

Introduction

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We are proud to present nine essays in this year's issue that embody the diverse scholarly pursuits of the UVic English community. While diverse—covering a range of texts from Chaucer to Childish Gambino—the essays in this issue are all interested in the influence of form on knowledge.

Kathryn LeBere shows how formal biblical allusions underpin the arboreal in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and suggest polyvalent readings of knowledge in the tales. Amanda Scherr and Esther Callo use formal analysis to reveal the social preoccupations with femininity in canonical Western literature—the works of Mary Wollstonecraft for Scherr and criticism of *The Odyssey* and the Bible for Callo. Lily Maase explores the forms of texture and how they inform perceptions and expressions of gender in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*. Ryann Anderson juxtaposes the Western and Latin American literary allusions in Cherríe L. Moraga's *The Hungry Woman*, revealing their effect on gender dynamics in the play. Christopher Horne provides a narratological analysis of Jennifer Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, arguing that diegetic gaps in the text fracture readers' assumed chronology. Erin Chewter examines André Alexis's *Fifteen Dogs*, showing how the violent behaviour of dogs in the novel functions as an allegory for human ideologies of fascism and violence. Drew Marie Beard argues that feminist oral forms in Larissa Lai's *The Tiger Flu* perpetuate historical and cultural knowledge despite dystopic environmental devastation. Kate Wallace Fry explores how Childish Gambino's "This Is America" exploits absurdism to both subvert conventional musical forms and critique the culture industry in America. All of these essays show how their respective source texts address epistemological problems through form. Accordingly, we have ordered the essays by their source text's year of publication to emphasize the development of this concern from Chaucer's tales to

contemporary pop culture. Thus, we begin with Chaucer's Edenic allusions (LeBere) and end with Childish Gambino's hip-hop music video (Fry). In the intervening essays, we encounter the late-eighteenth-century proto-feminist enlightenment (Scherr), assumptions of male authorship in late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century criticisms of canonical Western literature (Callo), second-wave feminist critiques of gender roles (Maase and Anderson), concerns that emerged from 9/11 (Horne), and recent Canadian dystopic novels (Chewter and Beard).

In our first essay, Kathryn LeBere analyzes formal allusions to the tree of knowledge in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (1387–1400), arguing that “the arboreal is imbued with symbolic and allegorical meaning” (16). Examining how Chaucer exploits biblical allegories of the Garden of Eden in “The Merchant's Tale” and “The Pardoner's Tale,” she reveals how Chaucer “complicat[es] the idea of knowledge in both tales” (16).

Our next four essays all engage with cultural understandings of femininity. Amanda Scherr problematizes Mary Wollstonecraft's proto-feminism, lauding her advancement of women's rights in the eighteenth century but critiquing her idealization of motherhood. Examining Wollstonecraft's body of work alongside both eighteenth-century contexts and contemporary criticism, Scherr argues that, despite her then-radical feminism, Wollstonecraft remains “burdened by the patriarchal constructs she seeks to escape” (32). While Scherr critiques eighteenth-century proto-feminism, Esther Callo critiques late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarly assumptions of male authorship. Explaining how Samuel Butler and Harold Bloom presume male authorship of anonymous canonical texts, Callo reveals how “the long-standing default use of the pronoun ‘he’ when authorship is unknown... eclips[es] the possibility of female authorship” (34). Equally concerned with constructions of gender, Lily Maase identifies how the textures of both art and clothing are gendered in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* (1988) and argues that the novel's narrator uses subversive textures in her own art to reclaim her unique gender expres-

sion. Ryann Anderson, examining Cherríe L. Moraga's *The Hungry Woman* (1995), argues that the play "juxtapose[es] ... Western allusions and Latin American mythology" to challenge patriarchal binaries and imagine new futures for the Chicano movement (49).

Our next three essays delve into the twenty-first-century ideological concerns that underpin three contemporary novels. Analyzing the narratological preoccupations of Jennifer Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (2010), Christopher Horne identifies diegetic gaps in the novel's narration, which break the chronological plot and promote "associative narrative building" (65). While Horne investigates narrative, our next essay examines allegory. Erin Chewter grapples with the "human-like violence" (66) of the dogs in André Alexis's *Fifteen Dogs* (2015), arguing that it functions as an allegory of fascism and coins the term "dogism" to emphasize that connection. In the next essay, Drew Marie Beard argues that, in spite of the bleak environmental contexts of Larissa Lai's *The Tiger Flu* (2018), the novel provides hope for cultural continuance through feminist oral history.

Our last essay leaves behind the written word to analyze a distinctly modern form: the music video. Kate Wallace Fry combines early twentieth-century critical and literary theory with an analysis of musical form to argue that Childish Gambino's "This Is America" (2018) exploits the "devices and approaches popularized by absurdist art movements" to critique the normalization of racism and gun violence in America (84).

Whether analyzing texts from the Middle Ages or the contemporary moment, all of these essays address the influence of form on our understanding of knowledge, thereby positioning literature as a forum for epistemological questioning. While you're reading the following essays, we therefore invite you to consider how we come to know what we know.

