching has fostered critical thinking and changed mentalities. She mentioned that women's image is still marginalized. Embodied learning can help to promote critical reasoning and question women's position in society. The aim is to change behaviors that foster the "reproduction of dominant-subordinate relations" (41). Thus, embodied learning can promote change, but only, Ng argues, if we can reflect on our behavior

and observe it impartially to determine how to change it (ibid). Embodied learning can enable personal as well as social change (ibid).

The feedback that Ng has received from her students demonstrates the positive impact of embodied learning on their lives. For example, the use of meditation and other forms of embodied spiritual practices can help women victims of sexual, physical abuses and violence to decolonize the body as an important step in the healing journey. The author argues that our experiences are saved in the body even when we have no memory of an event, the body seems to remember everything. So, in this process of healing through embodied learning, the body has to reconnect with those bad memories and painful experiences to recover. In other words, decolonizing the body is necessary in order to heal and to regain control over the body (46). Embodied learning has also helped one of Ng students to prepare for her surgery and to facilitate her recovery.

In short, spiritual practices such as meditation and qigong help to connect with the body to understand the mind, behavior and actions: "these practices enable one to develop the capacity to be mindful of one's thought and action" (44). They help understand the impact of our actions and raise awareness about our consciousness. This latter, the author argues, is embodied because it has both "a mind-intellect and a body-spirit dimension" (Ibid). If we understand how consciousness is made, we will be able to change it: "consciousness can be changed as we confront it and understand how it comes about" (ibid).

Similarly, the introduction of yoga can boost and enhance the learning process. Stewart confirms that yoga is part of her embodied learning: "Yoga has everything to do with my own embodied learning, helping me to ground myself and quiet the busy, critical mind that tells me I am *not enough*. It helps create a sense of space and rest, from which I am more open to learning of all kinds" (280). For Ng, the body is treated "as a site for knowledge construction" (45). Unsurprisingly, big companies nowadays host meditation classes and encourage employees to practice meditation and yoga to promote their well-

being and increase their productivity. For example, Steve Jobs integrated Zen mindfulness meditation to the corporate culture of Apple. This latter provides on-site yoga and meditation classes. Employees are encouraged to take 30-minute daily meditation breaks. Similar practices are observed in other multinational companies such as Google, Yahoo, Nike, to mention just a few (Lechner 2016).

One of the interesting points in this book is the use of certain key terms that belong to colonial history such as decolonize, resistance, resilience and oppression. The objective, in my view, is to stress the importance of decolonizing the process of learning through the integration of the body as an important pillar. The word decolonize is used metaphorically. For instance, decolonizing the body means to free the body from all toxic experiences one may have gone through in life to recover. Even the title of the article "Decolonizing Teaching and Learning Through Embodied Learning" aims to free teaching and learning from the traditional mindset which stipulates that the focus should be on the mind. Ng uses the concept of decolonization to "indicate the practices in which we can engage to free us from ideas and ideology, on the one hand, and action and behaviour, on the other, that serve as sources of separation" (51).

Young and Nadou recommend several educational tools to improve Indigenous-settler relationships and encourage Indigenous resurgence. In doing so, it is important to look for a common ground to build sustainable relationships. Decolonizing the body in this case requires an understanding of the value system, traditions of the Indigenous people. Young and Nadou suggest introducing the world of Indigenous people to settlers and asking them to share stories about their ancestors. This will increase settlers' engagement with Indigenous values. The objective is to create a culturally receptive environment which promotes intercultural understanding and respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples. In Canada, the names of the cities and provinces – such as Ottawa, Mississauga, Etobicoke, Ontario and Quebec – were given by Aboriginal people. In keeping them, the settlers recognize the historical ties of the

Indigenous people to the land. This is an attempt to honor Canada's Aboriginal heritage.

To conclude, embodied learning is a type of learning that asks one to connect with the mind, body, emotion and spirit. In education, we are not only educating the mind, but we are educating the whole body. So, how can we implement powerful embodied educational programs? And how can we convince educators about the importance of integrating the body in their teaching approach?

Embodied knowing: beyond immanent critique (K.C., October 23, 2020)

The impulse that shapes this seminar, as I've mentioned before, is to challenge taken-for-granted notions of method in the field of communication. There are two good reasons to do so: first, to broaden the field, and second, perhaps paradoxically, to use critique to *strengthen* conventional methods by grounding them in a more robust epistemology. I suspect that we'll touch on the second reason by the end of the seminar, but the first has been our focus.

To broaden the field, we have, up to this point, engaged in a form of immanent critique, which is to say, a critique that operates within the same epistemological bounds that have shaped the notions of method we are challenging. This epistemology is itself a product of history and culture. In broad strokes, we could call it "Western," although I dislike that term because it is inexact. We could also call it Eurocentric (better, because it gives us a more precise historical/geographic point of reference) or cartesian (better still, in my opinion, because it gives us an intellectual tradition, too). At the risk of oversimplification, this epistemology treats language as if it works in a relatively transparent way. What we've read up to this point, especially as it culminated in Ricoeur, suggests the opposite. Language is deceptive and slippery. (My close reading from October 8 makes this point in more detail.)

With *Sharing Breath* (and the books we'll read for the next two weeks), we come to a new form of critique, one grounded in a *different* epistemology. (We might call it a subaltern critique, for lack of a better term, but I'm not sure we need to name it.) If language betrays us, where do we turn? The authors of *Sharing Breath* propose at least two places: an embodied (rather than abstract or language-based) epistemology, and perspectives shaped by Indigenous ways of knowing. Often these places intersect: "Attention to the material aspects of pedagogy and decolonization coincides with a key concern in embodiment scholarship," write the editors of *Sharing Breath*, "that is, the importance of addressing more than solely discursive approaches to experience and knowledge production" (Batacharya and Wong 2018, 3).

The challenge posed by this approach comes in part from the way cartesian mind/body divisions (which take other forms, such as "rational/irrational, modern/primitive, cultural/natural, and social/biological") privilege the first element over the second — mind over body (Batacharya and Wong 2018, 10). But it is not enough simply to privilege the second instead. There's a trap to avoid — we must not reduce the body (both literally and as a metaphor) to our *account* of the body, which brings it back within a cartesian realm. We cannot *talk* our way into understanding embodied experience, even if scholarly work has long been — and still is — inextricably bound to language.

That trap is difficult to avoid. In fact, I'm struggling to write this close reading because I recognize that I am falling into it right now. That fact — I knew I'd face this dilemma — was another factor motivating the organization of this class. I wanted to adopt Alannah Young Leon and Denise Nadeau's (2018) approach in their chapter, albeit without the background knowledge that they have. Their chapter takes the form of a dialogue, as this class has taken (as I write in the preface, too). By employing a form where I must relinquish discursive control (not an easy thing for a professor to do!), I hoped to trick myself into a new mode of engagement, to give myself over to

the unresolved nature of dialogue, manifest in the idea that there is always more to say.

I'll end here by giving an example of what I mean. I write a lot. Sometimes writing comes easily. Sometimes it does not. Sometimes I feel like I'm swimming against the current. I might have an outline with all my points laid out from one end of my argument to the other, but I still can't write. I've learned to recognize this feeling as a sign that, for whatever reason, I don't *want* to write what I've laid out. Perhaps my argument is bad. Perhaps something else is on my mind. But the resistance I face is visceral – it's in my gut. Learning to recognize that my body knows something my mind does not – that is what I hope to find words to discuss in the next few weeks.

Response to Kyle (M.I., October 25, 2020)

Your close reading this time leads me to ask more questions. I guess this is because it is not easy to grasp this concept of embodied knowledge. Hui Niu Wilcox claims that embodied knowledge refers to actions that are produced and understood through "lived experiences, cultural performance, and bodily intelligence" (as cited in Knoblauch 2012, 51). This variety of sources of embodied knowledges may be ambiguous. Young mentioned that dance is also part of the bodily knowledge "dance therapy – if you move differently, you will think differently: that is, you can transform yourself through movement" (Young and Nadeau 2018, 69). We struggle sometimes to understand each other's verbal communication. How we can detect and then interpret one's embodied knowledge? Your sentence "my body knows something my mind does not" is complicating things further as if there is no internal communication between the mind and the body. How do we manage to communicate with one another? Does the body control the mind? Scientifically, it is the mind that controls and determines our body movements.

As an interpreter, I prefer to deal with people who speak with their body language, as this helps me to understand the message. It is impossible to read a person's mind because you cannot see it, but I can

read or at least guess the body language. Of course, to confirm that I understood the message correctly, I would just ask: did you mean...? Also, it is true that body language may sometimes betray us or reveal too much information about us, but it doesn't lie. We cannot say the same thing for the mind as we may think something and say something completely different.

Response to Zixuan (M.I., October 25, 2020)

First of all, it is interesting to know your opinion about TCM and Qigong. You have brought up a couple of great ideas, and I would like to comment on some of them. You said that "there is no cultural adaption, but assimilation." Personally, I prefer by far integration than assimilation and I believe that it is beneficial to integrate in a culture because your culture is valued, and your identity is respected. Whereas assimilation is a zero-sum game. What I love in Canada is that here, everybody is welcomed, and we can't really see that one identity is being promoted but everyone contributes, so to speak, in forming the Canadian Culture. Hence, I prefer to use the concept of "cultural mosaic" than "melting pot." I like the idea of the mosaic piece which acknowledges the existence of different ethnic groups and cultures who coexist within the same multicultural society.

So, by endorsing this cultural mosaic approach, I believe Canada helps people to feel a sense of belonging. By the same token, Young and Nadeau adopt this approach as they are interested in understanding the culture of Indigenous people to build sustainable relationships with them. In so doing, they stress the importance of mutually respecting differences:

> This dialogue is about allowing and holding up our differences. Allowing our voices to be distinct is part of being who we really are. I remember Elder Pnnal reminding me that we need to honour ourselves and be honest with who we are if we are going to continue to coexist and work together for survival on this planet. If we erase our difference, which is a

> real temptation for settlers, we do not allow for the complexity of Indigenous-settler relationships. (Young and Nadou 2018, 58)

Hence, one of the objectives of their article, in my view, is to rehabilitate the image of the Indigenous people (because they were marginalized in the past) and shed light on interesting aspects of their culture that shape their identity.

On a different note, you highlighted another interesting point about the use of poetry. In fact, the history of several countries such as Morocco and Algeria showed that poetry was used as a revolutionary tool to inspire and encourage the independence movements and popular resistance to continue their battle for independence. Jean Sénac, a famous pied noir poet of the Algerian Revolution, considers poetry as part of any resistance movement:

> resistance and poetry appear as a single blade where man relentlessly sharpens his dignity. Because poetry is conceived as dynamic, because it is "written by all", an "ignition key" with which the community moves and exalts itself, it is, in its fury, as in its serene transparency, in its mysteries as in its shamelessness, openly resistant. As long as the individual is hindered in his claim of total freedom, poetry will guard the outposts and brandish the torches. And Mallarmé himself affirmed our allegiance to the world of blue and lava when he assigned to us this rallying cry: "Give a purer meaning to the words of the tribe." (cited in Krienke 2014, 75)

Response to Kyle (Z.Z., October 25, 2020)

First of all, I am glad that I mentioned a similar concept with you in my close reading: the epistemology of the Western. In your case, the Western may not necessarily be related to the political power, but a particular rule, or a pattern, that has been engraved in our notion. I agree that writing is not an easy task because there are countless

grammar rules to follow in order to write sentences neatly. We also have a specific structure to fit our articles to be more organized and easier to read. However – allow me to deviate a little – who sets the definition of "easier"? Academia? Or the general public? In effect, each of us has become a contributor to the Western – we all help to reinforce the set of notions of easy-reading in our society. That is probably why Stewart thinks poetry is a perfect practice of embodiment language.

After your close reading, I realize that the essence of the Indigenous study is to free ourselves from the red tape and challenge taken-for-granted notions of the method in our field. The word "Indigenous" here refers to the words themselves, and we need to examine their correlation between signifier again and signified. If Qigong helps Ng's students through embodied learning, the Indigenous study might help us think outside the box. As you mention, language is deceptive and slippery; I believe it is us who give meaning to words. As a result, why cannot we be more creative and touch the essence of text/language more deeply?

Response to Maryame (Z.Z, October 25, 2020)

You mentioned how the educators should engage students to learn with the body; my assumption is that what if we extend the meaning of body here, and refer it to the students' self-awareness. For example, instead of teaching, cramming teaching, we need to figure out how we can engage students to find something new by themselves, such as by flipped instruction. It is the educators' job to engage students themselves so that they are the main part/body in class. As a result, they will understand better because it is they who figure out the course contents. Do you think it is reasonable to think like this?

Response to Zixuan (K.C., October 26, 2020)

Your close reading has (as I see it) two parts, and I'm curious what relation you see between them. The first relates to domination (and its attendant terms), the second to adaptation and assimilation. With

respect to the first, I think you've intuited one of Ng's reasons for focusing on TCM (about which I admit I know very little at all). The fact that it is based on experience rather than theoretical science – that seems to be its value. If you want to challenge hegemonic epistemologies (such as the cartesian epistemology shaping "theoretical science"), one effective way is to oppose it to a radically different way of knowing. Embodied experience provides exactly that – from within the dominant paradigm, it risks becoming illegible, in much the same way that from within the alternative paradigm of embodied forms of knowing, the cartesian approach is illegible. No longer is it a matter of one side convincing the other (as both will look upon the other with disdain). Instead, we've entered the realm of power.

That's where your second part is interesting. You declare "there is no cultural adaptation but assimilation," and I'm wondering exactly what you mean – "there is no form of cultural adaptation except for assimilation" or "there is no cultural adaptation; there is only assimilation"? Both seem to fit your explanation after that point with respect to the ways subaltern groups internalize the gaze of hegemonic groups. It is, as you point out, a question of power, but one more complex that the mere imposition of will.

Response to Maryame (K.C., October 26, 2020)

You pick up on one of the points I found most interesting between the different chapters, namely the idea, on the one hand, that scholars must guard "against the substitution of abstract, discursive readings of the term *colonization* for its concrete meaning: the repatriation of land and life" (Batacharya and Wong 2018, 5), and, on the other hand, the use of *decolonization* as a metaphor in some of the readings, especially later in the book. We have, yet again, a metaphor, and with it, the tension between a literal meaning (the repatriation of land) and a figurative meaning (the pedagogical enterprise). When I first read *Sharing Breath* this summer, I found the contrast striking. Why, I

wondered, did the editors include chapters treating decolonization as a metaphor? Or, more bluntly, how could the authors of those chapters get the idea so *wrong*?

Of course, they didn't get it wrong, so much as they opened a space for readers to investigate the tension between the literal and figurative meanings. (That's what I saw as I read the chapters last week.) More than that, as your close reading shows, they provided tools for readers to find ways that the figurative meaning (different forms of pedagogical practice) help make the literal forms of decolonization possible. The repatriation of land won't take place without education (something I write knowing full well that I claim to own the land where my house is located — these writers are addressing *me*). And education becomes a means by which we understand the literal task we settlers face.

7. Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*

What constitutes Indigenous methodologies? (Z.Z., November 4, 2020)

When I opened the book for the first time, I was wondering why we, as communicational students, need to learn the Indigenous methodologies as both of our research may concern little with the Indigenous studies ("Why Indigenous methodologies again?" was my real reaction). This time, I do not want to put forward my conclusions straight away. Instead, we will go through the book in a couple of questions.

However, before I start, the first question I want to ask, which supports all my following arguments, is that can we extend the scope of the Indigenous studies? That's to say, the word "Indigenous" stands for a broader meaning. It does not only stand for the Canadian Indigenous people but also all the minorities around the world. The minorities here are not only constrained to the number of populations, but an inferior position compared to the others. In fact, I find the usage of "the others" here is also intriguing because, strictly speaking, these minorities are "the others" to the majorities. By doing the Indigenous studies, we are gaining access to the world of the "other" (Kovach 2009, 28). Again, it brings up the issue of power. However, as we have discussed this in our previous opinion exchanges, I will not dwell on it here but proceed to other aspects of Indigenous methodologies.

The first thing is the role of language in the Indigenous research framework. Language is always the foundation of their culture for any nation – no exception for Indigenous peoples, either. Battiste (2000) argue that "Indigenous languages are the means for communicating the full range of human experience and are critical to

the survival of any Indigenous people. These languages provide direct and powerful ways of understanding Indigenous knowledge" (48). Similarly, Kovach (2009) suggests that Indigenous language constructs suggest a non-binary, complementary philosophy of the world (59). As a result, the foremost approach to study Indigenous peoples is to respect their language first. In my opinion, nevertheless, this is the ideal situation but is usually not fulfilled. On the one hand, in order to simplify the circulation of research, the non-Indigenous researcher will use their own languages (English will probably be the best option) to study the Indigenous culture; on the other hand, some of the meanings that are exclusive to the Indigenous language are lost during the translation process. Therefore, a dilemma comes up: the knowledge of the Indigenous language is required for a further understanding of Indigenous culture, but in order to make it available among academia, translation is necessary. One of the problems with colonialism is that it tries to maintain a singular social order by means of force and law, suppressing the diversity of human worldviews (Little Bear 2014, 77). Is it an inevitable cost we have to bear when it comes to the indigenous study?

If we push it a little further, the choice of language is also concerned with representation. The power issue surrounding knowledge and knowledge validity remains unbalanced, with Indigenous peoples often striving to gain recognition in a colonized territory (Linklater 2014, 29). Even an Indigenous writer, such as Michael Hart in our text, struggles with language: "The challenge with bringing out worldview is language, overall. There are concepts that we have in Cree that don't have English translations" (Kovach 2009, 69). While stories are the symbol of our culture and identity, language is the bridge connecting people and cultures. Thus, if we use the English vocabularies to transcribe the Indigenous stories, we are actually representing them using the western ideology. Again, Said's Orientalist concept can be applied. How can we make sure that Indigenous people have access to defining themselves in the western worldviews? I do not think Kovach gives a clear answer to this

question; neither do other scholars. Before I go too far, from my point of view, a more "decolonizing" approach should be added into the consideration: how can we encourage Indigenous people to tell their stories by themselves so that it will not be misinterpreted and distorted?

Speaking of the decolonizing perspective, another thing that draws my attention is the requirement from the Indigenous methodologies: methods that give back to community members in a way that is useful to them (Kovach 2009, 82). Renee Louis (2014), a Hawaii-born Indigenous scholar, expresses a similar opinion that "if research does not benefit the community, it should not be done" (131). In her perspective, "Indigenous people are responding to Western researchers' need to further develop Western scientific knowledge" (130). However, what are the methods that will benefit Indigenous people? Apparently, the standard for it cannot be quantified, but it is qualitative. Kovach believes that a powerful approach is a decolonizing lens allowing participants to share their experience on their terms (82). Under the premise of benefiting the group, nevertheless, I argue that allowing Indigenous people to speak for themselves is far from sufficient. It is not contradictory to what I talked about above as it merely concerns the methodologies. But when it comes to the results of our methodologies, how can we ensure that it will turn to be beneficial? Louis defines Indigenous methodologies as

> alternative ways of thinking about research processes. They are fluid and dynamic approaches and emphasize circular and cyclical perspectives. Their main aim is to ensure that research on Indigenous issues is accomplished in a more sympathetic, respectful, and ethically correct fashion from an Indigenous perspective. (133)

I personally think Louis's notion, along with Kovach's long descriptions in Chapter 5–7, is also formative rather than practical. What's more, the diversity of Indigenous people also means there will

not be a uniform research method. Therefore, what is the solution to this question if we reckon that reciprocity defines the Indigenous methodologies? I am looking forward to hearing from you.

The search for identity motivates the use of Indigenous methodologies (M.I., November 5, 2020)

The book of Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies, Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, is full of meaningful stories. I enjoyed reading it mainly because the author didn't hesitate to share part of her story with us readers, and she invited other scholars to do the same. I admire her journey and how she stood up to defend the right of Indigenous researchers to have a distinctive research methodology compatible with their values and tribal epistemology. To me, I could be wrong, but I think in writing this book, Kovach is trying not only to explain the distinctive characteristics of Indigenous methodologies and prove their validity, but she was also trying to restore her own identity, an identity stolen by colonization and also by the fact that she is an adoptee. Through learning her mother language, she is trying to reconnect with her mother culture. In this regard, she used several Indigenous words, throughout the book, to reveal her attachment to her indigenous culture.

Although she is Indigenous, she confirms that her identity is different and unique and shouldn't be confused with other Indigenous tribes. She thus resists and resents "the tendency to categorize Indigenous people as a homogeneous culture, wiping out personal identity, [that] haunts us everywhere" (Kovach 2009, 175). She insists that it is important to identify and acknowledge the intrinsic features of every tribal knowledge as Indigenous peoples do not appreciate the attempts made to homogenize their tribal practices (37). She said tribal affiliations must be recognised as this has to do with identity and respect (37). For this reason, she has chosen to use Centre Plains Cree Knowledge in her methodology (ibid). She has created a research framework via linking Plains Cree knowledges and their methods in a

way adaptable to Western research (40). but it is also approved by other tribal groups as identified in the literature by Indigenous scholars (44).

Epistemology, for Kovach, is also a question of identity as protocols and customs of a particular tribal group intervene in making research decisions (56). The role of the language in producing our own research stories using our own voice to engage others. It is interesting then to find stories that are relevant to the Indigenous context.

Similarly, by integrating the notion of self-location and cultural identification into her research methodology, Kovach is looking once again to enrich not only her own research methodology but also her own identity. For Liamputtong, self-location is a means of building "reciprocity, rapport and trust between the researcher and researched" (as cited in Kovach, 2009, 110). On a personal note, I think, belonging and identifying with an Indigenous tribe or group helps one to increase one's sense of belonging.

Story is also a method. For Kovach, it is a means to hear the voice of the marginalized community and represent it in her research. The objective is to find solutions through research that address the needs of the community. Story is thus an essential tool of giving back to the community (100). Unlike structured interviews, stories offer the people an opportunity to tell their stories as a whole. This flexibility and absence of rigid structure empower the research participant in sharing his/her story. So, the story enhances the equal relationship between the researcher and the research participant. As this latter needs to approve the accuracy of the transcripts of the story prior to integrating it in the research (100).

On a related note, story is considered an aspect of co-creating knowledge from an Indigenous perspective. By the same token, it introduces reflexivity into research. Reflexive story reveals the author's inward knowing. For Absolon and Willet (2004) (cited in Kovach 2009, 100), the experience of being Indigenous alongside with the identity factor, is essential in interpreting research. Through a co-

creative, interpretive tradition, Indigenous story has proved that it is a powerful means for knowledge production. To me, I believe that hearing multiple stories from Indigenous people helps Kovach to fulfill two objectives. The first one is to enrich her research and second to know more about her culture and thus boost her identity.

Tribal epistemologies are the core of Indigenous methodologies and this is what distinguish it from Western qualitative methods together with its relational aspect. Indigenous methodologies are a practical research method that has qualitative features (25). Kovach is open to use a mixed-method approach that would use an Indigenous inquiry alongside a Western approach (35).

Since not all research in Indigenous settings will involve an Indigenous methodological approach, Kovach is defending the right for Indigenous researchers to choose a non-Indigenous methodology if they deem it suitable for their research project: "Simply because a researcher is Indigenous, it does not follow that she ought to, or will, conduct research via an Indigenous form of inquiry" (175). In addition, given the distinctive features of Indigenous methodology, it may be difficult for non-Indigenous scholars to apply it in their research. Kovach suggests in this case an equal collaboration with an Indigenous researcher.

Although some Indigenous researchers have integrated their tribal epistemologies into their research, Indigenous methodologies have not yet been acknowledged as one of the valid options of qualitative methodologies for researchers. Kovach continually calls for the recognition of Indigenous methodology as this is the first step to decolonize research from the white supremacy that has, for a very long time, dominated research and knowledge production, and marginalized Indigenous inquiries. So, why has Western academia not yet approved Indigenous methodologies? What is the place of Indigenous methodologies in qualitative research? For me, I believe that by supporting the legitimacy and credibility of Indigenous methodology, Western universities can play a leading role in the process of reconciliation with the Indigenous community.

This leads me also to question why Indigenous scholars such as Kovach herself need the approval from Western institutions. I am aware that part of the answer involves the power and the legitimacy of these institutions. But what prevents Indigenous scholars from getting together and setting up the frameworks of Indigenous methodology that they may use and promote in their inquiries?

Paradoxes of incommensurability (K.C., November 6, 2020)

I chose this book and the next because they draw attention to certain dimensions of method – as we typically treat it in communication – that we take so thoroughly for granted (or, perhaps, that I have taken so thoroughly for granted) that they are effectively invisible. What I mean is this. Eurocentric epistemologies appear universal to those who work within them (and cannot see beyond their horizons). But to make the claim that these epistemologies are universal, as Kovach demonstrates, is really to exclude other ways of coming to know the world. In that respect, claims to universality obscure their own politics, a fact that has contributed to the colonial violence committed against Indigenous peoples, among others. What authorized European – and later American – acts of dispossession, if not the idea that Europeans – or Americans – understood the world better than Indigenous peoples?

Indigenous Methodologies renders those assumptions visible. It also offers tools for addressing them. For someone like me, however, ensconced as I am in my Western way of knowing the world, I face a paradox as I try to understand them. (A side note: Kovach is one of the few people I have read who gives a definition of "Western" I find compelling. Most people use the term in sloppy ways, as if its meaning were transparently grounded in history or culture. Samuel Huntington [1993], for example, is especially bad on this count. But Kovach uses the term in a more descriptive way, highlighting its contingent nature [21].)

At first glance, the paradox I face is conceptual. Western epistemologies do not accept types of evidence recognized within Indigenous epistemologies, as Kovach describes them: "Sacred knowledge," she writes,

> is not *really* accepted in Western research, other than in a peripheral, anthropological, exotic kind of way. [...] The proposition of integrating spiritual knowings and processes, like ceremonies, dreams, or synchronicities, which act as portals for gaining knowledge, makes mainstream academia uncomfortable, especially when brought into the discussion of research. This is because of the outward knowing versus inward knowing dichotomy. (67-68)

But the paradox runs deeper, to the point where language and epistemology intersect. Not only are Western conceptual vocabularies incommensurable with Indigenous worldviews, but so are their *meta*-vocabularies, or the words we use to describe ideas such as "concept" or "worldview" (which Michael Hart, Kovach's interlocutor at the end of chapter 3, points out is itself a "Western concept" [69]). Or, going further, "The epistemological conflict [between Western and Indigenous approaches] alludes to the differing paradigmatic characteristics of Western and Indigenous science, and suggests that they approach knowing from different entry points" (78). How can I understand a worldview that is not my own if even the words I use to understand it – like "worldview" – betray me?

Kovach describes approaches scholars have taken to address this paradox. The two most common are, well, deeply problematic. One has been to "view traditional Indigenous systems of beliefs as having no relevance whatsoever as knowledge sources" (78). The other has been to "equate Indigenous knowledges with a cultural exoticisim and thus relegate them to the periphery of the 'real' work of knowledge construction" (78). (It's not for nothing that this strategy consists in splitting Indigenous approaches into two categories, which

can both then be rejected. That is one of the three procedures of discursive exclusion Foucault outlines in *L'ordre du discours* [1971, 10–23].) These approaches have come with institutional backing. In publishing, for instance, non-Indigenous peer reviewers often perceive the "incorporation of narrative, story, and self-location found within Indigenous writing" to be "indulgent rather than being recognized as a methodological necessity flowing from a tribal epistemology" (84; she makes similar comments on 28 and 79). That perception reflects not only the incommensurability between Indigenous and hegemonic/Western epistemologies, but also the role of academic institutions in perpetuating that hegemony.

So what's a scholar like me to do? What a narcissistic question, I know, but one I want to ask anyway, especially as I think about my own research about oil in North Dakota, where the settler/Indigenous relationship has a complicated history. The key seems to be in developing relationships: "If a pre-existing relationship is not in place, such a process must begin. In asking others to share stories, it is necessary to share our own, starting with self-location" (98). In other words, scholars like me need to listen before we speak.

In a concrete way, this means coming to understand how I am located historically as one of what Nick Estes (2019, 148) describes as "the sometimes-unwilling shock troops of colonization — white European settlers." Alannah Young Leon and Denise Nadeau (2018) make a similar argument.

I think there's also a value in revising Western epistemology — in forcing it to evolve — by opening it to Indigenous ways of knowing. The challenge is to do so without appropriating and denaturing them by making them conform to the hegemonic logics they seek to undo. We might, for instance, reconsider ideas about the nature of claims. Kovach identifies reflexivity as a measure of validity both in (Western) qualitative methods and in Indigenous methods (33), although she pushes the idea further when she says, "I hear the Elders' voices: Are you doing this in a good way? There is a Cree word, *tâpwê*,

which means to speak the truth. This is about validity or, relationally speaking, credibility" (52). Not only reflexivity, but reflexivity in the greater network of relational accountability.

I'm still working through these ideas, however. There are conceptual tensions I cannot resolve (even the idea of "conceptual tension" is one that shows how rooted my thinking is in hegemonic or Western ways of knowing), but perhaps what matters is the working-through process, rather than the resolution.

Response to Zixuan (K.C., November 6, 2020)

I'm curious about the "again" in your question "Why Indigenous methodologies *again*?" I'm surprised but encouraged if you have encountered Indigenous methods before.

With respect to the substance of your response, I'd be careful about trying to extend the label "Indigenous" beyond the groups that identify themselves that way. There's a tension inherent in naming, as imposing a name on a group risks creating the impression that the group is homogenous. Names obscure heterogeneity. At the same time, labels are not entirely without value, in that they draw attention to the things that members of a group *do* share in common. Kovach (2009, 37) describes the tension between these two perspectives when she writes, on the one hand, "Indigenous peoples have never been appreciative of a pan-Indigenous approach that attempts to homogenize our tribal practices," and on the other, "As Indigenous people, we understand each other because we share a worldview that holds common, enduring beliefs about the world." (Shawn Wilson has another take on this, as you'll see. He comes down more firmly on the side of the pan-Indigenous framework. He also will provide insight into your question as he works with Indigenous people from around the world.)

To answer your broader question about "Why Indigenous methodologies?" – there are perhaps two answers here. First is that they have an inherent value that scholars should be aware of,

regardless of their own identities. Much of Kovach's argument relates to the role of non-Indigenous scholars in producing or evaluating Indigenous scholarship, a task for which books like this will help. Second is that these books offer a critique of hegemonic methodologies within the context of this class. I see the class as a training ground for future colleagues (because that is what you are), and the tools you'll need go beyond methods as such. Instead, you'll need to be able to devise your own methods, and the best way to sharpen that skill (in my opinion) is through critique. I don't imagine that you will necessarily take the specific methods we discuss here (metaphor, hermeneutics, Indigenous modes of inquiry) and apply them as such. In fact, I imagine you'll likely use more conventional methods, such as those developed for data mining or textual analysis. You'll have a stronger mastery of those skills if you can identify their weak points. Hermeneutics provides the strongest critique of conventional qualitative or quantitative methods, at least that I could conceive of, while Indigenous methods provide the strongest critique of the epistemology underpinning qualitative, quantitative, and even hermeneutic methods. (Hermeneutics provides an immanent critique, as I wrote on October 23, while Indigenous methods provide a critique from the outside.)

The challenge of the critique from the outside — something I see you wrestling with in your close reading — is that we have to set our normal tools aside to make sense of it. Kovach has a felicitous turn of phrase I meant to quote in my close reading, but couldn't find: non-Indigenous scholars must "adjourn disbelief and, in the pause, consider alternative possibilities" (29). I like "adjourn" because it does not foreclose the possibility of judgment later, only right now. Ultimately, she calls upon non-Indigenous scholars to live with an ambiguity that is foreign to them, as a way not just to open a space for Indigenous scholarship (although that is very important), but also to rethink — and even expand — the tools of Western epistemology.

Response to Maryame (K.C., November 6, 2020)

You might be right about the book as a means to restore the author's sense of identity, although I tend not to speculate on this type of thing (for methodological reasons as much as anything else – if I've taken anything from Ricoeur, it's the idea that the author's intention is lost to me).

Your summary is thorough, as always, and will be useful if you ever need to return to it (for instance, for comprehensive exams). I like your final questions about legitimacy as it characterizes research in the academy. You're exactly right that part of the reason Indigenous scholars want their methods to be accepted within Western universities is that those institutions confer authority within the broader social realm, largely because that realm is itself Western. (I say "confer authority" as if that were an unproblematic process – of course, that authority is contested, inside and outside the university.) It does seem, though, that Indigenous scholars do in fact work with each other in ways where they recognize the validity of their work. I'm thinking of the quotation (which I can't find, unfortunately) from one of Kovach's collaborators who explains the ambivalence they felt as they negotiated their way through their PhD program. The eagle feather represents the recognition of knowledge within the Indigenous community, they said, while the PhD represents recognition outside of it. I think the other key point, in that respect, is that much of Kovach's argument is addressed to non-Indigenous scholars, asking them to respect Indigenous ways of knowing in their own work (something I, for instance, think about quite a lot – how can I be sure that my work does not harm the people I come into contact with?).

Response to Kyle (M.I., November 8, 2020)

To me, I think, as a Western scholar, you are having the right attitude. Introducing Indigenous research methodology to your students is a nice initiative from your part that shows that you are not "locked in

your own world" and you are curious to know about ideas that might be different than yours. The aim of Kovach as an Indigenous scholar is to convince the Western world to recognize Indigenous methodologies as one of the valid options of qualitative methodologies available to researchers. I think that even if she has not succeeded in reaching this goal yet, she has instead succeeded in making a lot of noise about it. The proof is that her book has become a widely used reference for Indigenous methodologies.

I believe to reach that recognition status, Indigenous scholars have to follow the same path as Kovach. To put it simply, they have to publish articles, books, participate in conferences and be willing to engage in open dialogue to introduce their indigenous methodologies to other scholars and students. Unfortunately, in a country where there is one dominant culture, the Indigenous researchers are the ones who must put more efforts in introducing their distinctive methodology to others.

On an unrelated note, you are right as I shouldn't have made the assumption regarding the search for identity. In fact, this book reminded me of my own story as an Indigenous person of Morocco. I belong originally to the Amazigh population who are the first nation of North Africa. I know that most westerners consider Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania as purely Arab countries, but our population is mixed. By the way, I don't feel offended if someone considered me an Arab as my mother tongue is Arabic. Others may disagree, but I am grateful to the Arab civilization which I have endorsed voluntarily. My only regret is that I feel that there is something missing in my identity as I don't speak my mother tongue (Tamazight). So, whenever I speak to Amazigh people, I am curious to hear their stories, to know more about their life, culture because I feel a sense of belonging. In a sense, I want to restore my identity. All these reasons made me think that may be Kovach is going through the same experience.

Response to Zixuan (M.I, November 8, 2020)

I agree with you that language is fundamental in the survival of any culture. As an indigenous person, you have a feeling which you can't help, that your identity is not complete if you don't speak your mother tongue. However, albeit Margaret Kovach and Michael Hart do not speak, at least not fluently their mother tongue, they still belong and endorse this culture and both of them have contributed in introducing it to the other world. In this regard, to avoid any misunderstanding and to involve her participants in this knowledge production, Kovach asked them to review and approve the transcripts.

Additionally, I believe non-Indigenous scholars can for sure know more about the indigenous culture via reading the academic work of indigenous scholars available to them in English for example. To me, learning a language does indeed help one to learn the culture. Yet, one cannot claim that he knows a culture simply by knowing the language. My mother tongue is Arabic, I speak both Modern Standard Arabic and Moroccan dialect and I am familiar to a great extent with the majority of dialects in the Arabic world, I can even speak some of them. Yet, I cannot claim that I know their culture 100%, even though we share several common cultural aspects. I think thus to know certain aspects of a given culture, one doesn't need to speak the language. For instance, I don't speak Japanese and I know that in Japan you must finish your meal. Whereas, in Morocco, generally speaking, you have to leave something on your plate to let your host know that you have finished eating and that you are full. If you finish your food, the host may put more food on your plate. What I want to argue here is that one can learn several aspects of a culture without knowing the language – through books, films, conversations with people from that culture, trips... Conversely, if one wants to gain a deep understanding of the culture, a direct exposure is necessary. It is through the daily interactions with people in different contexts that one can get familiar with a given culture.

Response to Kyle (Z.Z., November 8, 2020)

I agree with your opinion that the Indigenous methodologies are, to some extent, defiant to the Western methodologies or worldviews. After reading your close-reading, I try to look back at all the readings we have done. Our journey this semester is actually a brief review of the entire Western scholarly history: Rhetoric is the foundation of the argumentation, and, in my opinion, the "textbook" of academic writing/speech; Saussure's theory of signified and signifier is, needless to elaborate, the universally recognized classic in communication studies; so are Austin's and Ricoeur's. However, as you mentioned, these are all Western thoughts. Although we will continue to make amendments to their theories, overall, we are sticking to and passing on the Western system. Our worldview is constrained in the Western one, which we are probably unconscious about and take for granted. This set of Eurocentric, or West-centric, approaches is problematic when applied to other cultures. As a result, we must learn different approaches and try to find "the essence of research." Personally, I am by no means convinced that there is a unified methodology that is universally applicable to any cultures worldwide. I totally agree that you think scholars need to listen before speaking. We cannot represent others in our wish because that will be another kind of "academic colonization," in contrast to Roxana Ng's notion that the Indigenous methodologies are a process of decolonization.

From another perspective, can I say that we, as international students from the other side of the world, might be more advantageous than native researchers because we are by ourselves experiencing the cultural collision so that we may take a more active role in understanding other culture better?

P.S. I was first introduced to the Indigenous methodologies in one of my courses last semester. Professor Paul Birt talked about it from the linguistic perspective in the context of some minority languages in the world. However, since the Indigenous topic was a completely new area to me, I was at a loss then.

Response to Maryame (Z.Z. November 8, 2020)

I have my own ideas about your questions. Why has not Western academia acknowledged the Indigenous methodologies? Apart from power and legitimacy, another possibility could be that the size of Indigenous studies may not be as large as other subjects. As a result, its influence is relatively limited. It is mainly constrained within the scholars and the Indigenous people, who are apparently the minority in our society. When white supremacy is challenged, they would definitely oppose the Indigenous methodologies. I think the Indigenous methodologies are still a marginalized approach, and there is still a long way to go for it to be recognized by academia. It might also account for Kovach's wish to be accepted by the Western institutions as their recognition is vital for it to be heard in academia. Indeed, it is important for the universities (in North America) to adopt it gradually, and I think Kyle and some of the other professors in uOttawa are great examples here. However, pessimistically speaking, the decline of the humanities in academia could lead to our voices being easily ignored. Thus, the question we should ask now is probably how we should collaborate with other scholars in various areas to help further change the situation.

We also need more Indigenous scholars like Kovach and encourage them to have their own voice in academia since they are the key in this process of decolonization. But that would concern other thorny issues like educational equity, so I would instead stop here.

8. Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*

A summary of Indigenous methodologies (Z.Z., November 12, 2020)

As this is our last reading about Indigenous methodologies, I think it is perfect timing to look back on what we have learnt so far, combining with readings during the previous three weeks. It is also the right timing to review the questions I raised previously and give my own answers. However, before that, I would like to say some words about Wilson's *Research Is Ceremony*.

The reading itself is refreshing to me – especially its narration style. Wilson uses two kinds of narration in the book: one in a traditional academic tone and the other is a more personal narrative section (Wilson 2008, 8). It is interesting as we can perceive the former as a methodology of white supremacy (or dominant culture). Simultaneously, the latter is in accord with the core approach of Indigenous methodologies: stories. By combining these two voices, Wilson manages to develop the grounds of an Indigenous research method that takes Indigenous ideologies and applies the dominant culture's research [on] how it best fits (Hollingsworth 2011, 89). When Wilson is explaining the general concepts, he uses a more serious narration, which seems he is trying to help Indigenous methodologies to emerge into the Western ones (my personal opinion is that Wilson needs to use a serious tone, which is preferred by dominant white culture, to get the academia to treat it seriously); however, when he is exploring the technical aspects about Indigenous methodologies, especially in Chapter 6, Wilson shows a preference of their own approaches by making extensive use of dialogues and stories. Wilson tables his idea in an originally Indigenous way in order to have his own voice in academia. On the other hand, the alternate use of two

approaches, western and Indigenous, also reveals the Indigenous scholars' dilemma and its methodologies. As Hollingsworth argues, this shift reflects his difficulties when shifting his thinking to fit with the expectations of the dominant culture (89). Still, there is a long way to go for Indigenous methodologies to be recognized by the so-called mainstream academia.

Now I will turn to the questions I raised in my previous close-readings and see whether I can conclude a clear answer for them.

1. What are Indigenous methodologies?

How can we define Indigenous methodologies? Kovach lists several critical factors in *Indigenous Methodologies* (Kovach 2009, 44), but I want to take a closer look at some of them. Let's start with stories. As Kovach states, stories connect present and past and provide a basis for continuity with future generations (94). They are the voices from marginalized communities and representing themselves (98). Furthermore, stories also play a reflexive role in research – it enhances the equal relationship between the researcher and the research participant (100). They even help to encourage the participants to get involved in the research more actively. Holistic epistemology can also partly define Indigenous methodologies. Combined with tribal epistemology (56), holism is rooted deeply in the Indigenous philosophy. "Knowledge is shared with all of creation" (Wilson 2008, 74). Wilson also claims that the Indigenous research paradigm requires the holistic use and transmission of information (32). As in our discussion with Professor Macdougall, she stresses the importance of establishing a relationship with families, communities, research partners, land, etc. – even the relationship with the dead. Indigenous methodologies aim to decentralize the human's position. It is the need of this holistic epistemology that what we can bring back to the communities or the land is of another vital importance, which is also the most distinctive characteristic of Indigenous methodologies. Also, according to the research ethics on the federal government website, respect is reiterated.

Meanwhile, we can also regard this question in another dimension. What I discussed above is for Indigenous people or scholars. However, what about the non-Indigenous scholars? What do Indigenous methodologies mean for us? In *Sharing Breath*, some scholars grant the Indigenous approaches a new reading through "embodied learning and decolonization." For Roxana Ng, the indigenous practices serve a role to fight against the "colonization" of white supremacy (35) as they alert us to be suspicious towards the natural, automatic, and unconscious common sense (51), beneath which is the power relation. In the following chapter, Alannah Leon and Denise Nadeau examine the concept of difference. They further contend that this discrepancy is the distinction of our identity, which tends to be manipulated by the dominant. Therefore, in order to avoid this overwhelming correlation, a series of Indigenous approaches are tabled, such as learning the local language, respecting their culture, etc.

To conclude, distinct from the traditional, Indigenous methodologies focus more on the correlation between researchers and others. The research fruits should be shared with not only academia but also the communities. In my last close-reading, I asked the question of how we can determine whether a method is beneficial to the communities. If I look back at it, I was still using a traditional way to examine the Indigenous methods – I paid too much attention to the result. For Indigenous methodologies, the process of giving back is continuous, which, at the same time, may require a combination of many approaches to achieve. It is an "embodied" process. Therefore, it is inappropriate to single out one particular method for discussion of its result.

2. What can we do with Indigenous methodologies?

Actually, I just realize that this question is a little bit inappropriate or too broad. Asking this question probably equals to "what can we do with Marxism film studies?" Similar to other methodologies, the Indigenous ones are essentially a tool. They are not limited to the

scope of the Indigenous studies. On the contrary, as Professor Macdougall indicates, Indigenous methodologies are, to some extent, universal as long as it can contribute to our research. I personally regard them as an alternative way to complement my research methods so that I can avoid a pretentious attitude towards other cultures due to the western-style education I received.

At last, why does Wilson say research is a ceremony? According to the Cambridge dictionary, a ceremony is "a set of formal acts, often fixed and traditional, performed on important social or religious occasions." In our context of Indigenous studies, we are following a set of rules with respect to indigenous traditions. Since one single approach cannot represent all cultures worldwide, there must be a different voice to stand apart from Western methodologies that dominate academia so far – just as there cannot be only a single guest in the ceremony. When we are doing research, it is essentially a process of communicating with others – scholars and nature. The entire procedure of interaction is a ceremony, and it is worth celebrating.

The distinctive features of Indigenous research paradigm and the ethics of a good indigenous scholar (M.I., November 13, 2020)

Wilson and Kovach promote the same set of ideas. They both call for the decolonization of research methodologies and the necessity to develop a research methodology compatible with the indigenous worldview. They both insist that scholars need to use Indigenous research method to conduct research on Indigenous people. Also, both of them are trying to create a strong bond and build relationships with us readers. This is the foundation of their work and they take it seriously. In this regard, both of them use story as a research method to share their family story. Wilson uses story also as a strategy to avoid boredom and increase the engagement of the reader: "I feel a story is needed to break up the monotony of all these abstractions" (Wilson 2008, 37). So, through stories, they provide personal

information about themselves, give concrete examples, and simplify complex terminology. In fact, they both show how they build relationships not only with people but also with their ideas. Wilson in his book, *Research is Ceremony*, enumerates a set of principles that indigenous scholars should respect and endorse in both choosing an indigenous research paradigm and in conducting their research. According to Atkinson, "the researcher honors the worldviews of Indigenous peoples and does so with ethical responsibility and sensitivity" (as cited in Wilson 2008, 59).

It is important to mention that Wilson draws a clear distinction between Western and Indigenous methodologies. For him, Western methodology holds the belief that knowledge is individual and should be objective and intellect-based. In contrast, in Indigenous methodology knowledge is relational and subjective. Senses, emotions, feelings and intuition are important elements that intervene in its construction. It is obvious that this subjective nature of Indigenous research methodology is problematic for mainstream academia. Another important distinction is that in Western research, the individual is fragmented as the research only focuses on individual components and not on the whole person and overlooks completely the interconnections and relationships that guide the behavior of the individual. On the contrary, knowledge from an Indigenous perspective is relational and based on the relationship with all creation be it the universe, human beings, animals, or even plants (56).

On another note, Wilson confirms that the foundation of an Indigenous research paradigm is Indigenous ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology (38). Also, throughout the book, Wilson emphasizes the crucial role of the concept of relationality or relationships: "Indigenous epistemology is all about ideas developing through the formation of relationships" (8). Hence, building relations is the foundation of any Indigenous research paradigm. Relationships are not only established with people, tribes, land, and places, but also the cosmos or the universe. For many Indigenous people, spirituality

is just equally important as other aspects of mental, emotional, and physical health (89). So, it is important to understand and respect the unique spiritual relationship Indigenous develop with the universe. Relationship with ideas is equally important, ideas shape how we interact with the world and thus our worldview. It is important thus to acknowledge the relational quality of knowledge and knowing (91). In fact, Indigenous ontology and epistemology are founded on the belief that all knowledge is culturally based. It is important to point out that Wilson claims that he doesn't like to criticize or judge other people's ideas and opinions because reality is based upon relationships. Hence, Wilson believes that epistemological beliefs should be based on egalitarianism and inclusiveness (92).

Wilson goes on and explains that Indigenous communities are resentful of research because they were abused in the past; several researchers had conducted research on them but had never bothered to follow up with them. That is why Indigenous people are willing to engage in a research only if it is useful, relevant and when they feel that they are included in the process from start to finish and the research results are shared with them (15). By the same token, Wilson criticizes the researchers who had conducted research on indigenous people and focused on negative aspects of life (16). These researches have contributed to "the proliferation of negative stereotypes about Indigenous communities" (17). With this in mind, Wilson stresses the importance of giving back to the community. For this purpose, it is important for a researcher to use respectful methodology and show how his research can be useful to the Indigenous communities (reciprocity) (77). So, for Weber-Pillwax (1999), research should be "a source of enrichment to their lives and not a source of depletion or denigration" (as cited in Wilson 2008, 38).

Thus, relationships also imply responsibility and accountability to people. In building relationships with Indigenous communities, a scholar needs to feel a sense of accountability and responsibility towards them. So, relationship building, and accountability go hand in hand and cannot be dissociated. In this

regard, Evelyn Steinhauer borrows a quote from Cora Weber-Pillwax, who argues that "a researcher must make sure that the three R's, Respect, Reciprocity and Relationality, are guiding the research." Likewise, Wilson insists that the researcher should show respect to indigenous people's ideas, ways of life. Atkinson also urges researchers to honour the worldviews of Indigenous peoples by adopting ethical responsibility and sensitivity (as cited in Wilson 2008, 59).

One of the interesting points about this book has to do with the use of the two voices (personal and academic style). Wilson, although it was not an easy task for him, used two voices to build relationships with his sons and us as readers: "I guess that in switching back and forth between worlds (Indigenous and dominant) I sometimes forget where I am" (62). He was looking for common ground. Through sharing with us stories he has written for his sons that reveals his strong bond with them, he was hoping that readers can develop in return a stronger relationship with him. Wilson confirms through using the two voices that Indigenous scholars possess a competitive advantage other researchers do not have in that they can work within both the Indigenous and dominant worldviews (44).

I think that Wilson's strategy – providing background information about himself and his family-helped him indeed to build a solid relationship with us as readers and to pave the way for his research. It is interesting to find out when the idea of this research was born and how it was shaped. He indicated in this regard that his different travels and trips played an important role as thanks to the he noticed common similarities between indigenous people in terms of beliefs and spirituality "my interest in this study has grown because of my belief that Indigenous people share a unique way of thinking because of the prevalence of a common Indigenous epistemology. My observations have led me to develop the topic of an Indigenous research paradigm" (32-33).

To sum up, in his book, Wilson explains the different set of relationships that should be built, observed, and respected in any

Indigenous research paradigm. He insists that the research outcome should also be valuable to Indigenous people and contribute in a way or another to enrich the indigenous community (reciprocity). The Indigenous scholar, on the other hand, should adopt the appropriate levels of respect, reciprocity and responsibility in conducting his research. Finally, Wilson claims that there is no objective research methodology as the researcher's own set of ideas do intervene in shaping this methodology for example "the choice of research topic and methodology reflects researcher bias" (16).

Shawn Wilson's invitation (K.C., November 13, 2020)

When we met with Prof. Macdougall earlier this week, she made a comment that I've been thinking about since. In answer to a question about non-Indigenous researchers using Indigenous methods, she recommended that we look for the values upheld by Indigenous methods in our own communities. It was a characteristically generous response (in my interactions with her, I've always found her to be generous) in that it did not stake ownership to ideas such as relationality, reciprocity, and respect. (Shawn Wilson shows quite clearly that making such a claim would run counter to Indigenous methods [e.g., p. 114, 127].)

This comment set me to thinking about Wilson's Research Is Ceremony in relation to my strategy for putting together CMN8101. It also set me to thinking about the contradictions I wrestled with in my last two close readings. Of all the books we've read, *Research Is Ceremony* has been my favourite new discovery. Wilson demonstrates the same generosity as Prof. Macdougall, using his book as an invitation into relationship. Through the device of letters to his children, he makes us members of his community.

Paul Ricoeur tells us all the reasons this should not work, foremost among them the fact that Wilson's written text is polysemous to such a degree that we as readers cannot know his intention. Wilson says the same thing: "As I cannot know beforehand

who will read this book, I cannot be sure of the relationships that readers might hold with me or the ideas I share" (6). Or later: "I can choose who I talk to, or what to share in a conversation, in a way that is not possible once my words are written down. How do I know that what I have written here will not be used against me or others in a way that is not my intention?" (126)

And yet, for me as a reader, his invitation was one I wanted to accept. Although I can imagine, say, a misanthropic reader who might say no, or a hardened positivist unwilling to step outside his or her own perspective, I felt compelled to give myself over to his way of thinking, even if I can only do so incompletely (as my hand-wringing over the past two weeks would suggest!). The reason, I think, is that *Research Is Ceremony* helps me see the places in my own tradition and community where Wilson and I share values.

We use the same vocabulary, for example: "[A] key to our [i.e. Indigenous] way of thinking and [...] a necessary ingredient of an Indigneous epistemology [...] is hermeneutics" (102; cf. 121–2). At the same time, Wilson challenges me to see hermeneutics differently than I do, for instance, in my earlier close readings in this class or in the chapters of my book *How to Read Like You Mean It* that we'll respond to next week. Like Ricoeur, he shifts the responsibility for meaning-making away from the author (or story-teller) toward the reader (or listener), but his shift is more radical. During his time in Alaska, he writes, "It was up to the listener to piece together a lesson from the story and to apply the pieces where they fit in the current problem. [... The] Elder [telling a story] would not presume to know what was the best way for anyone else" (27–8; cf. Kovach 2009, 72). In contrast to Ricoeur, who uses this shift as a starting point to discuss the ways people persuade each other that their interpretation is the one that the text best supports, Wilson describes a relationship where the speaker refrains from trying to impose their interpretation. A speaker who presumes their interpretation is better than their listener's also presumes to know more about their listener's experience than they can possibly know (92). That presumption does not respect the

reciprocity between speaker and listener, violating the central tenet of Indigenous axiology.

Or, to give another example, in several places Wilson cites Terry Tafoya's Principle of Uncertainty, according to which, in Wilson's paraphrase, "The closer you get to defining something, the more it loses its context. Conversely, the more something is put into context, the more it loses a specific definition" (8). It's easy (for me) to see in this principle the ideas of *Verstehen* (understanding) and *Erklären* (explanation) (see my close reading from October 16). *Erklären* corresponds to the idea of defining a word, while *Verstehen* is putting it in context. (Kovach draws similar parallels in Indigenous Methodologies [23–5].) My first inclination in drawing those parallels is to put understanding/*Verstehen* and explanation/*Erklären* into the dialectic relationship Ricoeur establishes, through a process of inductive and deductive reasoning. Wilson, in contrast, writes, "It is only through realizing both context and content/analysis that you will reach a deeper understanding of what [his conversation with other Indigenous scholars] is all about. This is the essence of relationality" (99). Wilson arrives at this understanding, however, though a "non-linear form of logic. What [analysis] involves is our whole lifelong learning leading up to an intuitive logic and way of analysis" rooted in relationships (116).

(Another example I'd like to explore later: the statement made by Wilson's collaborator Lewis Cardinal that "our language is built like metaphor, one word is like a zip file, zip disk that crunches all this information into it" [122]. This is such a fascinating starting point, especially after Ricoeur's *Rule of Metaphor.*)

Finally, to get back to the thought that prompted these comparisons, namely Prof. Macdougall's advice to look in my own community for values like those described by Wilson and Kovach — when I put this course together, I had an idea of how I wanted it to go. I constructed the syllabus to follow a set of ideas as they evolved from one thinker to the next, in a dialogue constructed largely by Ricoeur. But I have found as a teacher that classes are richer when I engineer

them to evolve in an organic way I might not be able to predict. I also knew that as a student, I would likely have been skeptical about the asynchronous, email-based format, but that as a professor, I could harness that skepticism, if the students were willing to play along long enough. (Thankfully you have been!)

In that respect, Wilson's description of how he put together his book resonated with me. He's describing a lesson given to non-Indigenous researchers by an Elder who has them clear mud from a lake. The researchers do not understand why they are clearing mud, but as they do, they feel a change in the water, and they see life return to the lake. Wilson writes:

> I think it's important that the Elder didn't just tell them the relationship between the mud and the fish, but took them to a place where they could discover the relationship for themselves. That is what relationality and relational accountability are all about. And that's a problem that I have in writing up the book. Should I just tell whoever is reading it what I think are the relationships inherent in an Indigenous research paradigm, or should I let them feel the thrill of this knowledge coming up through their toes? (118)

The joy of *Research Is Ceremony* — what makes it a pleasure to read, the way that there is pleasure in watching a flower open — is that I felt like these researchers as I read. The water coming up through my toes was the idea of relationality that felt intuitively right to me, even as I struggled to give myself over to it. Wilson invited me into a relationship, but rather than explain it, he enacted it.

I hope, for what it's worth, that my decision in organizing this class to leave the assumptions underpinning it unspoken — why these readings, how they go together, where they lead us — has opened up the possibility that my students can put pieces together themselves. I think you've done that well, and in ways I could not have predicted, which is precisely what I had hoped for.

Response to Zixuan (K.C., November 14, 2020)

On the question of tone, it's worth asking why Wilson chose to write as he did. In effect, you've happened upon a long-standing debate in translation studies (one that has preoccupied me for a long time [see Conway 2020]). What is the status of a translated text if it denatures the original to the point where the original is no longer recognizable? Or, rephrased for Wilson's text, what is the status of a westernized version of an Indigenous method if it denatures it to the point where scholars like Wilson no longer recognize it? I think Wilson realizes the bind in which he's caught – he acknowledges it frequently, for example in the foreword/conclusion, where he addresses his style, although I think is question about stating what appears obvious to him on p. 79 reveals how he uses humour to deal with this bind.

Beyond that, I think it's worth asking why western academic writing is often so bad. It's a question of convention and discipline (people risk punishment if they violate academic writing's ostensibly objective stance, made manifest in writing conventions). On a personal note, the further I get in my career, the more I've begun to seek to violate those conventions strategically. You'll see that in the manuscript fo *How to Read Like You Mean It*, which we'll read for next week. For a completely different example, see *Punk Archaeology*, edited by a friend of mine (William Caraher), an archaeologist who's thinking about his work through the lens of punk music. On the first page of the first essay, Peter Schultz writes, "As emotional and subjective entities, we punks never study the 'unfiltered past' (whatever the fuck that's supposed to mean)" (in Caraher et al. 2014, 16). I highly recommend the book as an anti-methods methods book. (For an even more extreme example, check out Andrea Long Chu's *Females*, which might be the most exciting piece of writing I've read all year.) These conventions are, when applied blindly, represent little more than a rather bald assertion of power. When violating them serves a strategic or rhetorical purpose, I say do it! (Note: perhaps not for your thesis. This is a freedom I enjoy because I have tenure.)

Response to Maryame (K.C., November 14, 2020)

I'm writing this response after finishing the one I wrote to Zixuan (I always put your close readings in the shared e-book in the order in which you send them, and I write my responses after reading through and formatting them), so perhaps that's why I have translation on my mind. I know this is an interest you and I share, and I'm curious, do you see dimensions of translation at play in Wilson's text? Perhaps not translation proper (what Roman Jakobson [2004, 139] calls "interlingual translation"), but "intersemiotic translation" (to cite Jakobson again, this time a bit abusively)? Have you run into situations, either in your own experience or in your research, where the rules shaping how thoughts in one context are re-expressed in another have an impact on the choices the interpreter can make?

Response to Kyle (M.I., November 15, 2020)

In Wilson's book, I think an example of intersemiotic translation is related to the powwows dance ritual. Wilson mentioned that ever non-Native people feel a connection to this indigenous ritual: "And we have non-Native people coming to round dances and powwows saying, 'When I hear the drum, something happens to me'" (94). Did you find other examples?

To answer your second question, I want to share with you a true story that I had faced as an interpreter.

Few weeks ago, I accepted a medical interpretation assignment. I went to the hospital and met the nurse who introduced me to the patient who is Syrian. He was so weak, very pale and could barely talk. She then told me that the doctor will come to speak to him shortly. As soon as he showed up, after a very brief introduction, he started asking the patient a few questions such as: what is your name? What year are we in? What month are we in? Where are you now? Why are you here?

The patient thought that we were in September 2009, but he knew that he was in the hospital awaiting his liver transplant surgery.

The doctor told him, “you are weak, your heart is weak, and your blood pressure is very low and on top of that you have an infection.” For all these reasons, “you are no longer a candidate for a liver transplant surgery.” The patient was shocked and started crying because he was waiting for this surgery for at least 2 years. The doctor decided to continue the conversation and told him that “unfortunately there is nothing we can do for you as you have been in ICU for almost 4 weeks and there is no improvement.” The doctor goes on “you are going to die; it is a matter of days or weeks” and asked him if he wants to be resuscitated. He asked him also if he wants to unplug the machines and let him pass naturally. The patient reacted and said this is suicide, I explained to the doctor that in his faith putting an end to one’s life is similar to suicide which is forbidden. The doctor said, “this is not suicide and you can think about it, you don’t have to decide today, my team will make sure that you die comfortably.”

This is the worst situation I had experienced as an interpreter; I understand that in Canada, doctors should have this open conversation with a dying patient. But in this case, the doctor's words were very hard to hear for me (I couldn’t hold my tears) but I had to interpret them to the patient. “Words themselves, like music, laughter, crying, playing, dancing and other forms of expression, have the power to heal or to harm. They can transfer information and enlighten others, but they can also be used as tools of social control and disempowerment” (Wilson 2008, 126).

Unfortunately, as an interpreter I couldn’t do anything, I can’t change the message and I have to remain unbiased. So, I did communicate the message to the patient gradually as I heard it. However, when he was crying, to console him, I decided to introduce the element of faith in my conversation with him. Several times, I reminded him to put his trust in God and to not lose hope come what may. I thought of faith as I wanted desperately to help him as he was extremely shocked and desperate. In fact, faith is an important element in our culture that we use in these kinds of situations. So, this

is the only strategy I thought of to help the patient deal with this harsh truth.

I believe that the doctor could have managed the conversation differently. He provided too much information, in a very short time, to a very sick patient (who was alone with no family support) with no previous preparation. One hour later, the same doctor accompanied by the hepatologist had a conversation with his wife and daughter (but he didn't suggest the option to turn off the machines this time) who were shocked and disappointed as the team didn't react quickly to save her father. Regrettably, this patient passed away two days later at the age of 52 years old.

Response to Zixuan (M.I., November 15, 2020)

You mentioned in your close reading that "The research fruits should be shared with not only academia but also the communities"; I totally agree with you. Wilson indicates also that "Indigenous scholars are making clear lists of criteria so that their research will be honoured and respected by their own people. So much the better if dominant universities and researchers adopt them as well" (59). Is this the ultimate goal of an Indigenous scholar? Is this how he/she can give back to the community? The research should be recognized by Western academia to be adopted by the community. I think this should be the least important thing for a scholar. To me, I believe that research is beneficial to a community if the knowledge gained from the research is practical and can be used to improve the life of the members of the community. For example, help them succeed in their education or access more jobs. Unfortunately, Indigenous people are still marginalized in Canada and their voice is not really heard. I am curious to know if you have examples that you can share with us either from Wilson and Kovach books or elsewhere that reveal the benefits of indigenous research on an indigenous community.

Response to Maryame (Z.Z., November 15, 2020)

Thank you for mentioning the difference between Western and Indigenous methodologies, which I left out in mine. In Wilson's opinion, Western knowledge is more individual. In fact, I would like to hear your comments about this statement. I agree with him that our methodologies seem more objective as we are stricter with the logic, data, etc. But to what extent do you agree that our (or Western) knowledge is individual? I think there are two ways to interpret his statement: 1) there is an invisible wall between each area for Western knowledge, and 2) knowledge is kept in researchers' minds only so that it is unshareable. However, in my perspective, both statements are a little bit problematic. First, our knowledge is merging gradually with each other as well. For example, digital humanity is an example of a cross-subject area that combines traditional humanities study and (more modern) information studies; we also share our knowledge with our (research) communities, and that's why we have something such as peer review. Actually, I am not entirely convinced by his notion because we also have our communities. We make contributions to the general public, such as producing a vaccine against the COVID; we also collaborate with researchers from other areas to create more creative works. Perhaps we learnt the notion of "giving back to the community" from Indigenous methodologies. But indeed, we are doing it. What's your opinion on it? Do you think Western methods are individual (from any perspective)?

Response to Kyle (Z.Z. November 15, 2020)

I am really fascinated by Cardinal's statement that "our language is built like a metaphor." His zip metaphor of languages is, in my opinion, genius. His comment reminds me of a question that I came across before. Some of my Canadian friends asked me why the Chinese language could not be phonetically spelled out like English did so that it could be said with no issue (by the way, this is an orientalist notion). The reason why we cannot do this is that Chinese (both Mandarin and

Cantonese) is a tonal language. So depending on how we say a word or phrase, its meaning can change *a lot*. For example, Yan-Jing can either mean glasses or eyes, depending on how you read it. What's more, since each character has several different meanings, it is sometimes tricky to figure out the exact meaning that a word conveys. Though slightly different, English has the same situation, such as different tones of "OK" can express endless "implicit messages." Therefore, I am interested in his idea, and I would like to dig deeper as well.

As for your question of why western academic writing is often so bad, I think that convention and discipline can partly answer it. I heard an undergrad student in the department of history got expelled because he/she left out an entry of reference in his/her course final paper. On the one hand, I think it reasonable because you need to respect others' research fruits; on the other hand, I begin to doubt whether our whole system pays too much attention to formalism, and it gets hard to adjust (people make mistakes, not to say an undergrad. Expelling is just too harsh to him/her). But I guess I might be too young to judge that.

9. Kyle Conway, *How to Read Like You Mean It* (draft manuscript)

Chapter 4, as I imagine it to be (K.C., November 17, 2020)

If I had had the time, I would have written chapter 4. It would look like — it *will* look like — this.

To this point in *How to Read Like You Mean It*, I've explored three metaphors: to read is to feel lost; to read is to wander; to read is to feel love. This chapter explores a fourth: to read is to be free. On the surface, this metaphor seems cliché. It makes me think of the theme song of a classic American kids' show from the 1980s called *Reading Rainbow*, which starts, "Butterfly in the sky! I can go twice as high! Take a look — it's in a book, a reading rainbow!" (Pretty much every American kid my generation can sing the song.) But *freedom* here means something different, perhaps even counterintuitive. To read, according to Ricoeur, is to perform an act of appropriation, to "'make one's own' what was originally 'alien'" (Ricoeur 1981, 147). But it's one gesture necessarily accompanied by a second, and that's where the key difference lies:

> Relinquishment is a fundamental moment of appropriation and distinguishes it from any form of "taking possession". Appropriation is also and primarily a "letting-go". Reading is an appropriation-divestiture. How can this letting-go, this relinquishment be incorporated into appropriation? Essentially by linking appropriation to the revelatory power of the text which we have described as its referential dimension.

> It is in allowing itself to be carried off towards the reference of the text that the *ego* divests itself of itself. (Ricoeur 1981, 153)

Appropriation is paradoxical: by making our own what was once alien, we must also let go of our desire that the world conform to our will (that is, our ego), but by letting go, a new world opens up. Boundaries fall, and the freedom we experience is that of being released into it.

This chapter serves a second purpose, namely to evaluate (as Ricoeur guides us) the claims I have made about what it means to read. What is the value of my metaphors? I'm making good on a promise from the introductory chapter, namely to subject my analysis to other modes of verification, this time more conventional. If the hermeneutic approach I've proposed has any value, it will stand up to verification by means other than its own. (As I write below, these two themes — appropriation-as-divestiture and evaluation — work together, the second leading us back to the first.)

So return I do. I reformulate a conventional approach to methods, consisting of data gathering and data analysis, along new lines. Then, using this lens, I look at conventional social-scientific scholarship on reading. For instance, I evaluate the claims I've made in the previous chapters against books with titles such as *Effective Study* (Robinson 1946) and *How We Read: Tales, Fury, Nothing, Sound* (Heller and Akbari 2019), articles with titles such as "Strategies for Improving Reading Comprehension among College Students" (Lei et al. 2010), even Twitter threads with titles such as "These are Tips I Wrote for My Students on How to Read Theory in a Humanities/interdisciplinary Context" (Pérez 2020).

The first step (corresponding to data gathering) consists in a recursive process of observation. If I have a question — for instance, *how do people read and understand hard texts?* — I can first make observations. What is readily observable about the reading as an act we undertake? I can also observe what I *don't* know, and with that in mind, I can identify what I need to now to answer the question I've

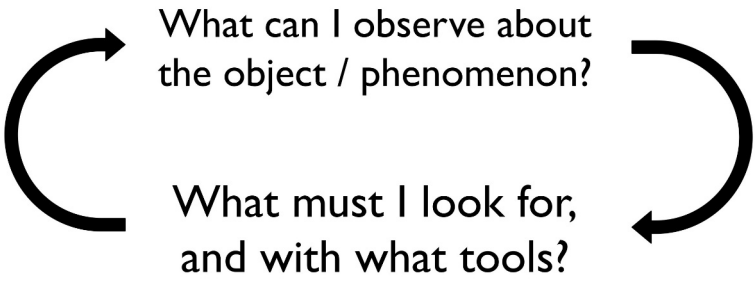


Figure 9.1. The recursive process of data gathering.

posed (see figure 9.1). This process is recursive because once I've found the tools I need to fill in gaps in what I know, I can identify further gaps.

The second step (corresponding to data analysis) is also recursive. I ask first, what do my observations reveal about the phenomenon I'm seeking to understand? What do I learn – to return to the book's theme – about reading? What, in other words, does my evidence explain? The most abstract question (and in many ways the most important) inverts these terms: what explains my evidence? (See figure 9.2.) What I mean is that we must adopt a similar attitude toward the evidence we gather as we adopt toward our object of study or our research question. What can we observe about our evidence? What is its nature? How, in effect, do we explain it?

What we must recognize is that certain types of evidence allow us to make certain types of claims. Randomly sampled surveys (for instance, about reading strategies that people in different communities adopt) allow us to make predictive claims about the population we're studying, but anecdotes do not. Anecdotes, which are so easily dismissed as "just someone's opinion," tell us things, too, such as how people interpret what they're doing (for instance, what reading means to them). They allow us to make a different type of claim. We can evaluate our evidence (by looking, for instance, at its

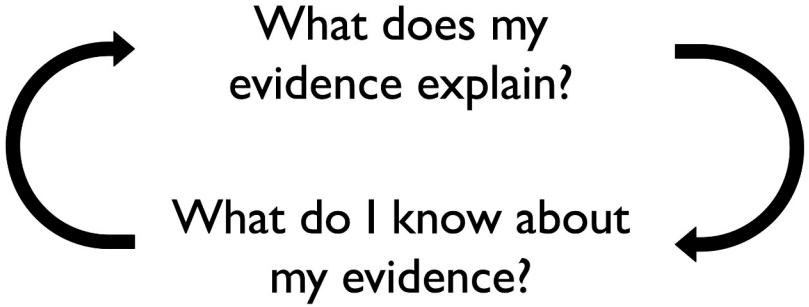


Figure 9.2. The recursive process of data analysis.

underlying epistemologies and corresponding warrants, as I write in the introductory chapter), and in so doing, adjust what we understand about the explanations it provides about, say, how to read.

And this process — data gathering and analysis — is itself recursive. We make observations; we identify tools to help us fill in gaps; we use those tools to gather evidence; we interpret the evidence; we evaluate the evidence in light of the tools themselves; and, finally, based on that evaluation, we return to our observations (figure 9.3).

This process is not linear. In fact, we perform multiple stages at once, making constant course corrections, in the process refining our interpretations. Through those refinements, we approach the criteria Ricoeur establishes of congruence and plenitude (chapter 2). We watch as the world of the text unfolds before us, its hidden complexities coming to light gradually but, through each recursive turn, with greater clarity.

An anecdote, but one whose value is illustrative: I wrote much of this book at the beginning of the pandemic, when my world felt very small. I read as a means of escape, when the house was quiet after everyone was in bed. I'm a night owl, and I enjoy the calm. As I read *Rule of Metaphor* and *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, taking copious notes — more than 100 pages by the time I was done — I grew more and more excited. I started seeing connections from essay to essay, book to book, that addressed the anxiety I felt in the face of the

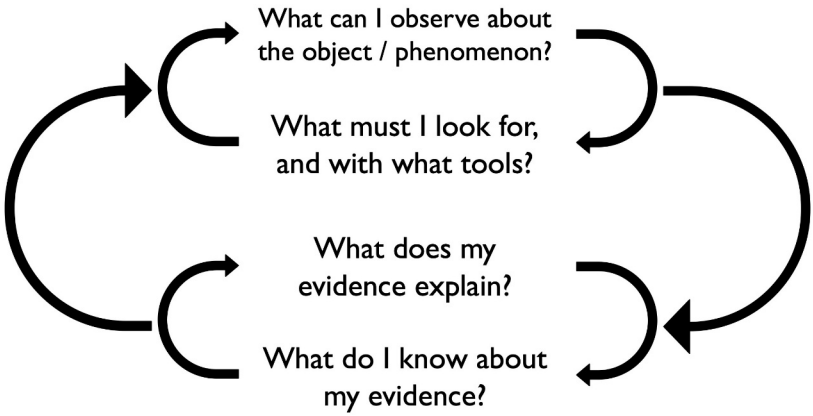


Figure 9.3. The recursive process of investigation, integrating data gathering and analysis.

unknown world we were entering, where we couldn't even take a walk in a park. I gave myself over to this new world opening up for me. I explored it, looked in its darkened nooks and crannies, felt around a bit. It surprised me in places. It was not always what I expected. (My children have had a similar experience as they've read the Harry Potter books, acting them out as they go, imagining themselves as part of this world. As a kid, I found *Star Trek* to be similar, a world I could enter and explore.)

It was through this feeling that I came to grasp what Ricoeur means by "appropriation." I made this alien world my own, but I had to give up my expectations about what it should be. Ricoeur would say I had to divest myself of my ego. Not completely, but I still had to surrender my desire to see the world as I wanted it to be. I had to evaluate Ricoeur's claims and the evidence on which they were based, and through that evaluation, come to see the world he was offering me. It is through this encounter with a world that we come to understand by testing its limits that evaluation leads us back to appropriation-as-divestiture.

Some final thoughts about CMN8101 for Fall 2020 (Z.Z., November 19, 2020)

How time flies! We have been collaborating for almost three months, and we are nearly approaching the end of the class. Thank you, Kyle, for leading us in readings and studies during the semester. Thank you, Maryame, for always providing us excellent summaries each week, as well as some intriguing insights on readings. After reading Kyle's (draft) book, I realized our course and its pedagogy have already been designated since earlier this year. The book itself can be regarded as your conclusion for this semester as you explained the reason in detail behind your choice of materials. This time, if you permit, I probably will not write "a monumental work" of 1000 words as I do not feel like repeating my thoughts over and over again. Maybe my close reading this week is more of a personal reflection of the course than an academic article (if you do not mind).

(I use "you" to refer to Kyle because this is like an "intimate" conversation with you.)

I admit and confess that when I first started our readings, I was completely confused. "Am I enrolled in a linguistic class? Why do I have to read Aristotle's classics?" Just as the title "To Read Is to Feel Lost," I was at a loss of what to focus on the reading and how to write the close reading. I struggled so hard to associate my life experience with the reading (which is also the case for the following readings) in order to make a meaningful action. I also had the feeling of being negated or "imposter syndrome": doubting whether my reading is stupid compared with Maryame as she always clings to the reading and makes detailed summaries, while my thoughts are often more bouncing and flexible (just as you said, "To Read Is to Wander").

However, with the course going on, I felt more confident in presenting my own thoughts. Similar to you, I am quite fond of the part of Indigenous studies since I also wonder which kind of scholars I would become in the end, situating myself in a collision between Western and Eastern education. To me, sometimes I would have an inferior feeling in terms of critical thinking abilities (whether the

discrepancy between professors and me or colleagues would be too distinct) and language abilities (whether my word choices are too childish or less formal). I tried so hard to "guess" what the professor might prefer, and I reckoned that there was only one "true" meaning behind the words. Along with my "lost" feeling towards the reading, my thoughts seem entirely to violate the hermeneutic rule. It was my empathy with Indigenous people whose concern about their integration into, or recognition of, the Western civilization that made me especially enjoy the last few readings. If the previous readings were way too abstract and difficult, readings on Indigenous methodologies revealed the eros of reading. Thus, I recognized that "To Read is To Feel Love." You are also practising "Indigenous methodologies" in our course. You never judge our opinions nor our thinking even if it deviates from what you expected. In other words, you respect other voices. Also, you shared your thoughts with us every week, which can be seen that you devote your knowledge back to your descendants. I appreciate what you have done for us and the course.

Therefore, I guess you probably have designed the pattern of developing the course: make us puzzled first, which pushes us to think it over and wander in all the meanings it could refer to; eventually, we realize the aim of the course and feel the love from the readings (and you). It is a successful attempt, or perlocutionary act if more academically, for you to develop the course pattern like this semester.

At last, I would like to raise a question about the concept of appropriation. I agree that on the linguistic level, the word should be neutral as it represents a method that we interpret the text and the metaphor, especially given that a text has no "true" or fixed meaning due to its objective dimension. However, the word has been regarded as a derogatory term nowadays when it comes to cultural studies. Is there a clear line drawing between domination and borrowing? For example, if an actress wears a cheongsam (qipao), or the protagonist speaks awkward Chinese, which even a native Chinese cannot understand in the film, there is a chance that the Chinese audience will deem it as an emphasis on the Chinese market, which is more

positive. However, suppose someone, such as an influencer on Instagram, wears a cheongsam and posts. In that case, although she means no harm, she will be accused of cultural appropriation.[NOTE 1] If I argue that the standard of determination of cultural appropriation is whether the respect to another culture is paid, the girl in the news probably fits this situation, but she is still condemned. She probably admires the beauty of cheongsam only. We can also turn to another example: if I travel abroad, in order to fit myself in with the local culture, I would choose to wear local costumes as well. Does it count as cultural appropriation? Is Kung Fu Panda an example of cultural appropriation because it is produced by the US rather than China? What's your opinion?

An invitation to read à la Conway (M.I., November 19, 2020)

In *How To Read Like You Mean It*, you did build a connection with several books we have read previously and in so doing you established a relationship with us, your students who have read the same books. You have simplified the different key concepts, put them in different contexts to explain your own ideas. You suggested several practical steps one could follow to read a text. You used metaphors to catch your readers' attention; it is indeed a great strategy because we tend to remember those catchy metaphorical phrases easily. My favorite chapter is "To Read Is to Feel Lost." When I read it, it echoes my own experience and I guess this would be a reassuring chapter to read for all students who struggle in their readings. Also, the metaphorical titles help to build this smooth and logical transition between the different steps one needs to go through to find the meaning of a given text. First, one will feel lost and you explain that it is normal to feel lost "Allow yourself to get lost. Then find your way back" (Intro, 23). Second, to overcome this feeling, one needs to wander, and this is the step that would lead one to encounter love, love with the text. Last, to read is to be free, I had a bit of difficulty with this last metaphor (you will discover the reason below).

When I first started reading your book, I said to myself, "Kyle should have suggested this book as the first one to read as this could have helped us in our readings; as not only you have deployed different key terms from the other books, but you have suggested a reading methodology that we could have applied in our readings." However, once I finished this book, I recognize another objective which has the same level of importance. In fact, I discovered how in this book, you have used the knowledge you have gained from previous books to build your own knowledge. So, if I had read this book at first, I would have missed this interesting point.

In so doing, you have used different concepts and applied them well (appropriation) to build your own ideas and to explain your different arguments. You are inviting the readers to try your methodology of reading. By the same token, you showed us, perhaps unintentionally, how to use the knowledge gained from other books to create knowledge in return (knowledge production). So, as your student and reader, you convinced me to follow your advice in reading because, as a scholar, you have proved that you can transform the knowledge you learned from other books to develop a new and different knowledge. In fact, you reminded me of one of my professors who kept advising us to use the knowledge we gain from books because if we don't use it, we will lose it.

Your tone and style of writing sound very familiar and personal and encourage one to read. As a student, I was reluctant to share my interpretation of texts I have read, as I was afraid that I would falsify the meaning of the text and thus professors might reject it. On the contrary, you motivate students throughout your book to read and not to be afraid to make guesses as this is the first step in the interpretation process.

For all these reasons, I believe that this book will be a good reference for students who question why it is challenging to read difficult texts. You used simple but comforting phrases that would resonate with all students such as, "Not only are feelings of confusion normal, I told them, but they're also the key to learning" (intro, 23);

“What learning really requires is struggle and practice. Reading like you mean it is more like learning a craft and cultivating your talent than winning on some elaborate quiz show” (intro, 18). Therefore, you explain that it is normal to struggle but through practice one will learn how to read texts. To overcome this confusion, you suggest a practical plan that will guide students in the reading process. In this context, I find your different strategies for example about the process of guessing and validation meaningful and easily applicable. It is great that you have applied them to interpret the pandemic.

The most difficult notion to grasp is appropriation which you said requires “distanciation,” to give up one’s own ideas to join another world. In other words, you invite readers to clean up old ideas to embrace new ones. Personally, I will only give up control voluntarily only, and only if I love the text I am reading. Otherwise, it is difficult to hand over the control to the I text or let it instruct me (as you mentioned in the introduction p. 19). Perhaps out of fear because I don’t know what is waiting for me or I am scared this might change who I am, my world, my identity… I am aware that this is a problem because this is preventing me from seeing the meaning of the text. As we tend to judge the text from our own cultural lens/our own worldview. You seem to have a different opinion as you invite us to distance ourselves from the world, we take for granted to understand the world the text opens up. How can we do so? Moreover, if we abandon our world, knowledge (our toolbox) with what tools can we read a text? And do you believe that one can be neutral in reading a text?

To sum up, this book is easy to read, and the use of different examples and stories including the ones related to Covid-19 does help one to stay connected all the time. Even though you are not an Indigenous scholar, I noticed that you are also eager to establish a relationship with readers.

Response to Zixuan and Maryame (K.C., November 20, 2020)

Thank you to both of you for your kind words (and for the pleasure that teaching this class has brought me). You are both generous readers, both of what I have written, and of the other authors we read throughout the semester.

Your feedback is valuable in multiple ways. In a practical sense, both of you picked up on one of the unstated goals of the class, namely to make a performative argument about the value of being lost and finding one's way back again. (Perhaps "back" is the wrong metaphor, as we don't necessarily end up where we started out.) I debated whether to put this manuscript at the beginning or the end of the course, and I put it at the end hoping that it would give you the tools to reflect back on the course, with a particular emphasis on the experience of reading, beyond the content to be found in each book. I'm very glad that this seems to have happened. I had professors do similar things for me, albeit not in the same way, and this is the first time I've had the courage to build in the performative argument. Usually, I operate very much on the surface! (I also hope you'll keep the experience in mind when you feel the effects of imposter syndrome, which is very real and which affects everyone. The main difference between you and me is that I have years of practice hiding its effects, but — like everyone — I still experience it. All that to say, recognize it for what it is and know that you have the skills to move past it. I've seen them in your work.)

Your questions about specific terms — *distanciation* and *appropriation* — have given me much to think about as I write chapter 4 (and eventually the conclusion). Zixuan is right about the negative connotations of *appropriation* in cultural studies. I think as I read *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, where he develops the term, I kept returning to its Latin roots, which are clearer in French and in English — the suffix *a-* meaning "toward" and the root *propr-* meaning "one's own." Perhaps it's just that the French word "propre" is more

common than the English word "proper." I'm not sure, really, but at the very least, I need a note dealing with that contradiction.

As for distanciation, the dimension Maryame evokes, tied up in a dialectical relation with appropriation – I think you describe a resistance to texts many people share, and I admire your self-awareness in describing it. I have come to recognize this resistance in myself only recently, after years of fighting texts. I think I was coming to that awareness through the process of writing *How to Read Like You Mean It* – Ricoeur gave me conceptual tools to name the ways I was interacting with his text.

Thank you again, both of you, for an excellent semester and for your feedback on the manuscript. Your names will figure prominently in the acknowledgments when I publish the book, hopefully in the next year or two.

Response to Kyle (M.I., November 21, 2020)

Thank you, Kyle, for your generous words and for all the support you have provided throughout this semester. This experience was challenging at the beginning, as I prefer face-to-face interaction, but it turns out to be very rewarding. I found you very generous because you decided as a professor to participate actively and provide the same work, if not more, you expected from us, your students; a weekly close reading, and at least two customized responses. I have learned, in a very short period of time, different valuable concepts from you and from the diverse readings. I am confident that I can apply this knowledge in my research project. I enjoyed our different online interactions and email exchanges. In fact, your book, the diverse readings alongside your teaching style have opened my horizon and pushed me to think outside my world. So, thank you so much again for all your efforts, you have done an amazing job as a professor.

Response to Zixuan (M.I., November 22, 2020)

Zixuan, each time you surprise us with your thoughtful close readings, and this time is no different. Thank you and it and I am pleased that

you are my colleague as I have learned so much from you. Thank you for sharing with us your thoughts about the course, I have experienced pretty much the same thing. Similarly, as time progresses and thanks to Kyle's indulgent teaching style, I gain more confidence in my writing, although I still have to decolonize myself from my "world," I think this will come with the experience and practice. Likewise, I enjoyed reading the Indigenous books and knowing about their research methodology. I found Kovach and Wilson truly generous authors as they both shared with us readers their personal stories.

On a different note, your point concerning the use of cultural appropriation is intriguing, thank you for bringing it up. Regarding your example, it is interesting to see how the Chinese interpreted the American girl wearing qipao. If an American or any other person wears Moroccan traditional clothes, I think she would be praised, and Moroccans will share her picture proudly. The same words, behaviors might be appreciated by one culture but deemed completely inappropriate or "offensive" in another culture. So, one needs to be careful before adopting a cultural aspect that might not be accepted by the people of this culture.

Response to Maryame and Kyle (Z.Z., November 22, 2020)

The unexpected COVID-19 pandemic did change everything. I had never thought my master's degree, as well as my first (and second) doctoral semester, would be in the form of online learning. It was challenging, especially without face-to-face communication every week. We finished our readings all on our own and exchanged our opinions through "emotionless" emails. Our readings were also demanding. I had to cope with them every week, each of which is in a brand new area. But we did it! It has become a weekly ritual: finishing the reading before Friday, reacting to both of your readings during weekends, and starting the new reading afterwards. To me, I suppose that this semester is an ideal transitional semester from my master's. Of course, Kyle, your help plays an essential role. We cannot get so far

without your assistance. Your close readings also lead us as they are so rich and carry an abundance of information. Also, Maryame, you always provide a new perspective, which enlightens me a lot. Thank you to both of you!

Now I would like to say a bit more about cultural appropriation that I brought up in my close reading. Some scholars contend that "respect for other cultures" determines whether it is a case of cultural appropriation. Still, it is vague. One thing I want to mention is that we cannot ignore the promotional role that so-called dominators play. They (for example, the U.S.) are capable of bringing a certain culture to the world stage by an episode in TV series, a film, or even a piece of music. To some extent, they are pushing the ignored culture, the owner of which may be just too feeble, politically and economically, to promote. So in this sense, can we think that the action of "borrowing and showing another culture" is, in fact, acceptable?

Note

1. See the following link: https://medium.com/shanghaiist/american-girl-wears-qipao-to-prom-gets-accused-of-cultural-appropriation-891f5dfd97d2.

Appendix: Syllabus

One dimension of academic work worth exploring is the intersection between teaching and research. We tend to hold them separate in North American universities (and elsewhere, but this course is taking place in North America). But, as I write in the preface, what if we didn't?

To that end, I'm putting a copy of the syllabus here. Its purpose is to serve as another record of the course. It seems I'm making a habit of this practice (see Conway 2020a, for instance). I hope it's useful. (K.C., Fall 2020)

Course name

Communication 8101: Research Methods 1 (PhD-level)
University of Ottawa, Fall 2020

Course description

Epistemology and research methods in communication studies. Critical analysis of the various epistemological stances in communication. Review of various intellectual tools with a view to gaining an in-depth understanding of the various steps involved in a communication research process (from the research question to the selection of a methodological approach). Review of various research techniques (interviews, observations, life stories, focus groups, surveys, etc.).

Rationale and course objectives

In the field of communication, method is typically treated as belonging to one of two categories – qualitative or quantitative. Even mixed method approaches take these categories for granted. But this dichotomy hides as much as it reveals, and other modes of inquiry, responding to other concerns, are not only possible but desirable.

Our purpose here is to undo that dichotomy. Thus this seminar will serve two purposes: it will expose students to other approaches and the questions to which they respond, and it will allow us to explore the ontological and epistemological foundations of method itself. The first half will work through questions of language and persuasion, which are not neutral tools: they actively shape our encounter with the world we claim to be studying, and their methodological implications demand sustained reflection. But these approaches, too, hide as much as they reveal: the philosophy that grounds them is subject to politics and, in some cases, the bald assertion of power. Thus the second half is concerned with challenges to "Western" methodological hegemony, in particular from Indigenous perspectives.

Modality

One distinctive feature of this seminar will be its asynchronous format. Although we will occasionally meet by video conference (probably Zoom), most of the discussion will take place through email and shared Google docs, as described below. It is an experimental format, but one that should allow us to explore the ideas we discuss at a performative level of induction, as well as give students the opportunity to hone their skills of written critique.

Required texts

Aristotle, *Rhetoric*
J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*
Sheila Batacharya and Yuk-Lin Renita Wong, eds., *Sharing Breath: Embodied Learning and Decolonization*
Kyle Conway, *How to Read Like You Mean It: A Humanist's Answer the the Question of Method* (working draft)
Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*
Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*

Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language*
Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*
Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*

Assignments

Close reading, 1,000–1,500 words each, 1 per week, to be distributed by email: Each week, each participant will respond to the readings by choosing a passage and performing a close reading. The response should include a summary of the passage (with citations) and be grounded in the text itself. Beyond that, however, the form is relatively open. Possible topics include (but are not limited to):

- What questions does this passage raise?
- How do those questions relate to others we've discussed in the seminar?
- How do they relate to the broader scholarly discussion?
- How do they relate to the world at large?
- Is the author persuasive? Why or why not?
- What counterexamples does the author fail to consider?

I will compile all close readings and responses (described below) in a shared Google doc.

In your response, please feel free to bring in any outside resources you think are relevant. Please cite everything appropriately using Chicago author-date format. Please add all new sources to the shared reference page. I have added the class readings to give you a model to follow.

Responses to other participants, 200 words each, 2 per week, to be distributed by email: The purpose of the reading responses is to generate conversation. To that end, each student will respond to at least two of the other participants' close readings. (Please feel free to respond to more — this exercise is most productive when there is a back-and-forth exchange.) These responses should be short but substantive,

either addressing different aspects of the original passage or relating that passage to other things we have read in class (or that you have read outside of class). Be generous in your critique — both kind toward the other participants, but also clear in pointing us concretely to the things you think we should be considering.

We will collect all of the close readings and responses in order to trace the evolution of our discussion and ideas over the course of the semester. The value of the course, I expect, will become clear in that collective document.

Final essay, 4,000–6,000 words: The topic of the final essay is open, as long as you demonstrate how it relates to the class material. One approach that might be useful would be to examine methods you know well, perhaps the ones you have thought about for your thesis, through the lenses provided by the readings in this seminar.

Reading schedule

The logic of undoing

Week 1: Humanities and social sciences
Reading: Conway, "What Is Reading?"

Language and method

Week 2: Language and persuasion
Reading: Aristotle, *Rhetoric*

Week 3: Structuralism
Reading: Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, introduction, secs. i-iv and parts 1–4

Week 4: Speech-act theory
Reading: Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*

Week 5: Hermeneutics: metaphor
Reading: Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, studies 1, 3, 6, and 7

Week 6: Hermeneutics: text and meaningful action
Reading: Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, chapters 1, 4–8

Indigenous method

Week 7: Embodied learning
Reading: Batacharya and Wong, *Sharing Breath*, introduction, chapters 1, 2, 10, and 12

Week 8: Characteristics, conversations, contexts
Reading: Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*

Week 9: Role of story
Reading: Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*; Tri-Council Policy Statement: "Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada"

Conclusions

Week 10: Humanistic method
Reading: Conway, *How to Read like You Mean It* (manuscript)

Student-led inquiry

Week 11: Example 1
Reading: TBD

Week 12: Example 2
Reading: TBD

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In the field of communication, method is typically treated as belonging to one of two categories — qualitative or quantitative. Even mixed method approaches take these categories for granted. But this dichotomy hides as much as it reveals, and other modes of inquiry, responding to other concerns, are not only possible but desirable.

This book is the record of a doctoral-level methods seminar at the University of Ottawa in Fall 2020, during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. The authors ran the seminar through email, preserving their messages here. The readings challenged familiar methodological paradigms by questioning their epistemological and ontological bases. The first half of the seminar asked about language and persuasion, which are not neutral tools. Indeed, they actively shape our encounter with the world we claim to be studying, and their methodological implications demand sustained reflection. But these approaches, too, hide as much as they reveal: the philosophy that grounds them is subject to politics and, in some cases, the bald assertion of power. Thus the second half examined challenges to Western methodological hegemony, in particular from Indigenous perspectives.