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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA CRUZ

**DECIDING THE LETTER:
READING, ETHICS, AND LANGUAGE POLITICS IN
ANCIENT GREEK AND CONTEMPORARY US LATINA/O LITERATURES**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

LITERATURE

by

Kendra A. Dority

June 2016

The Dissertation of Kendra A. Dority is
approved:

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Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

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ABSTRACT

Deciding the Letter: Reading, Ethics, and Language Politics in Ancient Greek and Contemporary U.S. Latina/o Literatures

Kendra A. Dority

This dissertation contends that we must account for the values we have inherited from the Greco-Roman tradition, and for the (anti-)colonial histories of the Americas, when we practice and teach reading in the United States today. This comparative study of ancient Greek literature from the Second Sophistic (c. 60-230 CE) and post-1960s U.S. Latina/o literature examines the intersection of ethics, reading, and language politics to reconsider our own conceptions of literacy, literary reading, and education in the present. Both literary traditions exhibit a heightened attention to the educational models and language hierarchies that shape readers into social and political subjects. In the Second Sophistic, Greek writers actively produced a “classical” heritage, as well as their own sociopolitical identities, through literary and linguistic training in an elite Greek dialect; this cultural education was entangled with legacies of Greek and Roman imperialism and conquest. Similarly, contemporary U.S. Latina/o writers grapple with the colonial and the revolutionary legacies of alphabetic literacy in the Americas, especially the relationship between literate education (in a dominant, colonial language) and sociopolitical belonging. Latina/o writers contest the equation of (proper) English with U.S. sociopolitical inclusion to summon a more inclusive, multilingual reading public.

Beginning with the second- or third-century CE work of Athenaeus, and moving to the work of Julia Alvarez in the early twenty-first century, the first two chapters argue for the ethical significance of reading practices that diverge from normative educational models of linguistic and literary mastery. The final two chapters emphasize how the embodied dimensions of reading intersect with language politics. The literary production of Lucian in the second century and of Norma Elia Cantú in the late twentieth century highlight the material dimensions of language and literacy instruction, such as forms of bodily discipline that train readers' gestures and tongues. Ultimately, this study argues that how we conceive of, practice, and teach reading are of ethical importance; it seeks an inclusive understanding of reading that accounts for a plurality of perspectives, multiple literacies and linguistic heritages, and the diverse embodied practices of readers.

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*

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INTRODUCTION

“Would such a history really have depended on a single letter, the ω , the omega opening its mouth and tossing a sentence to the other? Hardly anything at all? Less than a letter?”

—Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship* (189)

“[W]e are free to copy and paste, as we do even when we are reading the most restrictive text.”

—Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (33)

In a Greek text written in the Roman Empire during the second or third century CE, three “illiterate” characters each attempt to read a Greek inscription. Noting their inexperience with alphabetic writing, they feel uncomfortable performing this task. They do not know how to sound out the letters by equating each written letter with a corresponding, spoken sound. Nor do they know how to group the letters together to form an intelligible word. Instead, to convey the information in the inscription, they describe what the letters look like. In doing so, they find familiar shapes in the unfamiliar letters. A sigma (Σ), for example, “resembles a twisting lock of hair” for one of these characters. For another, the same letter looks like a “Scythian bow.” An epsilon (E) “looks like a trident turned sideways,” and a theta (Θ) looks like a well-measured circle that was created by a lathe (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 454b-f). Some of the letters present more difficulty, however, as the struggling readers are unable to associate them with familiar shapes. Noting the particular difficulty of the fifth letter of the inscription, one reader describes it as “two marks that are separated from one another” on the top, but that “merge into a single base”

(454 b-c). This letter, as readers who are more familiar with the Greek alphabet might know, is an upsilon (Υ).

These “illiterate” characters, who appear in Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophistae* (*The Learned Banqueters*), do not read the alphabetic inscription according to the norms of decipherment in Athenaeus’ time—or in our own. They are not able to easily and quickly identify the word in front of them. Rather, when they are confronted with unfamiliar letters, they employ an imaginative practice that produces figuration. That is, they find figures (shapes and contours) in the letters, and also represent the letters figuratively, by analogizing them to other objects. In doing so, they slow down the process of deciphering written language. They bring attention to the temporal and hermeneutic gaps that exist between the moment of encountering written letters and the moment of correctly identifying them or making their meaning intelligible. They demonstrate that readers’ imaginations fill in these gaps.

Jump with me to the late twentieth century, to a poem published in the United States in 1995. In Julia Alvarez’s “El Otro Lado,” a struggling schoolgirl in the Dominican Republic similarly brings imaginative attention to alphabetic letters. She practices writing out the Spanish alphabet by reading the letters her teacher has written on the blackboard. In the process, she imagines that the letters have bodies. “Big *A*,” for example, holds her “hands on her hips” as she “strides over distances,” while “big *B* puffs out his bully chest,” “big *C* smiles,” and “big *D*” shows off his “Roman belly” (X.17, 21, 25). Unlike the “illiterate” readers of Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophistae*, this young reader is able to identify the names of the letters before

her. However, the letters are still strange enough that writing them is physically difficult for her: her body “bends” and “twist[s]” while she “copies out / in tortured script the tidy alphabet” that her teacher has written “on the model top line” (X.11-15). Like Athenaeus’ “illiterate” readers, Alvarez’s reader occupies a position of imperfect learning; she does not read or write letters with ease or mastery. Yet, also like the “illiterate” readers who appear in a text centuries before her, she shows that the practice of deciphering written language is an imaginative one.

These fictional readers, who were created in different historical moments and cultural contexts, present a way of thinking about reading that guides *Deciding the Letter*. These readers are engaged in what we might consider to be basic acts of deciphering. That is, to those of us whose reading practices are more highly trained and more habitual, the acts of identifying letters and copying the alphabet, or of conveying what is written in a short inscription, may not seem to demand a high level of skill, interpretive aptitude, or imaginative engagement. Because of their relative unfamiliarity with alphabetic writing, these readers may appear to us to simply be “beginners”; they struggle because they are still in a stage of early learning that will, perhaps, lead them toward more literate practices. Indeed, this logic undergirds the categorization of Athenaeus’ readers as “illiterate” within *Deipnosophistae*; they do not practice the same forms of erudite reading that a group of well-read scholars, which is also depicted within the same text, practice. When compared with these highly educated scholars, these “illiterate” readers are slow and unmethodical, lacking the proper training to read inscriptions well and with ease.

However, Athenaeus' and Alvarez's readers perform a kind of textual engagement that we might consider to be "literary." That is, from their unlearned positions, they are able to employ imaginative attention and engage with figuration when they encounter written language. These practices invoke a certain conception of "literariness"—which includes literary texts as institutionally and culturally defined, their attributes, and the interpretive practices that readers bring to them—that resists the efficient communication of a stable message. For example, Derek Attridge indicates a long tradition of defining literary texts as those that do not "enable us to process them efficiently." Although they can offer an entry point into understanding the historical and cultural variables that shaped their production, literary texts do not easily provide "extractable content" or information that is immediately useful or easily communicable (Attridge, *Singularity* 7, 93). Working from a tradition similar to Attridge's, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak recommends that we take "figuration" as a guiding notion for thinking about literature. Because figurative language describes indirectly, and because it invites a multiplicity of interpretations, figuration can help us to think about the limits of rational discourse and the "demand [...] for [...] immediate comprehensibility" (Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* 71). When Athenaeus' and Alvarez's readers engage closely with texts, attend to figuration, and do not expect that what they read will result in easily transmittable knowledge, they attest to the difficulty of distinguishing literary language from other forms of language use. When these readers engage with figuration at the level of the individual letter, they de-familiarize the basic units of written alphabetic language that learned readers

might take for granted. Ultimately, they show how any act of reading could potentially be “literary.”

Together, these fictional readers demonstrate that “merely” deciphering a written text, on the one hand, and a more interpretive and imaginative method of reading, on the other hand, may not be easily distinguishable. In the contexts in which these fictional readers appear, the blurred lines that might otherwise distinguish these practices from one another also point to the difficulty of distinguishing unlearned readers from more erudite ones—categories that often translate to social hierarchies. The slippage between “mere” deciphering and literary reading, between untrained and erudite reading, invites us to rethink the different values we may currently afford to different styles of reading. When, for example, reading styles are ranked according to levels of education—such as in the common practice of designating reading level by grade level—this ranking helps to define the social positions of the readers who practice them. If the practices of “illiterate” and untrained readers are shown to produce close, critical attention to texts—results that have something in common with the practices of more highly trained readers—then we might wish to reexamine longstanding hierarchies that rank reading practices as well as readers.

Deciding the Letter argues that ancient Greek literature from a period known as the Second Sophistic (c. 60-230 CE) and post-1960s U.S. Latina/o literature have much to teach us about our current conceptions of literary reading. By historicizing recurrent hierarchies of reading practices in a longer history of reading in the west, this comparative study highlights how reading shapes social and political relations. In

both ancient Greek and contemporary United States contexts, education and access to literary culture are constructed as avenues for sociopolitical inclusion and socioeconomic betterment. In these contexts, to be deemed an improper, untrained, or illiterate reader is an exclusionary action. Both textual traditions thus demonstrate a heightened concern for reading practices, the valuation of readers, and the effects of these hierarchical valuations on social and political relations. *Deciding the Letter* attends to the readers who appear in ancient Greek and contemporary U.S. Latina/o texts, especially those who are perceived to be illiterate or untrained, because of their inability to access elite education, their culturally specific perspectives, their linguistic backgrounds, or their particular embodiment. By showing how their methods of reading are undervalued and yet able to generate alternative, non-hierarchical sociopolitical relations, *Deciding the Letter* invites a reconsideration of our own conceptions of literacy, literary reading, and education in our present. Ultimately, this study argues that how we conceive of, practice, and teach reading are of ethical importance; it seeks an inclusive notion of reading that can account for a plurality of perspectives and the diverse embodied practices of readers.

Unintended Collectivities: A Comparative Methodology

In her call for a “New Comparative Literature” in *Death of a Discipline* (2003), Spivak seeks disciplinary practices that cross traditional borders, that is, practices that value interdisciplinarity and non-dominant cultural production (7). In doing so, she makes a surprising connection between a collection of literary lectures

written in England in 1929 and twenty-first-century subaltern cultural practices in the Global South. While reading Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, Spivak discovers "an unpredictable filiation" with the subaltern communities with whom she has worked in more recent years. This unexpected association is sparked when Spivak reads Woolf's "insert[ion of] women as women into the question of friendship"—that is, her re-gendering of a historically masculine model of collectivity.¹ More specifically, Spivak is struck by Woolf's idea that "one of the greatest gains brought by the emancipation of women was the possibility of writing, in fiction: 'Chloe liked Olivia...'" (32). Within twenty-first-century subaltern cultural formations, Spivak intuits a similar kind of "originary queerness" that enacts alternatives to capitalist social formations so often dependent upon the heterosexual, patriarchal nuclear family (32-3). This exciting connection is by no means a direct one; Spivak does not claim that Woolf's text directly influenced these subaltern communities, for instance, or that Woolf was thinking about what is now termed "the Global South" when she was writing her lectures. Moreover, Spivak's connection is surprising given the critical history of *A Room of One's Own*. Focusing on Woolf's call for "a room of one's own and 500 pounds a year," some scholars have critiqued this limited view of gender equity that does not fully account for class difference and global structures of

¹ Here, Spivak engages with Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* (1997 [1994]), which deconstructs the logofratrocentrism of democracy—a political formation that is, for us, the "broadest institutional collectivity imaginable," as Spivak puts it (*Death of a Discipline* 31). For Spivak, Woolf's text "prefigures [...] Derrida's concerns" about the gendered history of friendship and the political structures founded upon a masculinist notion of collectivity (32).

socioeconomic inequity.² Adopting a different approach, Spivak makes *A Room of One's Own* relevant to the urgent work of rethinking dominant global capitalist structures.

What I want to emphasize are the methods by which Spivak makes these unexpected connections. Spivak forges a link between Woolf's 1929 collection of lectures and current subaltern community formations through imaginative reading practices that create new relations across distances. Spivak's reading of Woolf models the practice of *teleopoiesis*, a term that Spivak adopts from Derrida and describes as a process of "copying and pasting" that readers employ when reading across different contexts and forging creative connections across distance.³ This reading practice is possible due to the very structure of texts, and of language more generally; readers can "copy and paste" because texts, in full or in part, can be cited, that is, brought into new contexts. For example, Spivak writes of this particular moment in Woolf's work as "an open-ended structure that can be reconstellated, levered off from its textual location, copied from Bloomsbury and pasted on to the narrative" of her observations of subaltern cultural formations (32-33). In other words, Woolf's formulation of what Spivak calls a "new gendered collectivity" (34) is not fully bound to Woolf's text, its

² Important dialogues with *A Room of One's Own* have especially emerged among women of color writers. Gloria Anzaldúa's "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers" (1981) is a powerful interlocutor with Woolf's text: "Forget the room of one's own," Anzaldúa insists, "—write in the kitchen, lock yourself up in the bathroom. Write on the bus or the welfare line [...] No long stretches at the typewriter unless you're wealthy or have a patron—you may not even own a typewriter" (168).

³ See Corinne Scheiner, "Teleiopoiesis, Telepoesis, and the Practice of Comparative Literature" (2015), which elucidates the "negotiation of distance"—including temporal and spatial distance as well as "metaphoric distance of alterity"—in the work of Derrida and Spivak (240).

historical moment, or cultural context. A reader can actively make (*poiesis*) connections across different contexts, by “levering off” textual moments and “reconstellating” them with other narratives, where “reconstellation” is an act of gathering together aspects of different traditions and texts into a new relation. Importantly, this creative act can form an “unintended collectivity”; Spivak’s reading practices generate a collectivity of women, which she sees anticipated in Woolf’s call for readers to “work” for a more equitable future (34-35). A reader’s creative connections can therefore be politically generative because they make room for new or non-dominant social forms.

Spivak’s formulation of reconstellated collectivities, produced by reading across historical and cultural distance, guides my comparative methodology in *Deciding the Letter*. This dissertation is not about modernist literature or subaltern communities in the Global South. But it does argue for the relevance of a temporally distant textual tradition to the more recent literary production of people who have historically been marginalized in the United States. Just as Spivak resists a developmental model of influence in the relationship between Woolf’s text and more recent subaltern social practices, I make an argument for bringing ancient Greek and contemporary U.S. Latina/o texts together based on their shared conceptual approaches to reading. When I first began working with Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophistae* and read, in book 10, the series of citations from ancient Greek dramatic texts featuring “illiterate” characters making sense of written inscriptions, the connections I began to make with twentieth- and twenty-first century U.S. Latina/o literature were

surprising and unpredictable. I found that the readers depicted in Greek texts from the Second Sophistic have something in common with the readers depicted in recent U.S. Latina/o literature. Albeit in different historical contexts, these readers confront the relationship between educational training, language use, and social configurations when they read.

What are the stakes of formulating an “unintended collectivity” consisting of readers from two literary traditions that are in many ways distant from one another? To begin, this collectivity, generated by a necessarily uneven comparison of two literary traditions, does not indicate equivalence. Rather, the collectivity generated by my comparative reading leaves room for difference and the specificity of historical context. Bringing these readers together also actively invites us to rethink how we imagine the present relevance and uses of the classical past. Such a collectivity of readers does not solidify the cultural authority of the “classics,” but allows the texts of Greek antiquity to alter the dominant educational paradigms in which they have traditionally been utilized. Moreover, this collectivity of readers produces a sense of political urgency: U.S. Latina/o texts accentuate the very material effects and politically relevant stakes of reading that may not be apparent when reading texts from the distant past.

Following the work of Page duBois, Karen Bassi, and J. Peter Euben, *Deciding the Letter* considers voices from Greek antiquity as productive interlocutors with the present without seeking to reinscribe the privilege that has been afforded them in modern thought. Emphasizing “the persistence and danger of [the]

assumption” that Greeks are “originary” and “original” in the “West,” Bassi and Euben suggest that Greek texts operate “as an open-ended future,” allowing for both interdisciplinary inquiry and an examination of the “effects of the Greek ‘legacy’” in modern political and cultural venues (xi-xii). DuBois similarly urges us to question the idealized version of antiquity that we have inherited. “[I]t is in part because of the human labor expended on understanding the Greco-Roman past that it has significance for all of us who live in some place in its aftermath,” duBois writes, proposing that we examine our relationship to a past that has been “named as the origin of our own,” that is, as the birthplace of “western” civilization, democracy, and literature (*Sappho is Burning* 3, 25). Even while inviting us to see similarities between present and ancient cultural and political configurations, duBois, Bassi and Euben emphasize the limits of “turning history into a source of likeness” (Bassi and Euben xii). More specifically, duBois asks us to attend to this past’s “otherness,” that is, to the ideas, frameworks, and experiences that “differ radically from our own” (*Sappho is Burning* 25). This toggling between the recognition of similarity and of difference suggests that engaging with ancient texts raises ethical questions: in thinking across such temporal distances, we must resist the urge to transform difference into sameness.

In the pages that follow, I articulate several resonances between the Greek Second Sophistic and our U.S. American present, based on shared mechanisms of globalization, shifts in textual production, and the sociopolitical effects of language hierarchies. At the same time, I highlight the “fragmentary, partial... messages” of

these ancient texts—that is, our inability to gain “pure, unmediated access to the past”—as duBois emphasizes in her own readings of ancient texts (*Sappho is Burning* 26-27; *Out of Athens* 24). The fragmentation and mediation that define present encounters with ancient texts are mirrored in Second Sophistic literature: Greek readers during this period, too, were constructing their own relationships to an ancient, often idealized, past. Their attempts, and failures, at fully mastering those ancient texts parallel our own.

The ethical questions raised when reading ancient texts are also central to the field of Comparative Literature, which we might define by its methods of reading. Comparative methods of reading focus on relations across texts and traditions, rather than assuming the boundedness of, for example, nationally defined canons and language traditions. As Haun Saussy puts it, “Comparative reading is engaged with specificity and relation: the specificity of the object [...] and the relations that new reading creates among its objects” (“Exquisite Cadavers” 24). In other words, comparatists seek to respect the particularity of each text—the nuances of a text’s historical and cultural context, the conditions of its production, and its readership—while generating new relations when taking texts out of their contexts. The points of similarity between issues addressed in Greek texts from the Second Sophistic and those in U.S. Latina/o texts in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries—including language politics, inflections of imperialism and colonialism in educational models, and the social effects of reading practices—do not erase the incongruences among their historical, cultural, and political contexts. Indeed, the imperfect nature of

such a comparison highlights the significance of leaving room for the divergences, differences, and non-correspondences that necessarily define the relations between these texts.

The notion of “ethics” that undergirds my readings of ancient Greek and contemporary Latina/o texts extends, in part, from my experience of reading these texts together. When in this dissertation I ask readers to consider forms of non-hierarchical social relations that respect difference and distance, I am also bringing attention to the ethical dimensions of reading comparatively. The ethical implications of the structure and methodology of this project, and of the content of its arguments, are therefore mutually productive. *Deciding the Letter* contends that a comparative study of literary reading across diverse cultural and historical contexts can best address the intersection of reading, social relations, and ethics.

Comparative Histories of Reading

Attention to the social dimensions of reading in ancient Greek literature and in U.S. Latina/o literature is not my own; many scholars in each field have laid the groundwork for such a comparative study.⁴ In *Deciding the Letter*, I highlight the

⁴ For histories of reading in the ancient world, see Jesper Svenbro, *Phrasikleia: An Anthropology of Reading in Ancient Greece* (1993 [1988]); Rosalind Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (1992); Simon Goldhill, “Literary History without Literature: Reading Practices in the Ancient World” (1999); Harvey Yunis (ed.), *Written Texts and the Rise of Literate Culture in Ancient Greece* (2003); William Johnson (ed.), *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome* (2009); and William Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire* (2010). For Latina/o and Latin American Studies scholars’ engagement with histories of reading and interpretive practices, see Joanne Rappaport and Tom Cummins, *Beyond the Lettered City: Indigenous Literacies in the Andes* (2012); Elizabeth Boone and Walter Mignolo (eds.), *Writing without Words: Alternative*

significance of alphabetic literacy in these histories of reading, and thus have a special interest in a definition of reading that begins at the level of the alphabetic letter. Scholarship on literacy and reading in the ancient world has a history of privileging the uniqueness of the Greek phonetic alphabet and its significance in the development of western literary cultures and political institutions. It has been claimed that the Greek adoption of a phonetic alphabet—based on an alphabetic system that has non-Greek origins—introduced efficiency into oral reading practices (a common form of reading in antiquity) insofar as ancient readers are imagined to have mastered the correspondences between a configuration of letters and their associated sounds.⁵ In the chapters that discuss scenes of reading in Greek literature produced during the Second Sophistic (c. 60-230 CE), I focus on the uncertainties of reading alphabetic letters to offer a different view of reading in antiquity. This view counteracts assumptions about the stability, efficiency, and uniqueness of the Greek phonetic alphabet, and thus reworks the residual privileging of Greek institutions. In the background of Latina/o Studies scholarship on reading publics is a long history of clashes over writing systems and reading practices in the Americas. In this history, alphabetic writing has been used as the standard by which to assess an individual's or

Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes (1994); Manuel Martín-Rodríguez, *Life in Search of Readers: Reading (in) Chicano/a Literature* (2003); and Frances R. Aparicio, "On Sub-Versive Signifiers: Tropicalizing Language in the United States" (1997). Viewing translation as a form of reading—following Spivak's formulation that reading *is* translation—I also include Norma Alarcón's "Traddutora, Traditora: A Paradigmatic Figure of Chicana Feminism" (1989) in this list (Spivak, "Translation as Culture" 13).

⁵ For example, see Eric Havelock, *The Literate Revolution in Greece and its Cultural Consequences* (1982).

a culture's literacy level and relative "civilizational" status.⁶ The colonial uses of alphabetic writing thus provide a key connection to ancient Greek writings, and present the historical backdrop to my exploration of the political possibilities of alphabetic reading in contemporary Latina/o texts.

Each of these textual traditions addresses a significant aspect of a history of reading in the west. Greek writing in the Roman Empire during the Second Sophistic grapples with the heritage (and active creation) of a "classical" tradition as a source of literate education—a heritage that was entangled with Greek and Roman imperialism and conquest. Post-1960s U.S. Latina/o literature engages with both the colonial and the revolutionary legacies of literacy education in the Americas. In texts from both of these traditions, scenes of reading both depict and question the social, cultural, and political dynamics of literate education within their historical contexts. These scenes of reading also demonstrate how histories of colonialism and imperialism—and of resistance to these forces—shape reading practices and the values afforded to those practices. It is a central assertion of this dissertation that we must account for these legacies—the values we have inherited and adopted from the classical tradition, and the (de)colonial histories of the Americas that shape our present—when we talk about reading in the United States today.

We might see the Second Sophistic period as akin to our own. Scholars of antiquity have likened the effects of an expanding Roman Empire—especially a heightened sense of interconnectivity between distant locations that promotes cultural

⁶ See especially Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (1995).

diversity as well as increased social inequality—to modern conceptions of globalization.⁷ While Rome in the first centuries CE did not know the forms of digitization, virtual interconnectivity, and flows of information that we may associate with our digital era, the Second Sophistic is marked by a shift in textual production that facilitated information accumulation and extraction. As Tim Whitmarsh and Jason König demonstrate, this period’s increased production of textual compilations and encyclopedic texts shows that readers were working with large amounts of information, gathering pre-existing textual material and re-presenting it according to new logics of organization (3, 29). In addition to this form of “extensive reading,” the first centuries CE saw the development of a broader, though still stratified, reading public, and a “consumer” culture marked by the distribution of less “learned” literature (Cavallo 82). Texts took new shapes to reach these new publics—most notably the codex, a textual format that was associated with a less wealthy reading public and that facilitated different kinds of reading practices, including more fragmentary, discontinuous reading styles such as cross-referencing, scanning, and non-linear reading (Cavallo 84, 88-89; König and Whitmarsh 34). While second-century CE Greek scholars were more likely reading from bookrolls than from

⁷ See Martin Pitts and Miguel John Versluys (eds.), *Globalisation and the Roman World: World History, Connectivity, and Material Culture* (2015). Jason König and Tim Whitmarsh (eds.) call the Roman Empire a globalizing culture when they discuss the “universalizing” effects of imperial knowledge in *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire* (2007: 12). See also Daniel S. Richter, *Cosmopolis: Imagining Community in Late Classical Athens and the Early Roman Empire* (2011), which explores the early imperial endeavor to construct a “universal” or unified human community in the context of a broadening empire.

codices,⁸ these shifts in textual production demonstrate the analogies between the Second Sophistic and our own moment. Both the Second Sophistic and our twenty-first century “age of information” emphasize increased interconnectivity, shifting modes of textual production, and a heightened interest in how readers interact with textual material.

The political hegemony of Rome facilitated the spread of dominant cultural institutions, as well as the ascendancy of the languages of empire, Greek and Latin. Especially in the eastern parts of the empire, Rome’s dominant cultural institution was Greek cultural education, or *paideia*, which positioned Greek as a dominant language. Greek cultural institutions and dialects maintained prestige under Rome because of earlier Greek imperial dominance, starting with Athens’ ascendancy over other Greek city-states in the fifth century BCE, and intensified by Alexander’s military campaigns in the fourth century BCE and the subsequent colonization of the eastern Mediterranean and Asia Minor during the Hellenistic period. Rome thus gained political control over many populations that spoke, in addition to other languages, the official language of the Hellenistic empire, that is, the “common” (*koine*) dialect of Greek. The sense of a shared “Greekness” under Rome was thus the product of empire.⁹

⁸ While the first reference to the codex is found in Martial’s first-century CE poetry (*Epigrams* 1.2; 14.184-92), William Johnson reports that the bookroll was still the primary format of literary texts in the second century, especially for non-Christian writers (“The Ancient Book” 266).

⁹ Under Roman rule, Greekness was defined through intellectual and philosophical production, in contradistinction to Roman political management. This distinction both enhanced Roman political power and positioned Greece as an “originator of ideas,” allowing Greeks to control epistemological production (König and Whitmarsh 16-19).

But imperial expansion through culture, language, and education facilitates more than just a sense of interconnection and cultural cohesion; it also facilitates further differentiation, often through intensified socioeconomic and political hierarchies.¹⁰ This differentiation is visible in the politics of language use: to signal further refinement from the populations who spoke *koine*, members of elite classes, primarily in the eastern side of the empire, adopted the classical Attic dialect as a prestige literary language.¹¹ An idealized Greek dialect utilized in literary texts of the “classical” period—that is, the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, when Athens held cultural and political dominance over other Greek city-states—classical Attic became a key component of *paideia*, or Greek cultural education. Being deemed highly literate thus required gaining a deep knowledge of texts written in a form of Greek that was no longer in popular use. These forms of social differentiation through educational access and linguistic training provide the backdrop for the appearance of the “illiterate” readers in Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophistae*: their practices appear to be untrained and uneducated when compared with the elite forms of linguistic and literary training prized during the Second Sophistic.

Moreover, the performance of specialized literary and linguistic training during this period helped to define “Greekness” itself as a cultural identity.¹² In this

¹⁰ On the production of both cultural homogeneity and cultural heterogeneity in the context of modern globalization, see Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (1996).

¹¹ See especially Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50-250* (1996).

¹² On the performance of “Greekness” through *paideia*, see especially Goldhill (ed.), *Being Greek Under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire* (2001). On the gendered dynamics of this performance, see Maud Gleason, *Making Men:*

educational model, the literary and linguistic training required to read the idealized texts written in classical Attic was often only accessible to members of elite classes—thus further restricting access to forms of social and cultural inclusion. Texts from the Second Sophistic often thematize this form of cultural education, showing how literacy is defined by the language and by the methods of reading that are most valued, usually by elite readers. Greek texts from this period are thus productive sites from which to think about the social effects of reading. These texts also grapple with long-standing hierarchies among reading practices and readers that, while undoubtedly taking different forms in different contexts, shape our current understanding of what constitutes literate reading today.

In the United States today, hierarchies of reading practices are informed by the colonial histories of literate education in the Americas. Contemporary U.S. Latina/o literatures address the longstanding link between political inclusion and literacy that has been shaped by such histories. Beginning in the sixteenth century in what would become Latin America, literacy in alphabetic writing—both in Castilian Spanish and in newly alphabetized indigenous languages—was central to missionary efforts to convert and “civilize” indigenous American peoples, who maintained other communicative practices, often non-alphabetic or non-written.¹³ In the ensuing

Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome (1995). On the diversity of voices and practices that both comprised “Greekness” as a cultural identity and undermined its stability, see Nathanael Andrade, *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World* (2013).

¹³ On indigenous literacies and the transculturation of European and indigenous methods of communication, see especially Boone and Mignolo (eds.), *Writing without Words* (1994); Rappaport and Cummins (eds.), *Beyond the Lettered City* (2012); and Matt Cohen and Jeffrey Glover (eds.), *Colonial Mediascapes: Sensory Worlds of the Early Americas* (2014).

centuries, alphabetic literacy and access to texts has also been restricted to elite groups in order to maintain class, race, and gender hierarchies.¹⁴ As a result of this history, literacy education has also played a key role in revolutionary movements across the Americas. For example, anti-colonial independence movements in Latin America have employed instruction in alphabetic literacy as a means to empower the classes of people who have been marginalized by a long history of socioeconomic and racialized inequity.¹⁵ Given these histories, de-colonizing knowledge production is a central issue for many Latin American and Latina/o Studies scholars.

Emphasizing the epistemological effects of colonialism that continue to shape knowledge production today, they call on us to attend to alternative (non-hegemonic) ways of thinking generated from the perspectives and experiences of marginalized subjects.¹⁶

¹⁴ Uses of the printing press in Latin America, for example, helped to maintain social hierarchies; initially used to distribute printed catechisms and other books for the intellectual and religious colonization of indigenous groups, by the mid-seventeenth century it served the needs of the lettered *criollo* classes (Calvo 139). For a view of Latina/o engagements with print culture that allows for a broader range of literacy practices, see Kirsten Silva Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture: The Transamerican Origins of Latino Writing* (2002). For more on the uses of the “western book” in Latin America, see also Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance* (1995).

¹⁵ The most salient example to this dissertation is Cuba’s literacy campaign in 1961, part of Castro’s revolution to oust U.S.-backed dictator Batista. Other famous examples include the Sandinista literacy campaign of 1980 in Nicaragua, which included, in its subsequent phases, campaigns in indigenous languages for non-Spanish speakers; and Brazil’s National Literacy Campaign of 1964, in which Paulo Freire played an important role until he was exiled to Chile. Mary Louise Pratt clarifies that Latin American independence movements constitute a “process of partial decolonization,” as they often “relegitimize and refunctionalize colonial hierarchies and the practices and institutions that sustained them” (“In the Neocolony” 463).

¹⁶ On the “epistemic decolonial turn” in Latin American studies, see Ramón Grosfoguel’s essay in Mignolo and Arturo Escobar (eds.), *Globalization and the Decolonial Option* (2013: 65-77). Mignolo’s scholarship especially focuses on the epistemological effects of coloniality and the importance of “situated knowledge”; see his “Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-Coloniality” in the same collection (303-

In the United States, colonial ideologies have shaped transnational political relations and the uses of literate education from the nation's inception into the present. Especially pertinent to this dissertation are the histories of U.S. expansionism in the nineteenth century, such as the annexation of over half of Mexico's territory in 1848. Likewise, this dissertation addresses U.S. imperialist interventions in Latin American, especially Caribbean, nations in the twentieth century, including economic hegemony and political occupation. These imperialist histories highlight the uses of language and cultural literacy to "Americanize" populations living in acquired territory, such as in what is now the U.S. American Southwest, as well as the efforts to de-colonize educational practices in relation to not only European colonization but also U.S. globalizing imperialism, such as in the Dominican Republic and Cuba. These histories—both colonial and anti-colonial—shape the experiences and literary production of Latinas/os in the United States.

In recent years, efforts to maintain the national dominance of English and to define literacy according to Standard English usage in the U.S., exemplify how colonial and imperialist ideologies shape political relations and educational practices.¹⁷ These efforts, for instance in the re-emergence of English-only campaigns in the 1990s, are a reaction to what Frances R. Aparicio and Susana Chávez-

368). See also Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussell, and Carlos Jáuregui's edited collection, *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate* (2008), especially José Rabasa, "Thinking Europe in Indian Categories" (43-76).

¹⁷ Assertions about the ascendancy of English in the United States disavow the nation's rich multilingual history. For a multilingual view of U.S. American literary history, see Werner Sollors (ed.), *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature* (1998).

Silverman have termed the “latinization” of the United States. That is, English-only discourses are a reaction to the demographic growth and “visible empowerment” of Latinas/os, an identity category that is often defined linguistically, that is, by Spanish-language heritage (Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman 13). Anti-Latina/o, nativist discourses construct the categories of “citizen” and “foreigner” in the U.S. around not only perceived national origin but also language and literacy practices, highlighting an enduring link between (English) literacy and political inclusion in the United States. Latina/o literatures, especially texts written after the civil rights activism of the 1960s and ’70s, often undermine teleological narratives of literacy—including the “civilizing” narrative of progress toward alphabetic literacy in colonial contexts, and the assimilation narrative that transforms “foreigner” into “citizen” through the adoption of dominant U.S. language and cultural practices. By pointing out the colonial and imperialist residues within dominant ideas about literate education, Latina/o literature invites us to question the norms that shape our conceptions of what counts as “good” reading.

U.S. Latina/o literature and Greek texts from the Second Sophistic thus emphasize the role of language in the valuation of reading styles and of the readers who practice them. That is, in sociopolitical contexts where one language (or dialect) is valued over others, the language in which one reads is linked to political inclusion and social recognition. For Greek writers in the Roman Empire, learning the prestige literary language helped one to achieve an elite social status—and to maintain the exclusionary boundaries of an elite circle. Within this context, other, non-dominant

forms of language use—including languages other than Greek and Latin, as well as non-standard uses of Greek, that continued to thrive under both Hellenistic and Roman imperialism—were devalued in the eyes of the literary elite. The dominance of English as a political and literary language within the context of twenty-first-century globalization does not operate exactly as classical Attic did within a “globalizing” Roman Empire.¹⁸ For one thing, Rome conducted its empire in two hegemonic languages, Latin and Greek; in doing so, it tolerated the existing hegemony of Greek, the result of previous Hellenistic domination in the eastern parts of its empire. In the United States, the meeting of English and Spanish—two hegemonic, colonizing languages in the larger context of the Americas—has resulted in the devaluation of Spanish (in varying dialects) as a political and literary language. Other divergences from the norms of English, including the mixing of English and Spanish in forms of Spanglish, as well as “accented” speech, are also degraded. English as a dominant language functions, in part, by defining standard literacy practices, and thus shapes what counts as good reading in the United States.

In this context, many (though not all) U.S. Latina/o writers utilize linguistic practices that diverge from Standard English. These writers thus contest the equation of (proper) English use with political and social inclusion, and they instead summon a

¹⁸ A global language due in large part to U.S. American political and economic hegemony, English is tied to processes of economic and social advancement globally. At the same time, English, as a literary language, has become unmoored from its traditional national boundaries in the U.S. and Britain. On the “increasingly postnational” status of English literature, and the increasing interest in difference, rather than cultural homogeneity, in literary studies, see Paul Jay, “Beyond Discipline?: Globalization and the Future of English” (2001). For further discussion of the dominance of English in global publishing markets, see Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility* (2008 [1995]: 11-13).

more inclusive, multilingual reading public. Greek writers in the Second Sophistic ambivalently contest the elite status of classical Attic Greek. They do so when they reveal the difficulty of reading and mastering this dialect, demonstrating the great effort required to construct this language as a standard. Likewise, Greek writers who display signs of their cultured education, but also satirize the pretention of elite figures who speak and write in Attic, point to the instability and unevenness of this dialect's associated prestige. Importantly, both textual traditions locate their respective critiques of the dominant or prestige language—and of the social hierarchies it creates—within acts of reading. They thus show how reading, as defined by the politics of language use in each context, can both reproduce social hierarchies and become a site from which to imagine social relations differently.

The Social Effects of Reading: How You Read is an Ethical Question

In the classroom scene of Alvarez's "El Otro Lado" (1995), the schoolgirl who struggles to write out the Spanish alphabet discovers hierarchical relations among the letters. "The lowercase alters / but cannot escape / the precedent of its capital," she finds (X.26-30). The bodies of the lowercase letters are shaped in relation to their "bigger" counterparts: "little *a* tags behind" big *A*, "wagging her puppy tail"; "little *b* proudly imitates" big "bully" *B*; and little *c* is the "perfect child" and "nostalgic version" of big *C* (X.19-25). As these lowercase letters aim to follow or to imitate their capital counterparts, the schoolgirl also attempts to reproduce a "precedent" set by her teacher. Like the lowercase letters, her body contorts itself as

she attempts to copy the “model top line.” She “bend[s]” and “twist[s]” with effort, but the “tortured script” she produces cannot perfectly repeat the model writing of her teacher (X.11-15). The hierarchies embedded in written language bring attention to her own social position, hinting that the educational standards that measure her reading and writing practices help to contribute to her “lowercase” position.

The alphabetic hierarchies also raise the schoolgirl’s awareness of her family’s position within a hierarchical sociopolitical space. When she leaves the classroom, “[a]ll she can do is hope not to copy out / the sad example of her mother’s life / she does not want” (X.31-35). It is the “precedent” of her mother’s gendered experience of poverty—the “many [...] mouths to feed” and her mother’s “many worries” (X.39, 41)—that the schoolgirl wishes to escape. In the context of Alvarez’s poem, this poverty is a residue of the Dominican Republic’s colonial history and a result of the economic hegemony of the United States. The schoolgirl’s imaginative engagement with alphabetic letters allows her to read the social structures that shape her position both in the classroom and in a larger sociopolitical space. Alvarez’s poem thus offers an example of how reading—the methods by which one reads, and how one is taught to read—affects one’s social position. These social dimensions of reading appear often in both contemporary Latina/o and ancient Greek literatures, which demonstrate that one’s methods of reading affect not only how one relates to texts, but also how one relates to others.

Deciding the Letter thus views reading as an ethical endeavor, that is, as a practice that not only shapes individual habits but also orients one toward others. The

texts I discuss in this dissertation construct reading as an encounter with unfamiliarity, as an experience that combines the desire for comprehension with the inability to gain full knowledge, and as a mode for generating social relations—including the transformation of dominant, often hierarchical, social structures. These ethical dimensions of reading align with a notion of ethics that derives from the thinking of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Gloria Anzaldúa, Jacques Derrida, Peggy Kamuf, and Derek Attridge. These thinkers adopt a notion of ethics that is defined by our relations with others. That is, they question the very coherence of a single, individual “self” as the basis for ethics, and instead start with the idea that our relations with others constitute our very selves. An important aspect of their thought is the maintenance of the “otherness” of those with whom we are in relation: these thinkers emphasize the limitations of our full knowledge of or full access to others.¹⁹ As an extension of this thought, they see reading—especially literary reading—as an ethical encounter with our constitutive and mediated relations to others, and to otherness. They also see in acts of reading the potential to generate collectivities through the necessarily mediated relationships among readers, writers, and texts. The central ideas (defined below) that emerge from their work, and that play a significant role in this

¹⁹ On the influence of Levinas’ thinking on Derrida and other deconstructionist thinkers—namely, Levinas’ revision of philosophy’s focus on ontology when he names “the ethical” as an experience with irreducible alterity—see Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* (1992). Anzaldúa is not usually considered a deconstructionist or post-structuralist thinker, and it is important to associate her with a tradition of (third world) women of color theorists. However, in *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000), Chela Sandoval identifies lines of affinity among post-structuralist European thought (including Derrida’s theories) and U.S. Third World feminism (including the theoretical contributions of Anzaldúa). These lines of affinity include what Sandoval terms the “ethical” endeavor of “oppositional consciousness,” that is, a practice for reading ideological structures and “an apparatus for countering neocolonizing postmodern global formations” (1-2, 62).

dissertation, include undecidability and decision-making; (de-)habituation; unfamiliarity and difference; embodiment; and relationality.

For Derrida, the possibility for ethics depends on the aporetic structure of a decision. To understand Derrida's engagement with this idea, it is helpful to review how Aristotle constructed the relationship between ethics and decision-making in the fourth century BCE. Aristotle argued that the possibility of leading an ethical life, which for him was a life inclined toward "virtue," depends both on one's habitual disposition toward virtue and on a process of deliberation that allows one to make virtuous decisions (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1106a-1107b). This relationship between habit and deliberation is delicate: cultivating an inclination toward virtue helps one to become accustomed to making virtuous decisions, but this habituation also means that one is less likely to actually engage in ethical deliberation. For Derrida, the question of decision-making as it pertains to ethics also relates to the problem of a pre-determined set of behaviors or rules for action. No decision can take place without first engaging with an interruption of, or an opening within, a pre-determined set of rules or behaviors. Deliberation thus must encounter what he calls in some places a "perhaps," and in others, "undecidability." Derrida writes, "A decision can only come into being in a space that exceeds the calculable program that would destroy all responsibility by transforming it into a programmable effect of determinate causes. There can be no moral or political responsibility without this trial and this passage by way of the undecidable" (*Limited Inc* 116). In other words, it is not possible to make a decision if the "choice" is already pre-determined; one cannot take responsibility for

others, in an ethical or political sense, without this “experiment” with the unknown, with what is not already determined in advance.

However, Derrida clarifies that an act of decision-making also closes down the “perhaps” that allowed for the decision to happen in the first place. When Derrida writes that “no decision (ethical, juridical, political) is possible without interrupting determination by engaging oneself in the *perhaps*,” he also cautions that “the same decision must interrupt the very thing that is its condition of possibility: the *perhaps* itself” (*Politics of Friendship* 67). In other words, the rupture in the rules and pre-determined calculations that allows for a decision to take place, ultimately closes back up at the instant a decision is made. Further, Derrida adds, one *must* make a decision; one cannot engage indefinitely with this “perhaps.”

Derrida’s account of the aporetic structure of a decision relates to reading, as it points to the interplay between the necessary rules that guide reading (including grammar, syntax, and context) and the many interpretive possibilities that written language allows. Derrida offers a pertinent example of decision-making in relation to reading, when he discusses the frequent citation of a quote attributed Aristotle, “O my friends, there is no friend” (ὦ φίλοι, οὐδεὶς φίλος).²⁰ Noting the unstable transmission history of this ancient quotation (and of any ancient text), including the possibility that mistakes and misquotings could arise at any point in a copyist’s work, Derrida

²⁰ This exact phrase does not appear in Aristotle’s corpus, but is attributed to Aristotle in Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (5.1.21). In modern editions of Diogenes Laertius’ text, the quotation appears as “ὦ φίλοι, οὐδεὶς φίλος,” that is, with a dative singular relative pronoun at the start of the sentence, rather than a vocative. As Derrida shows, the phrase with the vocative has been (mis)quoted by a range of modern thinkers, from Montaigne, to Kant, to Nietzsche.

presents the possibility that the diacritical marks around a single letter—which determine both the letter’s pronunciation and its meaning in the sentence—could have been miscopied, or added, by later readers. He thus also hints at the methods for writing Greek script in the ancient world, in which a string of letters would be written without word divisions and without the diacritical marks that facilitate our reading of modern editions of ancient Greek texts today. Derrida presents his readers with the letter in question, an *omega* (ω), without any diacritical marks. Arguing that the “grammar, written form, and initial accentuation” of Aristotle’s phrase “still remain to be determined,” Derrida shows how the *omega* could be vocative ($\tilde{\omega}$), as it has often been cited by modern thinkers, or the dative singular of a relative pronoun ($\tilde{\phi}$), as it appears in its original source text. These small differences significantly change the meaning of the oft-cited phrase, and thus throw into question the philosophical interpretations of it (*Politics of Friendship* 189).²¹

Derrida’s reading of the ancient phrase points to the possibility for an engagement with the “undecidable,” the “perhaps,” in any reading—even in the most canonical, authoritative, seemingly certain interpretations of a text. At the same time, Derrida does not suggest that his divergent reading of the phrase (or, really, of a single letter, or the marks around that letter) opens up endless possibilities for

²¹ The difference would be between “O my friends, there is no friend” and “He for whom there are friends, has no friend” (Derrida, *PF* 209). Reading the second version of the phrase in the context of Aristotle’s discussion of friendship in *Nicomachean Ethics*, Derrida argues that it is more probable, though the vocative version has attained “canonical authority protected by great names,” that is, by the many famous thinkers who have cited this phrase (*PF* 208). The point of this reading, Derrida shows, is that there is a “pledge and a wager,” a “risk,” and “speculation” in all readings—even in cases when spelling and grammar may seem more certain (*PF* 208).

interpreting any text—ancient or otherwise. Indeed, Derrida’s new reading offers a different interpretation of the phrase, but it does so while accounting for the material histories of “transcription, translation, [and] tradition” that help to determine our interpretations (*PF* 189). Finally, Derrida affirms that we must decide on what may seem undecidable, if we are to read at all.

Derrida’s reading of Aristotle confirms that reading depends upon necessary rules; in order to make intelligible meaning, and to discuss our interpretations with others, we need such rules. His discussion also points to the ways that reading and interpretative practices can become habitual and unquestioned, resulting in interpretations that become codified—and that thus block out other possibilities.²² Anzaldúa’s work elucidates the ethical implications of certain forms of habituation in reading. When readers are socialized into normative habits of reading, she suggests, they tend to focus on what is already familiar to them within the texts they read. As a result, they either ignore what is unfamiliar or different in a text, or transform that unfamiliarity into something more familiar and understandable (“Too Queer” 171). In other words, how one practices reading affects the kinds of encounters and opportunities for meaning making a reader can have. A recurring topic in the following chapters is the radical potential of dehabituating the practices that readers take for granted, primarily due to a high level of literacy. The dehabituating of habitual practices is especially significant to my discussion of scenes of reading, in

²² See also Andrew Elfenbein, “What Literary Scholars Can Learn from the ‘Simple View of Reading’” (2015), on how “good-enough” textual processing and entrenched reading habits can get in the way of making meaning—or of even seeing the words on a page (686).

both traditions, which contest normative ideas about reading that devalue the cultural and linguistic diversity of readers.

Extending from this notion of dehabituating, I employ the terms “unfamiliarity” and “difference” when articulating a style of reading that does not, as Anzaldúa puts it, “attach to familiarity.” Anzaldúa and Attridge discuss reading as both an act of assimilation and an act that registers difference on its own terms. In a manner similar to Anzaldúa, Attridge highlights a reader’s tendency to “assimilate the other to the same,” that is, to bring what we read into our own pre-existing frameworks of comprehension. In order to counteract this tendency, he proposes that we cultivate an open stance toward what is unfamiliar, which can shift our usual modes of perception and understanding (*Singularity of Literature* 33, 80). For Attridge, the suspension of one’s usual reading processes also marks an encounter with “the limits of [one’s] own powers to think and to judge, [one’s] capacities as a rational agent” (33). This view of reading as an encounter with difference thus emphasizes the ethical stakes of acknowledging one’s own lack of control, mastery, and authority over texts. An encounter with one’s lack of mastery trains readers in an ethical stance toward otherness, which in turn affects how they relate to others in social space. Anzaldúa’s notion of *la facultad*, which I link to her discussions about reading, invokes a similar disruption of one’s habituated modes of perception and sense of secure knowledge. *La facultad* names a special sense or an awareness, as cultivated by marginalized subjects who navigate multiple identity formations and language practices, that both interrupts habituated patterns of thought and develops

one's capacity to embrace contradiction and ambiguity (*Borderlands* 61, 101-102). I see *la facultad* as a way of reading—texts, the world, and others—that refuses to assimilate difference into sameness.

When Anzaldúa and Attridge each articulate the ethical importance of cultivating an open stance toward unfamiliarity and difference, they are primarily concerned with the content of literary texts. For Attridge in particular, this stance of openness means not treating a text “as a means to a predetermined end,” that is, not approaching a text with preconceived ideas about what it means or for what it can be made useful (*Singularity* 7). As the fictional readers who appear in this dissertation show, a stance of openness also pertains to reading at the level of the alphabetic letter. For example, Athenaeus’ “illiterate” readers find the basic units of alphabetic writing to be unfamiliar; in attempting to decipher the inscription, they toggle between the tendency to transform a letter into an object they already know, and the limits of their ability to do so. In the face of unfamiliarity, they show a willingness to try to understand—even if this means transforming some of that “difference” into something more familiar. Especially in the later chapters of this dissertation, the category of “difference” that Attridge in particular names, translates to “foreignness.” Thus, the abstract sense of “difference” takes on more concrete meaning, as I bring attention to how Second-Sophistic and U.S. Latina/o texts emphasize the very real, material effects of the (albeit unstable) categories of “citizen” and “foreigner”—categories that exclude certain subjects from social groups and political formations.

This focus on the material effects of abstract categories also arises from Anzaldúa's work, which is particularly attentive to the embodied experiences of marginalized subjects. For example, *la facultad* is a particularly embodied sense, developed through one's embodied responses and receptivity to oppressive social structures, and especially by people whose bodies have been racialized and gendered in a stratified society (*Borderlands* 60-61). Anzaldúa, like many scholars of book history and of reading, reminds us that when we think about reading, we must think about the body. This engagement with the body points to feminist interventions in philosophy, which seek to undo the hierarchies in Western thought that have not only privileged the mind over the body and reason over passion, but have also gendered these hierarchies by equating the lowest form (the body, passion) with the feminine (Littau 11). But more specifically, Anzaldúa's engagement with the body addresses how one's particular embodied experiences, as they pertain to gender, racial, cultural, and linguistic difference, affect how one reads. For Anzaldúa, one's body holds one's cultural experiences as well as one's experiences with marginalization, and readers can never be separated from the perspectives they generate out of those embodied experiences.

My engagement with "relationality" grows out of the work of Kamuf and Spivak, and is a term that helps me to think about social relations that affirm differences between people without constructing hierarchies.²³ Building on Derrida's

²³ My engagement with the term "relationality" is also an attempt to think beyond the limitations of the term "community," which Jean-Luc Nancy and others have challenged for its history of invoking ethnic or cultural similarity. This condition of sameness, in which each

thought, Spivak articulates the possibility for generating collectivities through the “originary” and “irreducible curvature of social space” (*Death of a Discipline* 28-29). In other words, she affirms that we first and foremost exist in relation to others, and that relation takes the form of a curve, that is, it is defined by a lack of immediacy and direct access to others. As Spivak puts it, “one cannot access another directly and with a guarantee” (*Death of a Discipline* 30). There are no direct lines of access or guarantees because this curve is, as Derrida explains, “heteronomic and dissymmetrical”; our relations to others extend beyond our own autonomy and control, and are defined by a necessary unevenness (Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* 29). Kamuf similarly affirms that we are constituted through our relations with others, and takes the writing-reading relationship as an illustration for how this primary relationality works. To explain the writing-reading relationship, she discusses the “condition of being addressed.” When she says that her own writing “is addressed,” she is interested in the ambiguity of the phrase: “to say ‘these pieces [of writing] are addressed’ can mean, grammatically, both that they are spoken, delivered, or written to another’s address *and* that they are addressed by another” (Kamuf, *Book of Addresses* 3). The ambiguity of direction, or “indirection,” within the phrase “to be addressed” provides a way to think about how each person is “determined and positioned” by such a relationship, distinct from others (each has “an address”) and yet tied to others (Kamuf, *Book of Addresses* 3, 286).

member of a community is deemed “equivalent,” requires both an erasure of difference and the exclusion of those who do not fit the group’s parameters. See Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (2000 [1996]).

For Kamuf as well as for Spivak, the notion of “indirection” is key to understanding relationality, and key to understanding why reading—and in particular, reading literature—can be an encounter with this relationality. In general, reading someone’s writing highlights the mediation that defines our relations with others; though also true for listening to direct speech, reading emphasizes distance even when it produces a sense of intimacy between reader and writer. Moreover, because literary texts in particular are considered to have a special relationship with “the real”—that is, they refer to reality indirectly and not always precisely—reading literary texts invites a further encounter with mediation and indirection. Thus, the act of reading, for Kamuf and Spivak, emphasizes that our relations with others are always heavily mediated. Reading literary texts can teach us that we cannot fully know, access, or dominate others. The experience of reading thus allows us to think about a form of relationality that preserves the differences of others.

The indirectness, the “curve,” that defines our relations with others does not need to be a “deterrent to politics, as Spivak points out (*Death of a Discipline* 30). Rather, a form of relationality that preserves difference and thus does not require foundational sameness—such as a shared identity based on ethnic, cultural, or national origins—allows for an important reconsideration of political space. Such a form of relationality is especially pertinent to the construction of United States citizenship, and to the very category “Latina/o.” In the U.S., the identity “Latina/o” is

constantly produced by census categories and media representations.²⁴ As a result, many scholars and activists emphasize the necessity of recognizing the historical and cultural specificity of different groups who might be categorized under this umbrella term; they also recognize the political potential of imagining a transnational, transcultural, collective group identity.²⁵ Greek writers in the Second Sophistic likewise grappled with contested forms of political belonging. With a common cultural education (*paideia*) providing one widespread definition of “Greekness,” this cultural and political umbrella term could potentially include those who, under “ethnic” definitions of Greekness, would otherwise be excluded. With this cultural definition of identity, a “Greek” community had to figure out how to respond to new forms of internal difference that always threatened to undermine cohesion and to shift the very definition of Greekness from within. *Deciding the Letter* offers a way to think about ethical relationality as a form of sociopolitical inclusion, while acknowledging the dangers of promoting political unity at the expense of recognizing crucial divergences. Moreover, this project acknowledges the limitations of theorizing formal political equality at the expense of addressing material conditions of inequality, an issue that both defines and limits the construction of democratic citizenship.²⁶

²⁴ See Suzanne Oboler, *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of (Re)presentation in the United States* (1995) and Arlene Dávila, *Latinos, Inc.: The Marketing and Making of a People* (2001). On *latinidad* both as constructed by dominant, often stereotypical, perceptions and as “re-semanticized” by Latinas/os, see Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman (eds.), *Tropicalizations: Transcultural Representations of Latinidad* (1997).

²⁵ For a review of scholarly and literary engagements with the term “Latina/o,” and the limitations and political possibilities of this term, see Marta Caminero-Santangelo, *On Latinidad: U.S. Latino Literature and the Construction of Ethnicity* (2007).

²⁶ In *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (1996), Lisa Lowe demonstrates how the legal definition and political concept of the “American citizen” relies on the erasure

Our Reading Moment

Deciding the Letter's comparative history of reading offers a response to recent discussions, in public discourse and in academic circles, about what constitutes (good) literary reading in a digital age. Recent interest in the status of reading demonstrates how literary reading is being both redefined in light of, and defended against, a period of rapid technological change. Many public conversations about reading demonstrate a common association between literary reading and print media, and thus claim that we are undergoing a reading "crisis." Public figures, such as bestselling authors, have both lauded and lamented the "democratization" of reading through the expansion of book distribution methods (for both e- and print-books), digital reading platforms, and online social networks.²⁷ Common questions include not only whether e-books allow for serious engagement with literature, but also whether digital media changes our ability to read literature well.²⁸ Recent studies, made accessible through popular news outlets, suggest that we are living in an age of

of material inequality. The "abstract citizen—each formally equivalent, one to the other" is "split off" from the unrepresentable histories of situated embodiment that contradict the abstract form of citizenship" (Lowe 2).

²⁷ On the popularization of literary culture, see Jim Collins, *Bring on the Books for Everybody* (2010). Collins attributes this popularization to "digital downloadability," the "conglomeration of the publishing industry," and a new synergy between literature and other forms of media (6-7). Lisa Nakamura discusses the "new social valences of reading" in relation to the online social network Goodreads (2013: 238).

²⁸ In an argument that recalls—and reverses—Socrates' critique of writing in Plato's fourth-century BCE dialogue *Phaedrus*, bestselling novelist Jonathan Franzen sparked debate when in 2012 he told *The Guardian* that e-books are not for "serious readers." Whereas Plato's Socrates worries about the permanence of writing, that is, its ability to "keep saying the same thing forever" even as it "rolls around everywhere" to indiscriminately reach the masses, Franzen warned that e-books transform "permanent" literature into texts that are too easily mutable by amateur readers (*Phaedrus* 275d-e; Flood).

distraction, that “Google is making us stupid,” and that the longer, deeper forms of attention commonly associated with literary reading are difficult to cultivate when we are overloaded with information.²⁹ Likewise, recent reports on national rates of reading claim that our engagement with electronic media competes with our ability to read literature.³⁰ In the Common Core Standards, recently implemented in many U.S. American primary and secondary schools, the value of literary texts is articulated in contrast with the practical uses of “informational” texts. These engagements with reading, which have intensified over the past decade and a half, demonstrate common perceptions that (proper) literary reading has an oppositional or, at best, ambivalent relationship to our shifting electronic and digital mediascape.

In an effort to think beyond an “either/or attitude toward electronic and digital media,” as Johanna Drucker puts it, a number of scholars have recently addressed and refuted the common perception that reading is “in crisis” because of a dominance of digital media (“The Self-Conscious Codex” 93). For example, Jim Collins argues that such notions of a crisis are founded on an “ahistorical” understanding of reading and help to shape hierarchies among current reading practices. As he puts it, these notions assume that “there’s reading and then there’s *reading*,” where the implication is that

²⁹ See Nicholas Carr’s essay in *The Atlantic*, “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” (2008), which stresses the “efficiency” and “immediacy” of digital reading, in contrast with forms of deep concentration associated with reading literature. In *The New York Times*, Motoko Rich cites neurological studies that suggest digital reading restructures our cognitive processing in “Literacy Debate: R U Really Reading?” (2008) and Patricia Cohen cites scientific findings suggesting that our access to digital information affects our capacity to remember in “Internet Use Affects Memory” (2011). See also Matt Richtel’s *New York Times* series, *Your Brain on Computers*, especially “Growing Up Digital, Wired for Distraction” (2011).

³⁰ See the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America* (2004); *To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence* (2007); and *Reading on the Rise: A New Chapter in American Literacy* (2009).

there is a better, more legitimate way to read (and it does not involve e-books or digital practices) (“Reading” 207). Lutz Koepnick argues that perceptions of a reading crisis are based on a preference for the kind of prolonged, absorptive attention associated with reading novels—a type of reading and a literary genre that play only a small part in a longer history of reading (“Reading on the Move” 232-233). Following scholars of book history and of reading, *Deciding the Letter* offers a more extensive, comparative view of reading that emphasizes continuities and gradual changes in textual production and reading practices, rather than ruptures with the past.³¹

This project also attends to a longer history of hierarchizing reading practices, demonstrating how affording different values to different styles of reading—both past and present—helps to chart social space. *Deciding the Letter* thus addresses current perceptions about the social utility of reading literature. A current popular view holds that reading literature both facilitates self-improvement and enhances one’s ability to participate in sociopolitical settings. Thus, when public figures and national reports on reading alike express a concern that we are undergoing a reading crisis, these concerns imply a sense of social urgency. Questions about the status of literary reading in a digital age often oppose views that literary reading is a solely individual act that distances one from the “real” world. In our current reading moment, in other words, how we practice reading is a question of social importance.

³¹ A history of reading that attends to the materials of texts and the bodies of readers is Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (eds.), *A History of Reading in the West* (2003 [1997]). See also Karin Littau, *Theories of Reading: Books, Bodies, Bibliomania* (2006). In “Books and Scrolls” (2002), Peter Stallybrass refutes pronouncements of the “death of the book” by arguing that the codex has always encouraged discontinuous reading and random access to information, which also characterize computerized reading (42, 47).

A series of reports on the status of literary reading in the United States, issued by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), exemplifies the current association between literary reading and social participation. In their 2009 report celebrating the revitalization of literary reading among U.S. American adults and youth, the NEA stressed the idea that reading literature—as opposed to engaging with electronic media—correlates with higher civic and cultural engagement. The NEA articulated this social—and indeed, political—significance in its previous report from 2004: “If literacy is the baseline for participation in social life, then reading—and reading of literary work in particular—is essential to a sound and healthy understanding of, and participation in, a democratic society” (*Reading at Risk* 1). Positioning literate reading as a basis for good citizenship, the NEA affirms a long-held association between literacy and political inclusion in the United States, which this dissertation explores. When the NEA’s studies demonstrate that readers of (printed) literature are more actively involved in their communities, they affirm that the effects of reading are more than personal. Here, literate reading, facilitated by access to literary culture, is the basis for one’s inclusion in and concern for a political community. At the same time, the prized “democratic” effects of reading literature are understood to compete with the modes of attention associated with digital media, suggesting that some styles of reading are valued more than others in the production of a sociopolitical community.³²

³² For a discussion of the role of self-cultivation in popular literary culture, a critique of the NEA’s view that reading literature and engaging with electronic media “are mutually

The notion that literary reading is a social catalyst also prevails in recent discussions about the place of literature in U.S. American education, as instigated by the revamping of K-12 educational standards through the Common Core, a set of standards published in 2010 and subsequently adopted by a majority of states. In their introduction to the Standards for English Language Arts (ELA), the authors of the Common Core articulate a connection between reading and social participation: “Students who meet the Standards readily undertake the close, attentive reading that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature. [...] They reflexively demonstrate the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is essential to both private deliberation and responsible citizenship in a democratic republic” (3). Here, the practices required to “understand and enjoy” literary texts relate to students’ social “responsibility” in a political space defined (at least in theory) by equitable participation.

At other times, the Common Core Standards imply that “informational” (i.e., non-fiction) texts have more real-world relevance. The Standards have been critiqued for making a distinction between “literary” and “informational” texts, and more specifically, for requiring a “growing emphasis on informational texts” in the upper grade levels (Common Core 5).³³ As Evelyn Ender and Deidre Shauna Lynch

antagonistic experiences,” and a fuller analysis of the factors that helped to revitalize reading in the U.S., see Collins, *Bring on the Books for Everybody* (14-16).

³³ For English teachers’ critiques of this growing emphasis on “informational” or nonfiction texts, see Lyndsey Layton, “Common Core State Standards in English Spark War Over Words” (2012) and Kate Taylor, “English Class in Common Core Era” (2015). In the 2015 PMLA special edition on “Learning to Read,” Stephen Arata critiques this dichotomy between texts by emphasizing the limitations it imposes upon reading practices: literary texts, he writes, “actively invite many forms of reading” (674).

explain in their introduction to the 2015 PMLA special issue “Learning to Read,” this “uneasy and unresolved cohabitation of fiction and nonfiction [...] marginalize[s] imaginative writings in favor of information texts” and “risk[s] shaping a generation of readers who learn to read books only as practical-minded realists” (544). Indeed, the assumption that students need “practical” skills in order to engage with a world driven by information—and that fictional texts do not facilitate such skills—undergirds the emphasis on informational texts in the first place. Responding to these shifting educational standards, defenders of literary texts cite the practical, real-world significance of literature. They point to recent studies on the ability of imaginative literature to produce socially relevant habits, such as inviting readers to practice empathy when encountering a wide range of characters.³⁴ Underlying such discussions about the social effects of reading—especially as they relate to U.S. American education—is an important assumption: reading literature is a practice that has ethical significance. Therefore, our methods for teaching literary reading matter because they affect how students relate to others and participate in social life.

These examples exhibit an important connection between, on the one hand, conceptions of the changing status of reading in a digital age, and on the other hand, ideas about the ethical effects of literary reading. When literary reading is defended as

³⁴ In a 2013 study published in *Science*, David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano demonstrate that reading literary fiction—that is, literature about the inner life of characters, rather than plot-based popular fiction—improves one’s ability to understand that people hold beliefs that differ from one’s own. The findings of this study circulated in popular news outlets, including *The New York Times* (Belluck), *NPR* (Greenfieldboyce), and *The New Yorker* (Siegel). Pointing out the this study’s “gratifying” findings “in light of the new Common Core Standards,” Siegel nevertheless worries that it represents “a victory [...] for the quantifying power of social science” that stresses use-value and data (n.p.).

a special kind of reading (in contrast with forms of literacy associated with digital or electronic media), its social importance is a primary justification. Is there something special about the act of reading literature—as opposed to engaging with “non-fictional” writing—that gives it more ethical relevance? These discussions highlight the constitutive uncertainties in the very definition of literature, which, while perhaps highly evident in our technologically shifting climate, are not new.³⁵ Do we define literary texts by their content (imaginative writing “versus” non-fictional writing), their medium (printed or digitized), or the kind of reading one employs when reading a text (literary or informational)? Moreover, these discussions point to a hierarchy of texts and of reading practices: do all imaginative texts have important ethical implications, or just the ones deemed “good” based on dominant cultural and institutional values?

Professional literary studies has taken up many of these questions, as literary scholars are asking about the effects of data-driven methodologies on the discipline of literature and its pedagogical objectives. More specifically, scholars are asking whether and how digital technologies are reshaping—or are simply at odds with—the kinds of reading we have understood ourselves to perform and teach in the academy. Often under the purview of digital humanities, we are figuring out the role of quantitative analysis in literary studies, and whether and how to implement

³⁵ Haun Saussy discusses Comparative Literature’s “difficulty in determining [its] object of investigation” in “Exquisite Cadavers Stitched from Fresh Nightmares” (2006: 9). Ultimately, he argues that comparatists do not have a particular object of study but a practice of reading: “Comparative literature is best known, not as the reading *of literature*, but as reading *literarily* (with intensive textual scrutiny, defiance, and metatheoretical awareness) whatever there may be to read” (23).

computational, data-driven research in a discipline that has understood itself to teach skills, such as close reading, that have an uneasy relationship to empiricism and large-scale data collection.³⁶ Thus, emerging techniques associated with digital humanities have provided scholars with opportunities to reassess and redefine the practices of literary reading.³⁷

Michael Warner demonstrates the effects of guarding a discipline-specific form of reading, which he identifies as “critical reading,” against the uncertainties of a “technologically changing environment.” Doing so can help to define the objective of literary analysis as something other than the “transmission of a canon” or the “incorporation of facts”—and thus to “legitimate the profession” in light of the current under-funding of Humanities programs and other austerity measures in U.S. educational institutions (“Uncritical” 14). At the same time, affirming discipline-

³⁶ Franco Moretti has perhaps become best known for his call for a methodology of (not) reading world literature, that is, for the distant assessment of literary data, patterns, and maps (“Conjectures on World Literature,” 2000). For examples of digital humanities work in literary studies, see Matthew Wilkens, “Digital Humanities and its Application in the Study of Literature and Culture” (2015). Pointing out that literary scholars have always used “quantitative” and “pattern-based” methods in their analyses of texts, Wilkens demonstrates that computational methods are not necessarily at odds with literary studies (11-12). See also Anne Burdick et al., *Digital Humanities* (2012), which stresses the importance of bringing humanistic inquiry to digital and computational scholarship. For a critique of the digital humanities as celebrating “technological innovation as an end in itself,” see Daniel Allington et al., “Neoliberal Tools (and Archives): A Political History of Digital Humanities” (2016).

³⁷ See Sharon Best and Stephen Marcus, “Surface Reading: An Introduction,” in the special issue of *Representations* on “How We Read Now” (2009). Here, they name the availability of information as one historical reason that professional critics and the public alike have recognized that “so much seems to be on the surface” and have thus shifted their practices of reading to focus on textual surfaces rather than depth (1-4). See also Heather Love, “Close but not Deep” (2010), which explores how a method of surface reading can produce an ethics that diverges from that of depth models. Adopting methods from the social sciences, Love models a “close but not deep” reading practice that allows her to see the real, “material processes of dehumanization” as depicted in a literary text (386). This reading practice, Love argues, proposes an ethics based in “documentation and description rather than empathy and witness” (375).

specific ways of reading can position literary studies in competition with other, emerging forms of reading. That is, by envisioning a highly educated form of reading that can only be accessed in the academy, the discipline of literature affirms hierarchies between high and low literary culture—and between good and unlearned reading. As Warner puts it, our definitions of disciplinary-specific reading might just be “perversely antagonistic to all the ways our students actually read.” Among these forms of reading, he includes emotionally invested reading, “reverence and piety,” skimming, and getting lost in books that are not relevant to his class (“Uncritical” 13-14). Warner’s assessment suggests that defining a discipline-specific form of reading, guarded by “bearers of a heroic pedagogy,” can exclude and discount other kinds of reading practices (“Uncritical” 14).³⁸

Warner’s assessment is particularly significant to the arguments that follow because they emphasize the processes by which disciplinary practices shape readers into ethical subjects. In other words, he shows how the modes of reading that scholars might prefer, defend, and teach in the academy help to produce certain kinds of subjects.³⁹ As his primary example, Warner argues that the skill of “critical reading” encourages readers to adopt a stance of “objective distance” when engaging with literature. This “normative stance,” in turn, helps to create subjects who prize autonomy, individuality, and freedom (“Uncritical” 25). Warner thus alerts us to the

³⁸ Other important conversations about critical habits and their limitations include Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation” (1966 [1964]) and Eve Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading” (2003).

³⁹ See also Amy Hollywood, “Reading as Self-Annihilation” (2004), which discusses the subjectivities and perspectives that rational criticism produces.

kinds of subjectivities we may privilege through the reading practices we teach. If critical reading forms autonomous, individuated subjects, as Warner suggests, then what other forms of reading might produce an awareness of social interdependence and responsibility? Moreover, are these other styles of reading given value within the academy? *Deciding the Letter* examines the production of hierarchies among different forms of reading—and how such hierarchies privilege certain ethical subjectivities and social formations over others.

The link between the ethical and pedagogical dimensions of literary reading is a central dimension of this comparative study of Greek texts from the Second Sophistic and literature by contemporary U.S. Latina/o writers. These traditions exhibit a heightened attention to the educational models that shape readers into social and political subjects. In the context of the Second Sophistic, the dominant model of Greek cultural education, or *paideia*, participates in a long educational tradition that constructs literary and linguistic training as a method for producing Greek citizens. By focusing on readers whose practices diverge from the elite Second-Sophistic educational model of linguistic and literary mastery (Chapter One), and on the literary production of a figure constructed as a “foreigner” to the Greek tradition (Chapter Three), my discussion of literature from this period highlights the social and political exclusions effected by the dominant educational model. The chapters on Second-Sophistic literature emphasize the contributions of “illiterate” and “foreign” readers to our understanding of reading in the ancient world as well as to our understanding of literary reading today.

Against a backdrop of contemporary U.S. language politics, Latina/o writers engage with a long tradition in both the U.S. and the broader Americas that constructs literate education (in a dominant language) as an avenue toward sociopolitical inclusion, and as a process of assimilation that suppresses diverse linguistic and interpretive practices. Focusing on Latina/o literature's engagements with the colonial legacies of literate education in the Americas, I discuss how methods of reading instruction can both perpetuate and disrupt gendered social hierarchies (Chapter Two). I argue that a reader's encounter with linguistic heterogeneity constitutes a form of resistance to monolingual and monocultural educational models (Chapter Four). The chapters on Latina/o literature thus contribute to a more robust conception of literary reading that can account for multiple literacy practices and linguistic plurality. This dissertation's engagement with the dynamics of reading and literacy in these two traditions highlights the social, political, and ethical significance of attending to readers who do not adhere to dominant educational models. *Deciding the Letter* therefore reminds us that how we train students to read produces certain kinds of social identities and relationships.

Chapter Overview

In an effort to resist a teleological reading—that is, the notion that the ancient past leads up to our present in an unquestioned, unmediated way—*Deciding the Letter* employs alternating chapters to invite a reader's movement back and forth between Second-Sophistic Greek and contemporary U.S. Latina/o texts. These

alternating chapters are organized into two parts, each consisting of two chapters that together address a particular aspect of reading. My hope is that the movement between ancient Greek and contemporary U.S. Latina/o texts will have unexpected results. Perhaps readers will make new connections between texts, and forge new paths across the structural partitions I have created.

The first part of *Deciding the Letter* addresses the role of reading in defining social relations in both ancient Greek and contemporary Latina/o literatures. More specifically, each of the first two chapters emphasizes how the valuation of different reading practices helps to form social relations and construct political belonging. This first part also indicates a key connection between Second Sophistic texts and contemporary U.S. Latina/o texts, that is, how each tradition engages with the inheritances of a historical past that influence later paradigms of literate education. Greek writers in the Second Sophistic sought to access an idealized “classical” past and to imitate its language and literary production in order to gain social prestige and recognition; these efforts demonstrate how this past was not just imitated but actively constructed as a legacy worth imitating. Second Sophistic texts thus highlight how access to an ancient past will always be imperfect, highly mediated, and at least partially determined by present value systems. U.S. Latina/o writers grapple with the colonial histories of the Americas, and more specifically, with the use of alphabetic writing to dominate indigenous populations and to generate social hierarchies based on levels of literacy. This history continues to inform paradigms for literate education in the present, especially within the valuation of different practices of reading.

Chapter One, “Figuring Letters: Reading the Classical Past in the Second Sophistic,” focuses on the depictions of readers in Athenaeus’ multi-volume work *Deipnosophistae* (second or third century CE). A collection of citations from classical literature woven together into the format of a dinner conversation amongst scholars, Athenaeus’ work is explicitly concerned with what it means to read texts from the classical past. *Deipnosophistae* offers a glimpse at the diversity of practices available to readers in the Second Sophistic. On one level, this sprawling work indicates an extensive reading practice that required a reader’s distance from texts, as performed by Athenaeus in his process of collecting, compiling, and re-writing quotations from a vast array of ancient texts. On another level, the scholars depicted in Athenaeus’ work oscillate between close philological reading (intensive attention to small units of language) and distant topical reading (more extensive reading that traces connections between and among texts) when they approach classical texts. When the fictional scholars encounter, within the texts they read, characters that do not read according to their own norms, they deem these characters “illiterate.” By arguing that these “illiterate” characters are, in fact, readers, this chapter demonstrates the interpretive limitations of the erudite scholars depicted in Athenaeus’ text. This chapter thus emphasizes how certain styles of reading are valorized over others in the pursuit of an idealized cultural literacy, and highlights the significance of approaching texts, especially ancient texts, from a position of non-mastery.

Juxtaposing the “illiterate” reading practices depicted in *Deipnosophistae* with the practices of an unlearned reader depicted in a twenty-first century U.S. novel,

Chapter Two introduces the particular, and complicated, history of literacy in the Americas. Linked, on the one hand, to the possibility for political empowerment and change in anti-colonial movements, reading and writing are, on the other hand, the terrain on which colonization has historically operated. “Touching Letters: Reading (and) the Colonial Legacy in the Americas” focuses on the uses of reading instruction in both the colonial and revolutionary histories of the Dominican Republic, as depicted in Julia Alvarez’s novel *In the Name of Salomé* (2000) and narrated, in part, from the perspective of a Dominican woman living in exile in the United States. Depicting educational settings in which one mode of reading is taught at the expense of another, Alvarez’s novel teeters between these two possibilities—literacy as a colonizing and as a liberating force. In a novel invested in recovering women’s voices from male-dominated versions of Dominican literary history, the educational scenes especially reveal that reading is a practice marked by gender inequity. In this context, untrained or non-dominant ways of reading, which specifically bring attention to both the bodies of readers and the bodies of texts, can transform existing social relations by undermining colonial and patriarchal hierarchies. Here, reading is a practice that can allow readers to imagine political collectivities that do not yet exist.

The second part of *Deciding the Letter* focuses on the bodily inculcation of reading habits, especially in contexts where proper reading is tied to a dominant language. The two chapters that comprise this second part highlight the material dimensions of language instruction and of dominant educational paradigms, such as forms of bodily discipline that train readers’ gestures and tongues. By linking the

embodied aspects of reading instruction to political and social boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, these chapters contend that the ethical dimensions of reading are tied to modes of bodily expression.

Literary training during the Second Sophistic, which was linked with the cultivation of social prestige, especially emphasized a reader's proper pronunciation and disciplined bodily performance. This commitment to bodily discipline, as part of the concept of *paideia* (Greek cultural education), takes as its historical precedent the oratorical training of the classical tradition. Within this pedagogical history, the training of bodily and vocal performance bears directly on reading practices, revealing a significant connection between phonological and orthographic standardization and bodily comportment. To illustrate this connection, Chapter Three demonstrates how efforts to standardize a literary language in the Second Sophistic directly affected how readers were trained to configure their bodies, especially their mouths and tongues. "Encroaching Letters: Foreign Tongues and Marginalized Bodies in Atticist Satire" discusses the texts of Lucian (second century CE), which both participate in and satirize the model of sophisticated Greek education and linguistic training of the period. Lucian's *Consonants at Law*, for example, stages a jury trial between the Greek letters Sigma and Tau that showcases anxieties over orthographic deviations from an imagined "pure" language, all while indicating the physical effects of letters upon human bodies. Describing instances of linguistic deviation in the metaphor of a foreign threat, Lucian's text introduces debates about language standardization and political ideologies of inclusion that resonate in

contemporary U.S. Latina/o literature. Indeed, as a Syrian writing in Greek in the Roman Empire, Lucian occupies an uneasy position within Greek literary culture; his texts consistently address the dynamics between “foreign” or “barbarian” knowledge and Greek practices, pointing to the deep connection between one’s literate training in a dominant cultural tradition and one’s inclusion in a political community.

Chapter Four, “Divergent Letters: Reading Linguistic Difference in Latina/o Literature,” turns to a U.S. Chicana text that depicts a bilingual reader undergoing bodily discipline while being trained to read in English without the “interference” of her home language and culture. Norma Elia Cantú’s *Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera* (1995) navigates the cultural and linguistic terrain of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, as shaped by nineteenth- and twentieth-century U.S. imperial expansion and militarization. Grappling with the region’s history of educational inequity, especially the devaluation of Spanish as a public and literary language, this narrative de-privileges a monolingual and monocultural reading public. Primarily written in English for an English-dominant U.S. audience, Cantú’s text includes unmarked (i.e., unitalicized and thus unforeignized) Spanish terms and invites readers to move between images and textual narration while reading. *Canícula* thus develops an ethical approach to reading by inviting readers to move between multiple systems of signification; by moving across multiple languages, as well as between text and image, readers are encouraged to attend to difference, divergence, non-correspondence. Pairing Cantú’s text with Juan Felipe Herrera’s 1970s interlingual poetry, this chapter further argues that a reader’s deviations from a

standard language are embodied acts that resist the dominance of monolingualism in the United States. Valuing English over Spanish, and monolingualism over multilingualism, perpetuates social hierarchies and helps to define the categories of “citizen” and “foreigner” in the context of the United States; a reading practice that refuses these hierarchies imagines more inclusive forms of political and social belonging.

This fourth and concluding chapter of *Deciding the Letter* elucidates the pedagogical implications of this comparative study. By positioning the publication of *Canícula* within the context of a re-emergence of nativism in the U.S., which has targeted Latina/o communities (whether or not they are migrants) and attacked bilingual education, this chapter proposes that we reshape dominant educational practices. In order to do so, we must adopt an understanding of reading that values multiple literacies and language practices. Highlighting how current educational standards and tools for assessing literacy are based on monolingual, English-dominant models, this concluding chapter engages with education scholarship that advocates for more inclusive notions of literacy and reading. Such inclusive models—which value the linguistic and cultural diversity of students—are not only relevant in early education when students learn to read. Inclusive models of reading can also invite us to reshape the disciplinary ways of reading that we teach in our college and university classrooms. They can, moreover, allow us to examine the ethical effects of our pedagogical practices within the academy.

CHAPTER ONE

Figuring Letters: Reading the Classical Literary Past in the Second Sophistic

What would a mark be that could not be cited? Or one whose origins would not get lost along the way?

—Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” in *Limited Inc* (12)

Introduction: Reading in the Second Sophistic

Twenty-three scholars sit around a table; their multi-course dinner is as much an invitation to perform their erudition as it is to eat. To show off their learning, they recite passages from a range of literary and philosophical texts from earlier centuries, primarily written in a dialect of ancient Greek (Attic) that differed from the language commonly spoken during their own time. While drinking wine, they recite examples of riddles and other forms of linguistic playfulness. In a series of three citations from Attic drama, literary characters whom the scholars call “ἀγράμματος” (“letter-less” or “illiterate”) attempt to decipher for an audience what is written in an inscription. Professing that they “are not knowledgeable of the letters,” the three ἀγράμματοι, each excerpted from a different dramatic text, are unable to pronounce the names or sounds of the inscribed letters. Instead, they produce figuration, describing the shapes of the letters and comparing them to more familiar forms. To the ἀγράμματοι, a sigma (Σ) “resembles a curling lock of hair,” while an epsilon (Ε) “looks like a trident turned sideways” (Athenaeus 454c-e).

This imaginative figuration, performed by characters in classical texts (the ἀγράμματοι), offers a contrast to the scholarly practices of those who extensively read those texts and competently recite large amounts of text from memory (the dining scholars). The juxtaposition of these forms of textual engagement provides a productive site from which to consider not only a historically situated understanding of literacy—that is, who is recognized as “literate”—but also what constitutes an act of reading. The scholars and the ἀγράμματοι each appear to practice different, perhaps even competing, ways of reading. In this chapter, I address why the scholars are unable to recognize the ἀγράμματοι as legitimate readers by attending to the cultural and political values that inform their erudite literary performance. I also show why it matters to literary comparatists to recognize both the dining scholars and the unlearned ἀγράμματοι as literary readers. As I will argue, their collective practices demonstrate the ethical dimensions of literary reading, as neither group of readers, in the end, can take for granted their knowledge of a single alphabetic letter.

This scene that brings together the practices of both scholarly and non-literate readers is located in a text called *Deipnosophistae*, a multi-volume work attributed to the Greek writer Athenaeus and produced in the Roman Empire in the late second or early third century CE, during a period known as the Second Sophistic.¹ Translated as

¹ For the dating of Athenaeus’ text, see Oswyn Murray, “Athenaeus the Encyclopediast” (2015), which addresses the common confusion between the dramatic date of *Deipnosophistae* and Athenaeus’ moment of writing (31). Murray, Laura McClure, and others point out the text’s allusions to famous historical figures, most especially Plutarch (historian and philosopher, c. 46-120 CE), Galen (physician and medical writer, c. 129-199 CE), and Ulpian (jurist and legal writer, c. 170-223 CE). These historical figures, however, are “typed” (and populate a fictional world of stock characters), and their context is “unhistorical,” as “even the real characters mentioned were not exact contemporaries with

“The Learned Banqueters,” *Deipnosophistae* is a compilation of citations from ancient Greek literature organized as a long dinner conversation among scholars in Rome. The citations of ancient material are primarily arranged in Athenaeus’ sprawling work according to the logic of a Roman banquet. The conceit of *Deipnosophistae* is that Athenaeus recently attended the dinner party, hosted by the Roman scholar Larensius, and the text that results is his report to his friend, Timocrates, about what happened there.² From Athenaeus’ report, we learn that the dining scholars (I will call them the deipnosophists) use each stage of the banquet as an invitation to recite passages from ancient texts they have read. Each phase of the meal inspires the guests to recite passages that refer in some way to the current dish, or to dining and symposia practices more generally.³ To take an example, in Book 3, which focuses on the appetizers before the main courses appear, one deipnosophist pursues the topic of figs by reciting numerous passages from ancient literary texts and lexica that describe the varieties of figs, where they grow in different regions of the

each other” (Murray 31-3). The term “Second Sophistic” was coined in the third century CE by the Athenian sophist Philostratus. When Philostratus used the term, he was referring to the activities of professional orators who were influenced by the “sophists” of the fifth century BCE—the teachers who, to Socrates’ discontent, taught public speaking and other skills for pay (Anderson, *Second Sophistic* 13). For further discussion of Philostratus and his conception of the Second Sophistic, see G. W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (1969: 1-16).

² With its framing device and the symposium setting, Athenaeus’ text engages with Plato’s dialogues. See John Wilkins, “Dialogue and Comedy: The Structure of the *Deipnosophistae*” and Michael Trapp, “Plato in the *Deipnosophistae*,” in David Braund and John Wilkins (eds.), *Athenaeus and his World* (2000).

³ For the significance of the logic of the banquet, see especially Jason König, *Saints and Symposiasts* (2012); McClure, *Courtesans at Table* (2003); and Murray, “Athenaeus the Encyclopediast” (2015). While Murray notes the contradictions that arise when Greek literary material is brought under the logic of a Roman feast (38), McClure and König argue that Athenaeus’ text blurs the boundaries between Greek and Roman culture (McClure 30, 35; König 95-6).

Greek world, and how they are eaten (Athenaeus 74c-80d). In the process, he demonstrates not only his knowledge of the food item, but also his extensive reading of ancient texts across multiple genres—and thus his high level of educational training.

Recent scholarship on the *Deipnosophistae* reflects a new interest in the text's thematization of reading practices. More specifically, attention has been directed toward the reading methods that are depicted within *Deipnosophistae*, as demonstrated by the deipnosophists, and toward Athenaeus' own reading strategies, as demonstrated by his approaches to citing ancient texts.⁴ *Deipnosophistae* brings attention to yet another dimension of reading: it can be a productive site from which to ask about our own practices when confronted with a text like Athenaeus', or more generally, with textual materials from the ancient world. How do we read this material and seek to give it meaning, while also acknowledging the reading and editing practices that have shaped, over centuries, the ancient texts and fragments that we encounter? *Deipnosophistae* has long been valued for its preservation of fragments from ancient Greek texts that would otherwise be unavailable to modern readers, including pieces of Sappho's poetry, Homeric quotations from Hellenistic scholarship, and dialogues and songs from lost Attic dramas (including the citations from Attic drama that feature the ἀγράμματοι). The value that modern scholars often attribute to this work has transformed it into an encyclopedia of sorts, encouraging

⁴ For Athenaeus' reading practices, see especially the essays in David Braund and John Wilkins (eds.), *Athenaeus and His World* (2000). For the deipnosophists' reading practices, see John Paulas, "How to Read Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*" (2012).

acts of information culling. As Yun Lee Too puts it, scholars have been “unlikely to read [*Deipnosophistae*] from cover to cover,” but instead have treated it “as a scholarly research tool, mining it for literary and biographical references” (“Walking Library” 121). In other words, Athenaeus’ text has often been viewed as a reference book that contains cultural facts and information about other literary texts.

Deipnosophistae thus introduces a set of concerns that bear on what it means to read literary texts—and more specifically, texts that have been claimed as part of (or as preserving) a classical tradition and given value for that association. This chapter attends to the reading practices of the readers depicted in Athenaeus’ text, as well as to the practices of modern readers when they encounter ancient texts. In doing so, it contends that the unlearned readers presented in *Deipnosophistae*, the ἀγράμματοι, can especially elucidate the ethical dimensions of reading texts from the ancient past—and can disrupt the modern desire to fully access or master that past by reading them.

The material recited by the dining scholars in Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophistae* spans centuries and genres. Their citations range from snippets of eighth-century Homeric poetry, to the literature and philosophy of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE (the “classical period” in Greek antiquity), as well as later Hellenistic writings. The range of these fictional scholars’ citations exemplifies Athenaeus’ extensive reading practice. Often called a miscellanist, Athenaeus collected material from a variety of literary and philosophical texts, from scholarly commentaries on those texts, and from lexica and other existing compilations. The Second Sophistic saw the increased

production of texts like *Deipnosophistae*, which exhibits what Jason König and Tim Whitmarsh have termed a “compilatory aesthetic”—that is, it was produced by reading, gathering, and then re-presenting information from diverse, pre-existing textual material (*Ordering Knowledge* 3, 29). As the composer of *Deipnosophistae*, Athenaeus read across a range of texts to select and then organize pieces from those texts according to lines of affinity, from shared topics to shared lexical items. In the process, he created new contexts for reading those fragments in relation to one another.⁵ Highlighting the creative activity a reader performs when extracting and compiling textual snippets to create a text like *Deipnosophistae*, Christian Jacob suggests that “the importance of books [in this period] no longer lies in their intellectual or material entirety and frame, but in the way one navigates through them” (“Athenaeus the Librarian” 104). Athenaeus’ compilation demonstrates the cultural and epistemological significance of a reader’s relationship to and actions upon textual material in the Greco-Roman world of the Second Sophistic.

Athenaeus’ logic for selecting citations demonstrates a special interest in texts from fifth- and fourth-century BCE Athens. For readers in the first centuries CE, interacting with this ancient corpus often required knowledge of the centuries-old dialect of classical Attic Greek, which was idealized and imitated during the Second Sophistic. Called Atticism after the region and dialect of Athens, these acts of imitation attempted to stabilize an elite literary language against the variability of diverse spoken languages in the Roman Empire. In this context, an interest in

⁵ Scholars have recently compared Athenaeus’ practices with hypertext. See Christian Jacob, “Athenaeus the Librarian” (2000) and Monica Berti’s online project, “Digital Athenaeus.”

“reinstat[ing] the ‘pure’ Attic” aimed to create a “medium for literary prose and educated discourse,” in contrast with the uses of the vernacular *koine*, or common Greek dialect, that developed in the later years of the fourth century BCE and was instated as a sign of Greek unification and Hellenistic empire (Silk 23, 3). One’s ability to employ the idealized, ancient dialect signaled one’s elite status as tied to one’s level of education. As Tim Whitmarsh explains, the definition of “being educated” in the Second Sophistic included, centrally, the ability to use and imitate classical Attic Greek, that is, the ability “to write and declaim fluently in a form of Greek that had passed from popular currency some five centuries earlier” (*Greek Literature* 6).

The significance of the classical Attic dialect to *paideia*, or Greek cultural education, helped to dictate which texts and authors became canonical—and which readers could claim cultural and social authority based on their knowledge of those privileged texts. As Michael Silk puts it, the Second-Sophistic interest in classical Attic created a “significant skewing of the canon of approved ancient authors, and therefore of the survival of ancient texts—in favor (most obviously) of Plato and Attic oratory” (23). Classical Athenian oratorical writings (such as speeches by Demosthenes) and prose texts (especially Plato’s dialogues) provided a model for proper locution and literary expression (Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature* 6). Such texts also provided a set of cultural values and standards. Though it did not present a single, coherent doctrine or curriculum across the eastern parts of the Roman Empire, *paideia* helped to bind together elite social groups through shared access to and

knowledge of ancient texts (Anderson, *Second Sophistic* 8; Goldhill, “The Anecdote” 111). To successfully undergo *paideia*, one needed access to these privileged texts, as well as special training not only to interpret these texts but also to read them with proper phrasing and locution (Johnson, *Readers* 167-170). *Paideia*, therefore, helped to designate an elite status based on one’s ability to read and interpret literary materials—a form of training that was not accessible to everyone. *Paideia* also helped to forge one’s cultural ties to a lauded Greek past and thus constructed one’s sense of “Greekness.” In this context, how one read and recited ancient Greek texts actively created one’s social status and relation to others in a political community.⁶

The complex position of ancient Greek poetry in Second-Sophistic linguistic and literary training further demonstrates the sociopolitical implications of *paideia*. Traditionally used in elite education, ancient Greek poetry (such as the texts of Homer and of Attic tragedy and comedy) contains many non-Attic dialects and linguistic elements. Hellenistic scholars often characterized these features as ξενικός, that is, “foreign,” “strange” or “unfamiliar.”⁷ Distinctions between what was properly “Greek” and what was “foreign” show how the reading of idealized, ancient texts was

⁶ On the significance of social belonging to identity-formation in the Second Sophistic, see Kendra Eshleman, *The Social World of Intellectuals in the Roman Empire: Sophists, Philosophers, and Christians* (2012).

⁷ For a discussion of how different genres of Greek poetry influenced Attic standardization, see Michael Silk, “The Invention of Greek,” in Alexandra Georgakopoulou and Silk (eds.), *Standard Languages and Language Standards: Greek, Past and Present* (2009: 14-24). Aristotle used the term ξενικός in the *Poetics* to describe the use of “anything beyond the established or ordinary” (τὸ παρὰ τὸ κύριον) in diction (1458a 17-34). Before Aristotle’s *Poetics*, Plato used τὰ ξενικά to refer to non-Attic words in *Cratylus* (401c). Writing after Aristotle in the first century BCE, Dionysius of Halicarnassus praised orators like Lysias for their use of a “pure” Attic dialect and standard, ordinary, already-established language, and compared them with writers who used too many “unfamiliar” or “foreign” words (*Lys.* 3).

entangled with acts of sociopolitical exclusion. With this relationship in mind, we can begin to glimpse why it might matter that the ἀγράμματοι do not pronounce the alphabetic letters of an inscription with ease or efficiency, or according to proper (elite) conventions for reading. In the context of the Second Sophistic, the distinction between the learned and unlearned, between “having letters” and not, carried political and cultural weight—and helped to determine whether one belonged within a particular community.

In this chapter I emphasize a central tension in the *Deipnosophistae*, that is, the tension among different styles of reading or methods for approaching texts. This tension, insofar as it relates to readers’ engagements with the privileged texts of elite Greek cultural education, also relates to Second-Sophistic conceptions of language, namely, the equation between one’s knowledge of the centuries-old classical Attic dialect and one’s achievement of a high level of literate education. This chapter argues that the imaginative practices of the unlearned ἀγράμματοι disrupt Second-Sophistic investments in linguistic purity, as tied to the mastery of privileged ancient texts. By attending to the voices of these characters, which are interposed with the erudite performances of highly educated scholars, I argue for the significance of their uncertainty and non-mastery when reading alphabetic inscriptions. More specifically, these “illiterate” readers introduce three topics that guide my discussion: the relationship between reading and knowledge (both the prior knowledge one has when approaching a written text and the desire to gain knowledge through reading); the role of alphabetic letters in the configuration of meaning; and the play between efficient

communication and imaginative figuration in the practice of reading. By demonstrating that reading is an act of imaginative making, the ἀγράμματοι disrupt Second-Sophistic norms for elite reading, as demonstrated by the Atticist readers among the deipnosophists. That is, the ἀγράμματοι unsettle the logics of language standardization that undergird Atticism. They also throw into doubt the ability to acquire a stable body of knowledge from ancient texts, or to construct an ideal canon devoid of “foreign” influence— notions that underpin elite conceptions of cultural education during the Second Sophistic.

In their divergences from the norms of elite Second Sophistic reading practices, the ἀγράμματοι demonstrate the ethical dimensions of reading. As I discuss in the Introduction, these ethical dimensions include acts of deliberation that arise from an experience with uncertainty; the impossibility of full, unmediated understanding (of texts and of others); and an encounter with unfamiliarity. Rather than presume the dismissive title (“illiterate”) that the deipnosophists use to describe the unlearned “ἀγράμματοι” readers, I wager that the practices of the ἀγράμματοι, and the ethical dimensions of reading that they illuminate, are pertinent to the experiences of the highly educated scholars. Arguing that the deipnosophists also encounter unfamiliarity and difficulty when reading ancient literature, I show how the deipnosophists shed light on the practices of modern readers who encounter texts from the ancient past and construct relationships between those texts and their present.

This chapter thus underlines the central ethical issues that shape the comparative methodology of *Deciding the Letter*. In a dissertation that mobilizes

literary texts from Greek antiquity to consider the sociopolitical and ethical dimensions of reading in our U.S. American present, Athenaeus' scenes of reading provide a model for what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak terms "copying and pasting," that is, for gathering together different texts so that they can be read in new ways (*Death of a Discipline* 32-33). At the same time, *Deipnosophistae* provides a crucial lesson in encountering unfamiliarity and a lack of complete mastery when engaging with those texts. That is, Athenaeus' scenes of reading thematize both the desire for knowledge and the limits of gaining full understanding when reading fragmentary and heavily mediated texts from classical antiquity. If Athenaeus' text provides a model for reading comparatively with classical texts, it does so by calling into question the cultural authority of the "classics" while demonstrating both the generative possibilities and the necessary limitations of a comparative project.

The Deipnosophists: Reading with Letters

The dinner conversations that take place during the course of *Deipnosophistae* demonstrate the norms of elite reading practices in the Second Sophistic. The guests are surrounded by books: the host, Larensius, is an erudite, bilingual (Latin and Greek) scholar who is celebrated for his library of "ancient Greek books" that "exceeds" the famous libraries of the likes of Aristotle and Euripides (3a).⁸ In order to

⁸ All references to *Deipnosophistae* utilize S. Douglas Olson's 2006 edition. All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted. The first two books of the *Deipnosophistae*'s fifteen books are from a medieval epitome (tenth or eleventh century CE), which substitute the missing parts of a manuscript that was copied between 895 and 917 CE. For the textual history of Athenaeus' work, see Geoffrey Arnott, "Athenaeus and the Epitome" (2000).

prepare for their performance of erudition, the deipnosophists bring γράμματα, or writings, with them in their bags (4b). One scholar arrives with quotations that are relevant to each of the dishes, while another prepares for the event by “writing out the beginnings of many poems and writings” in order to be praised for his learnedness (4b-c). As their recitations from a wide range of ancient Greek texts, and their admiration of Larensius’ extensive library, show, the deipnosophists equate extensive reading with erudition. Their methods of extensive reading, and their performances of that reading, construct their social relationships. This link between erudition and social prestige relies on their prior reading as well as on memorization: the deipnosophists rarely read from any texts during their dinner, and instead recite texts from memory (Paulas 406, n. 6).⁹ If the deipnosophists utilize the copied writings (γράμματα) they bring with them to the feast, these writings serve as cheat-sheets, reminders that prompt the recitation of longer passages. In order to gain recognition for one’s reading in this context, one must have a big library, but not read from the texts in it—at least, not in the presence of one’s friends.

The deipnosophists’ accumulation and memorization of selected textual material suggests an interest in mapping and regulating what gets included in a Greek literary corpus. Christian Jacob refers to this act of amassing texts—in one’s library and in one’s memory—as the construction of an “ideal library” of ancient Greek literature (“Athenaeus the Librarian” 89-90). As Yun Lee too points out, each scholar

⁹ While the deipnosophists rely on memory, a technique common to classical symposia and oratory, König points out that Athenaeus “relies heavily on the written technologies of note-taking,” as exhibited by the inclusion of long excerpted passages into his work (*Saints and Symposiasts* 95).

becomes a living location of this ideal library, as well as a “textual regulator and authenticator,” that is, a preserver of texts but also a gatekeeper (“Walking Library” 115). This textual gatekeeping was a linguistic enterprise in the Second Sophistic. *Deipnosophistae* registers how practices of reading during this period intersected with Atticism: the deipnosophists refer to ancient Greek texts not only to show off their extensive reading, but also to marshal evidence in debates over how words ought to be spelled and how letters ought to be pronounced. In other words, the deipnosophists read exhaustively but recite from texts selectively; they recall word occurrences and patterns, and can remember passages in which any obscure topic or rare word is located.

The main interlocutors of *Deipnosophistae* are Ulpian and Theodorus (primarily referred to by the nickname Cynulcus), a grammarian and Cynic philosopher, respectively, who are positioned as rivals. Their perspectives on language are a key point of contention: Ulpian’s interests lie in establishing and maintaining the purity of the (classical Attic) Greek language, whereas Cynulcus views language as culturally specific and does not shy away from using Roman terminology (Braund, “Learning” 20). It follows from their linguistic perspectives that each of these characters adopts a different style of reading. Ulpian’s obsession with linguistic correctness leads him to search out and name the exact source of a particular word, while Cynulcus takes into account “a wide range of varied sources” and incorporates quotations into his speeches without always naming the source text (Paulas 426-7). While both are extensive readers, their treatment of texts varies,

depending on the uses they put them to. It is specifically Ulpian's Atticism that will come under scrutiny when the ἀγράμματοι enter into the conversation, in the tenth book of Athenaeus' work. The ἀγράμματοι also interrupt the ease and efficiency with which the deipnosophists, despite the differences among them, navigate and utilize vast amounts of textual material.

In the section of *Deipnosophistae* in which the ἀγράμματοι appear, the deipnosophists discuss riddles during their postprandial wine drinking. Larensius, the host of the dinner party, responds to a guest's introduction of the topic by reciting the definition of riddles from a fourth-century BCE text by the philosopher Clearchus of Soli. According to Clearchus, Larensius explains, a riddle is an "intricate" use of language (γρῖφος)¹⁰ that obscures an obvious solution, and therefore demands work from a reader or listener—who is then either praised or punished depending on whether he figures out the solution (448c). Larensius then lists Clearchus' classifications of riddles—by seven types—and provides examples from each type, as he and his guests recite scenes of riddling from various literary genres, often from Attic comedy.

As these citations demonstrate, the assumption that riddles are obscure and "intricate" is attributed to their form: they are posed in complex poetic meter and use figurative language. In the snippets of dialogue that the deipnosophists recite, the hearers of riddles often complain that a riddle renders sense-making difficult. For

¹⁰ γρῖφος literally denotes a "fishing basket" but also refers more metaphorically to "anything intricate," especially an intricate or obscure use of language, such as a riddle (Liddell and Scott, "γρῖφος" A1-A2).

instance, when Larensius recites a passage from Antiphanes, a playwright of Middle Comedy (early- to mid-fourth century BCE), we hear from a literary character who thinks that speaking in riddles causes people to “act foolishly” and to “speak not at all clearly” (448f-449a). In another citation from Antiphanes, we hear from two speakers who have different views on riddling. Responding to speaker A, who enjoys speaking periphrastically and figuratively—for example, preferring to say “a dewy, nymph-sacred spring” (λιβάδα νυμφαίαν δροσώδη) instead of “water” (ὔδωρ)—speaker B chides those who “amass together close-packed words” (συστρέφειν πυκνά) instead of naming the thing exactly (449c-d). As these citations show, riddles emphasize the figurative dimensions of language, while they both intensify and disrupt a hearer’s desire to understand the meaning. Riddles defer understanding, if they are understood at all, and require active work from the interpreter.

Modern readers may notice an affinity between the characteristics of these ancient riddles and modern definitions of literary language. Literature has been defined by its “linguistic difficulty and density” and by its inability to be easily reduced to utilitarian means (Gallagher 138, 140). Likewise, literary texts are known for their figurality and indirection, that is, for the many readings made possible by their heightened uses of figurative language and by their imperfect correspondence to real-world referents.¹¹ For ancient audiences, the assumption that riddles demand

¹¹ Both Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Jonathan Culler locate their definitions of literature—as that which does not produce a “singular ‘fact’” (Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* 44)—in the quality of figurative language, in the practices that readers bring to texts, and in the institutional conventions that shape those interpretive practices. Culler, for example, attributes the “openness” or “ambiguity” of literature to a reader’s interpretive treatment of

interpretive work positions them as part of a complex negotiation of social position and political identity. In a discussion of the “institutional context of reception” of oracles in ancient Greek texts, Elton Barker argues that the interpretive work that riddling language demands may not be a “natural” or inherent characteristic of the genre. Rather, there is social and political investment in the very notion that oracles and other riddles require interpretive skill (Barker 2-3).

For the *deipnosophists*, the interpretive skill demanded by riddles is based in linguistic expertise. Larensius explains that riddles are classified according to the units of language on which they focus: some revolve around an individual letter; some are “posed syllabically,” where the solution is a metrical unit that conforms to a particular meter;¹² and others require the listener to come up with a noun that fits either a “lofty” (*τραγική*) or more “commonplace” or “colloquial” (*ταπεινή*) context (Athenaeus 448c-d).¹³ These categories reveal the extent to which solving a riddle depends on one’s knowledge of the orthographic conventions, metrical forms, and appropriate linguistic registers of ancient Greek. This linguistic knowledge, as a facet

figuration: “[a]ny figure can be read referentially or rhetorically” (*Pursuit of Signs* 78-79). In an example directly relevant to Athenaeus’ text, Paulas advocates for a specifically “literary” reading of *Deipnosophistae* by arguing that we should understand the symbolic value of a set of textual references that modern scholars have tended to take more literally (412).

¹² Greek meter is quantitative; it depends upon the arrangement of long and short syllables. A standard introduction to Greek meter is by M.L. West.

¹³ This division of language into parts shares much in common the atomistic understanding of the world and of language in Presocratic thought, and runs through the fourth-century BCE texts of Aristotle (see *Poetics*, 1456b), the second-century BCE work of the grammarian Dionysius Thrax (see Vivien Law and Ineke Sluiter (eds.), *Dionysius Thrax and the Technē Grammatikē*), and the first-century BCE work of Atticist literary critic Dionysius of Halicarnassus. For a discussion of the “componential and compositional” theory of language, its Presocratic origins, and its afterlives, see James I. Porter’s *The Origins of Aesthetic Thought in Ancient Greece* (2010: 213-239).

of a classical Greek cultural education, or *paideia*, was “a site of intense intellectual concern over the distribution of social power” during the Second Sophistic (Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature* 129-130). As Simon Goldhill puts it, “linguistic performance” was a “key to elite identity,” and the “protocols of proper speech” were “central to a politics of class and status” (“Literary History” 61). When the deipnosophists perform their erudition in relation to the riddle form, their reading methods converge with the linguistic and social politics of the Second Sophistic period. With the important claim that “Greekness” during the Second Sophistic was “inseparable from processes of sophisticated literary interpretation,” Whitmarsh argues that the very act of posing “problems” of literary interpretation constructed and performed Greek identity (*Greek Literature* 17, 32). At the same time that riddles make communication difficult, they present the opportunity for both the riddle-poser and the riddle-solver to exhibit interpretative skill—and thus social and political authority.

In spite of the resemblances between the ancient riddle form and the modern conception of literary language, the deipnosophists do not perform interpretive work on the riddles. That is to say, they do not directly engage in the problem-solving processes that help to define riddles as a special category. Rather, they are more interested in showing that they have already mastered those interpretive problems through their extensive reading. When Larensius recites examples of riddles, he also includes their solutions in his references to over twenty Greek poets, including comic, tragic, and lyric poets ranging from the sixth to the fourth centuries BCE. When

Larensius recites lines from another playwright of Middle Comedy, for example, he interrupts the verse to tell his dinner guests the answer to the riddle: “You all may judge that these verses signify a machine for casting lots [the answer to the riddle], so that we may not take up all (of the passage) from [the author] Eubulus” (450c). In this instance, Larensius prefers to sum up the riddle’s solution rather than deal further with the text. His citations thus indicate mastery over a wide variety of material: as an extensive reader, Larensius is invested in the cultural value assigned both to individual citations (the value of the texts and authors from which the citations are excerpted) and to the size of the textual collection (his access to a large number of texts). Any interpretive decisions appear to reside in his strategies for selecting and ordering vast amounts of material, a distant mapping of texts that, to borrow Heather Love’s description of modern distant reading, produces “generality, knowledge, legitimacy” (König and Whitmarsh, *Ordering Knowledge* 29, 35; Love 374).

The linguistic and textual knowledge required to understand the riddles and their solutions identifies the deipnosophists as “γραμματικοί,” a term used by Larensius to designate his guests as “scholars” or “critics” and that shares its root with the Greek word for “letters” and “writing” (Athenaeus 222a; Liddell and Scott, “γραμματικός” A.I, A.II.2-3). In one of Xenophon’s Socratic dialogues (fourth century BCE), the term γραμματικός signifies one’s knowledge of the written letters: “one who willingly does not write correctly” (ὁ μὲν ἐκὼν μὴ ὀρθῶς γράφων) is considered “literate” (γραμματικός), and someone “who does so unwillingly” (ἄκων) is considered “illiterate” (ἀγράμματος) (*Memorabilia* 4.2.20). After the centralization

of Hellenistic libraries in the second and first centuries BCE, “γραμματικός” came to signify someone who not only had cultural and literary knowledge, but who also dealt with editing and regulating literary texts (Liddell and Scott, “γραμματικός” A.II.2).¹⁴ This term, then, designates one who commands control over written letters, both as a writer and a reader. Riddles, as a genre, invite a performance of this kind of mastery.

However, as the material in Larensius’ citations demonstrates, riddles also threaten to undermine this mastery of language. We only have to think back to the annoyance of Antiphanes’ comedic character—speaker B’s distaste for his friend’s use of riddling language—to recall that riddles proliferate descriptions of a given thing, playfully circling around the referent. Riddles display the inexactness of language as a system of reference, in which many words can refer to the same thing; inasmuch as they require explanation, they also demonstrate the excesses of language conceived as a system for direct communication. The complex relationship between the linguistic mastery that the γραμματικοί exhibit, and the pressure exerted onto that mastery by riddling language, can be exemplified by the very location of the riddles within Athenaeus’ text. The discussion of riddles—including the references to the ἀγράμματοι—is positioned in *Deipnosophistae* as an interruption of Ulpian’s Atticist pursuit of proper linguistic forms in literary texts. In the remainder of this section, I will discuss Ulpian’s engagement with literary texts, so that his attempts at linguistic

¹⁴ See Yun Lee Too’s discussion of Hellenistic libraries in *The Idea of Ancient Literary Criticism* (1998), in which she argues that the institutionalization of library spaces was a political process by which textual critics could hold the power of judgment and discrimination, and thus cultural and political authority, even as Hellenism was disseminated throughout the Mediterranean world (117-150).

mastery may be compared with the linguistic playfulness of riddles, which I will more fully discuss in the following section when I focus on the ἀγράμματοι.

Called Κειτούκειτος, a nickname derived from his favorite question, “κεῖται ἢ οὐ κεῖται;” (“Has it been established [in a literary source] or not?”), Ulpian utilizes ancient Greek literature to locate the source of a given word and to establish the proper use, spelling, and pronunciation of that word (1e). When one guest questions Ulpian on his use of a particular form of the verb “to drink” (Ulpian uses πῖθι, an imperative form of πίνω), Ulpian mobilizes five different texts in which the word can be found (446a-d). He does not comment on or engage in a reading of the passages he cites, other than to confirm that his use of the verb has an established precedent in ancient literary texts. After proving this point, Ulpian abruptly turns to another form of the verb “to drink” (πίομαι, a form of the middle indicative), this time to comment on how the form ought to be pronounced: “One must say *piomai* without a *u*, and with the *i* lengthened. For this is the Homeric way” (446d). He then cites a line from the *Iliad*, and a couple of lines from Aristophanes’ comedies, in which the position of the aforementioned verb within the given poetic meter offers clues to its pronunciation. Ulpian sees literary texts as receptacles for linguistic information: he utilizes ancient texts to locate precedents for pronunciation and for standard orthographic conventions. His citation practice seeks to establish ancient sources as authoritative and their language as a standard.

However, even Ulpian cannot hold fast to strict rules, for three citations later he remarks, “sometimes they also shorten the *i*,” the first piece of evidence for which

is a passage from Plato (446e). This uncertainty when moving between Homer and Plato reveals a central crux in Atticism: Homer is a long-established authority in the ancient Greek canon, but Homeric poetry is not comprised of the “pure” Attic dialect that Plato’s prose might exemplify. Instead, Homeric poetry is a composite language, consisting of multiple dialects. The archaizing qualities of canonical texts like epics presented difficulties in the Second-Sophistic attempt to resuscitate a “pure” Attic dialect (Silk 23). Likewise, the impulse of an Atticist like Ulpian to turn to Attic comedy (by playwrights such as Antiphanes and Aristophanes) to establish linguistic rules demonstrates a similar paradox: comedy provides examples of “good Attic style” but also contains “abstruse or puzzling vocabulary,” which, beginning in the early Hellenistic period, necessitated the production of reading guides like commentaries and lexica (Murray 36). Such comedies are common source texts for the riddles presented in Athenaeus’ text, and the discussion of riddles further interrupts Ulpian’s contradictory efforts to promote Attic purism.

Right in the middle of Ulpian’s discussion, just as he is about to add further comment to a myriad of textual references to drinking, another guest, Aemilianus, decides that it is time to discuss the topic of riddles (448b). This interruption reveals the shaky grounds of Ulpian’s pursuit of proper linguistic forms, as the riddles that are cited in Athenaeus’ text often stress the contingencies of language. When Larensius discusses riddles that are grouped together because they focus on individual letters, for example, these riddles thematize the strangeness of alphabetic letters from the perspective of those who have not been deemed “γραμματικοί.” This is where the

ἀγράμματοι appear in Athenaeus' text. These passages are drawn from three different dramatic texts from the fifth and fourth centuries BCE (*Theseus* by Euripides, *Telephus* by Agathon, and an unnamed play by Theodectes). In these scenes, each ἀγράμματος describes the shapes of the letters in the name "Theseus" (ΘΗΣΕΥΣ) as it appears before him in an inscription. As the next section will explore, the ἀγράμματοι read written letters with a different approach than do the γραμματικοί. While the Atticist among the dinner guests (Ulpian) expresses a more extreme viewpoint about language than others at Athenaeus' table, the deipnosophists perform mastery over the riddling texts they cite, as their extensive reading and linguistic knowledge allows them to know the solutions in advance. The content of the ἀγράμματος riddles suggests a different view of language, and of reading, made available from the position of the untrained.

The *Agrammatoi*: Reading without Letters

For the deipnosophists, the element that links the three ἀγράμματος passages, each cited from a different text, is a particular way of describing alphabetic letters. After discussing a play by Callias of Athens, called *Grammatikē Theōria*, Larensius claims that this fifth- or fourth-century BCE author was the first to "describe a letter in iambic verse" (δεδήλωκε δὲ καὶ διὰ τῶν ἰαμβείων γράμμα πρῶτος) (448a). That is, his play features characters who indicate words by describing what the individual letters would look like when written. The use of iambic verse refers to the meter of dramatic dialogue (iambic trimeter), which in Attic drama is distinct from the lyric

songs often sung by the chorus. The dialogue of Attic drama boasts an Athenocentric linguistic history: in fifth-century Athens, the Attic dialect was primarily used in dialogues for tragedy, and almost always used in comedy's dialogues. As compared with a more "pan-Hellenic" composite dialect that had been created in the epic poetry of earlier centuries, and which could appear in the lyric songs of tragedy, the dramatic dialogue represented a markedly Athens-centric literary output (Silk 16, 18). That is to say, Larensius' designation of iambic trimeter links his inquiry into letter-focused riddles to the linguistic politics of Atticism, one effect of which is, in Silk's terms, a "significant skewing of the canon" toward texts that provide a good Attic model (23). The ἀγράμματοι enter into the deipnosophists' discussion to serve as further examples of dramatic characters who adopt this descriptive practice by indirectly spelling a word without naming the letters or sounding them out.

This descriptive practice is exemplified by the first cited ἀγράμματος, whom Larensius introduces as an "illiterate shepherd" (βοτήρ [...] ἀγράμματος) depicted in Euripides' lost tragedy *Theseus*. In this passage, the ἀγράμματος describes the name "Theseus" (ΘΗΣΕΥΣ) as it is written before him in an inscription:

I am not by nature knowledgeable of the letters,
But I will speak out shapes and clear signs:
There is a circle measured out as if by lathes,
And this has a clear mark in the middle.
The second is, primarily, two lines,
And connecting them in the middle is another one.
The third is like a lock of hair after it has been curled,
As for the fourth, one line is straight up,
And three slanting ones are propped up against it—
But the fifth is not to be said with ease;
For two lines are set apart from one another
And they join in a single base.

The remaining letter resembles the third. (454b-c)

ἐγὼ πέφυκα γραμμάτων μὲν οὐκ ἴδρις,
μορφὰς δὲ λέξω καὶ σαφῆ τεκμήρια,
κύκλος τις ὡς τόρνοισιν ἐκμετρούμενος:
οὗτος δ' ἔχει σημεῖον ἐν μέσῳ σαφές.
τὸ δεύτερον δὲ πρῶτα μὲν γραμμαὶ δύο,
ταύτας διείργει δὲ ἐν μέσαις ἄλλη μία.
τρίτον δὲ βόστρυχός τις ὡς εἰλιγμένος,
τὸ δ' αὖ τέταρτον ἢ μὲν εἰς ὀρθὸν μία,
λοξαὶ δ' ἐπ' αὐτῆς τρεῖς κατεστηριγμένα
εἰσίν. τὸ πέμπτον δ' οὐκ ἐν εὐμαρεῖ φράσαι
γραμμαὶ γὰρ εἰσιν ἐκ διεστώτων δύο,
αὗται δὲ συντρέχουσιν εἰς μίαν βάσιν.
τὸ λοισθιον δὲ τῷ τρίτῳ προσεμφερές.

Here the ἀγράμματος begins his description with an acknowledgement of his lack of familiarity with alphabetic writing: “I am not knowledgeable of the letters.” He comes to the inscription without literacy training, and so professes his lack of mastery over the text. The resulting account of “shapes” and “signs” poses problems for the linguistic politics of Atticism: he uses the metrical conventions of Attic dramatic dialogue to unsettle the relationship between a letter and its “proper” sound (or how later scholars, like the fictionalized Ulpian, imagine it should sound). When the ἀγράμματος comes to the third letter in the inscribed name, for example, he does not refer to the mark by its letter name (*sigma*), nor does he pronounce its associated |s| sound, but instead explains that the letter looks like “a lock of hair after it has been curled.” His description of alphabetic letters generates sound and rhythm in excess of the sound a letter is meant to produce in the mouth of a reader.

The ἀγράμματος’ textual practice differentiates him from the elite readers at Larensius’ dinner, whose status is defined by how and from what they read. Like

classically trained and non-Christian readers during the Second Sophistic, the deipnosophists read their literary materials from bookrolls, which, because they were difficult to access and difficult to read, were “elite products” that helped to define what it meant to be educated during the period (Johnson, *Readers* 21). Bookrolls were difficult to read because they were written in *scriptio continua*, that is, without word division and with minimal, if any, punctuation; to efficiently read this “stream of letters” required intensive training, so that being educated meant navigating texts efficiently without lectional aid (Johnson, *Readers* 200-201). When Larensius labels the character from Euripides’ play “ἀγράμματος,” he brings attention to the way that literacy is linked to a particular style of reading. The shepherd is ἀγράμματος because he has not been educated to read written script efficiently, according to the norms of Second Sophistic elite reading practices.

I want to suggest, however, that the ἀγράμματος’ description of the letters he sees is informed by a high degree of cultural and literary understanding. His account alludes to common tropes of Attic drama. More specifically, the ἀγράμματος’ description alludes to scenes of recognition (and misrecognition) commonly employed in Attic tragedy.¹⁵ The comparison that the first ἀγράμματος makes between a *sigma* and a lock of hair (τρίτον δὲ βόστρυχός τις ὡς εἰλιγμένος) recalls a

¹⁵ This alphabetic description also anticipates a comic scene in Aristophanes’ *Frogs* (405 BCE), commonly understood as a parody of early literary criticism (see Ford, *Origins of Criticism* 281; Too, *Idea of Ancient Literary Criticism* 49). More specifically, the description of a circular letter measured “by lathes” (κύκλος τις ὡς τόρνοισιν ἐκμετρούμενος, Athenaeus 454b) echoes in the measurement of words that occurs during the contest between tragic playwrights Euripides and Aeschylus in Hades. When the character Dionysus stumbles into—and becomes the judge of—the competition, poetry is weighed on scales (ταλάντῳ μουσικῆ σταθμήσεται), and tragedy is measured with verbal rulers (καὶ κανόνας ἐξοίσουσι καὶ πήχεις ἐπῶν) (Aristophanes, *Frogs* ll. 798-800).

key scene in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* (458 BCE), in which Elektra encounters a lock of hair that has been left at her father's grave by her presumed-dead brother Orestes (Aeschylus ll. 167-180). Unable to identify with certainty to whom the lock of hair belongs, the first step in her interpretive practice is comparative, as she attempts to establish similarity between herself and the material traces of the unknown visitor:

Elektra:	I see a cut lock of hair here on the tomb.
Chorus:	From what man, or deep-girded girl?
Elektra:	This is easy for all to understand.
Chorus:	How, then? I, being old, shall learn from the younger.
Elektra:	There is not anyone except me who could cut it.
[...]	
Elektra:	And yet it is possible to see that this is very similar—
Chorus:	To hair of what sort? This I want to learn.
Elektra:	To see that it is very like my hair. (ll. 168-175)
Elektra:	ὄρῳ τομαῖον τόνδε βόστρυχον τάφῳ.
Chorus:	τίνοϋ ποτ' ἀνδρός, ἢ βαθυζώνου κόρης;
Elektra:	εὐξύμβολον τόδ' ἐστὶ παντὶ δοξάσαι.
Chorus:	πῶς οὖν; παλαιὰ παρὰ νεωτέρας μάθω.
Elektra:	οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις πλὴν ἐμοῦ κείραιτό νιν.
[...]	
Elektra:	καὶ μὴν ὄδ' ἐστὶ κάρτ' ἰδεῖν ὁμόπτερος—
Chorus:	ποιάϊς ἐθείραις; τοῦτο γὰρ θέλω μαθεῖν.
Elektra:	αὐτοῖσιν ἡμῖν κάρτα προσφερῆς ἰδεῖν.

The ἀγράμματος uses a similar practice when he compares the first *sigma* in *Theseus* (ΘΗΣΕΥΣ) to the final *sigma*: “the remaining letter resembles the third.” Unable to identify the name of the letters in front of him, the ἀγράμματος uses the text referentially—that is, he refers individual letters to one another in order to draw comparisons and ultimately to communicate what the inscription says to his audience. In the process, the ἀγράμματος character, cited from one Attic tragedy, exhibits

literary knowledge through an allusion to another Attic tragedy. This subtle allusion demonstrates an intertextual skill that the ἀγράμματος shares with the deipnosophists, but his analytic processes are illegible to the erudite scholars.

The scene of recognition from *Libation Bearers* is a fitting companion to the ἀγράμματοι scenes cited in *Deipnosophistae* because it defers recognition through the proliferation of signs (σημεία).¹⁶ Even after encountering two material traces—the lock of hair and a set of footprints that look a lot like her own—Elektra is unable to confirm that her brother Orestes has been present at the gravesite. Elektra’s encounter with these signs and her interpretation of them leave her uncertain, “divided in the mind” (δίφροντις οὔσα) (Aeschylus l. 196), and even when Orestes is standing before her, she will require yet another sign (her brother’s woven textile) before she can recognize him (ll. 232-5). In her uncertain reading of these signs and in her deferred recognition, Elektra has much in common with the ἀγράμματοι when they encounter the inscribed letters. By labeling these characters “illiterate,” the deipnosophists show that they are unable to recognize and engage with the conventions of unreadable signs and straying messages so often employed in tragedy—conventions that the ἀγράμματοι and their source texts artfully navigate. Habituated by their own training

¹⁶ Aristotle would disagree. In *Poetics*, he cites this scene from *Libation Bearers* as the best mode of recognition in tragedy, that is, “through inference” (ἐκ συλλογισμοῦ). In his description of the scene, Aristotle disregards the proliferating signs in order to privilege an efficient resolution. He reduces the mediation that defers Elektra’s recognition of her brother, spanning over 60 lines of verse in Aeschylus’ play, to a simplified statement: “someone ‘like’ has come, no one except Orestes is ‘like,’ therefore this man has come” (ὅμοιός τις ἐλήλυθεν, ὅμοιος δὲ οὐθεὶς ἀλλ’ ἢ Ὀρέστης, οὗτος ἄρα ἐλήλυθεν) (*Poetics* 1455a 4-5).

in reading, the scholars focus on the ἀγράμματοι's ignorance of the sounds or names of alphabetic letters and thus miss out on the allusion.

While the three ἀγράμματοι, as cited in *Deipnosophistae*, all encounter the same name (Theseus), their descriptions of the letters that constitute this name do not exactly correspond to one another. These variations attest not only to the multiplicity of readings that can be produced from a set of letters, but also to the material variability of the written letters themselves—including alphabetic variation that makes the efficiency of an erudite reading practice difficult to achieve. Larensius' second example of an ἀγράμματος character is extracted from the fifth-century BCE play *Telephus*, by the tragic poet Agathon. For this ἀγράμματος, the first *sigma* (Σ) in the name “Theseus” does not look like a lock of hair. Rather, it “resembles a Scythian bow” (Σκυθικῶ τε τόξῳ τὸ τρίτον ἦν προσεμφορές) (454d). Together, the lock of hair and the Scythian bow point to the variety of imaginative forms that can be used to describe the same letter. That is, these descriptions point to non-standard phonetic and orthographic practices, showing how alphabetic letters can elicit reading strategies that do not cohere with the dominant significations ascribed to those letters.

These different alphabetic descriptions also point to the diversity of alphabets and written scripts that existed between the Greek adoption of the Phoenician writing system (eighth century BCE) and the official adoption of the Ionic alphabet in Athens, with the Decree of Archinus (late fifth century BCE).¹⁷ During the period in which the Attic dramas featuring the ἀγράμματοι were produced, written language was

¹⁷ For the history of the Greek alphabet, including periods of alphabetic experimentation, see Roger D. Woodard, *Greek Writing from Knossos to Homer* (1997).

increasingly standardized in Athens—both in script style and in writing directionality—but fluctuating alphabetic variety did not disappear over night.¹⁸ The divergences among the three ἀγράμματοι’s alphabetic descriptions, then, attest to the variability at the heart of the Greek phonetic alphabet’s history, in both the writing and the reading of each letter. Whereas Ulpian looks to ancient texts to discern proper models of pronunciation and orthography, the ἀγράμματοι’s alphabetic descriptions point to the impossibility of fulfilling such a project. They do so by questioning the very assumptions about the “proper” relationship between written letters and spoken sounds that undergird Atticist efforts, as represented by the fictional reader Ulpian.

The ἀγράμματοι’s unfamiliarity with alphabetic letters in turn makes the Greek phonetic alphabet unfamiliar. This unfamiliarity is especially significant in the case of the second ἀγράμματος, who compares a *sigma* to a Scythian bow. Since at least the time of Herodotus, the Scythians were represented in the Athenian cultural imaginary as uncivilized “others.”¹⁹ The ἀγράμματος therefore finds something

¹⁸ On the varieties of alphabetic writing as an expression of local identity—rather than as a sign of “illiteracy”—in the midst of increasing standardization in the fifth century BCE, see Rosalind Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (1992: 75-76).

¹⁹ François Hartog’s important study of the Scythian *logos* in Book 4 of Herodotus’ fifth-century BCE *Histories* argues that the text does not accurately depict the Scythians as a cultural and political group, but instead constructs them as “other” to the Athenians, and in the process, defines Greek (Athenian) identity. For Hartog’s Herodotus, the Scythians’ nomadism is a central point of distinction from the Athenians’ city-centered community. Another sign of difference from the Athenians was the Scythians’ use of bows and arrows as weaponry. See Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History* (1988). Orators Andocides and Aeschines (fourth century BCE) attest to Athens’ purchase of three hundred Scythian archers after the Battle of Salamis (480 BCE); these archers were kept as public slaves and served as a civic police force (Andocides 3.5; Aeschines 2.173). Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazousae* (c. 411 BCE) depicts one of these Scythian slaves, who is marked by his foreignized accent—which Edith Hall has called “the

foreign in the middle of an alphabetic writing system prized for its unique “Greekness”;²⁰ in the middle of a classical genre (tragedy) that Atticists in the Second Sophistic used as a cultural model; and in the middle of the name of a legendary Greek hero and mythic king of Athens.²¹ The ἀγράμματοι challenge the standard, or dominant, reading practices of the deipnosophists, and especially the Atticist Ulpian’s reading methods. Their defamiliarization of the alphabet, moreover, suggests that their decipherment of inscribed letters defamiliarizes a practice to which, because of their elite literary training, the deipnosophists have become accustomed: reading. In the process, the ἀγράμματοι’s descriptions of alphabetic text challenge the very label “ἀγράμματος,” that is, the distinction the educated scholars make between themselves and the characters they encounter in the texts they read.

The ἀγράμματοι are difficult to recognize as readers because their alphabetic descriptions evade both the full disciplining of Attic purism and the full mastery of the scholars’ extensive reading practice. Despite this defamiliarization, their

most extensive example of caricature of barbarized Greek speech to have survived from the Greek comic stage” (“The Scythian Archer” 227).

²⁰ There is a long history of celebrating the alphabet as a singular achievement of the Greeks. More specifically, the Greeks’ addition of vowels to the Phoenician writing system has been lauded and even linked to arguments about the advancement of Western civilization and democracy. Eric Havelock’s important work on reading in ancient Greece, *The Literate Revolution in Greece and its Cultural Consequences* (1982), has been critiqued for its idealization of the Greek phonetic alphabet. Rosalind Thomas’ study of ancient Greek literacy debunks the myth that the alphabet represents an “exact fit between sound and sign”; she illustrates ancient uses of alphabetic writing—symbolic, figural, artistic—that do not attempt to approximate speech (*Literacy and Orality* 55, 65).

²¹ For the kind of cultural work that the character Theseus performs in ancient tragedy, see especially Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus* and Euripides’ *Herakles*. In each, Theseus promises the downtrodden hero protection in Athens. See also Sophie Mills, *Theseus, Tragedy, and the Athenian Empire* (1997), on “the process of sanitation and domestication” that transformed Theseus into a specifically Athenian hero during the sixth and fifth centuries BCE (5).

imaginative descriptions can still produce a correct answer to their riddle: all three ἀγράμματοι can describe the letter shapes in such a way that someone who is familiar with them could conclude that the inscribed letters spell “Theseus.” Likewise, the common analogies that emerge across their descriptions produce the sense of a shared intelligibility even without the proper pronunciation of a letter sound or its name. This intelligibility is achieved, for example, without Ulpian’s sense of Attic “correctness”: whereas Ulpian focuses on single letters to put a brake on their proliferating sounds and orthographic possibilities, the ἀγράμματοι observe the shifting shapes that constitute each letter and unleash imaginative figures from their observations. Their imaginative attention affirms variability and multiplicity—in acts of reading, in the material contingencies of texts, and in alphabetic letters—even as it produces intelligibility.

The Literary Comparatists of *Deipnosophistae*

Readers of *Deipnosophistae* are able to consider the relationships among the three ἀγράμματοι’s readings because these citations from different ancient texts—mostly now lost—have been gathered together in one place. An ancient reader called Athenaeus collected these citations so that future readers could encounter them together in the same textual location. Describing *Deipnosophistae* as a whole, David Braund notes that Athenaeus’ textual extraction and citation strategies bring our attention to the “interaction between texts, persons and places otherwise kept apart by centuries” (“Learning” 10). This textual interaction is made possible by a practice we

might recognize as a form of literary comparatism. Moving across historical context and genre, Athenaeus locates points of affinity among texts that are otherwise distant from one another, not only to reveal already existing relationships among texts but also to create new ones.

In an essay that advocates reading *Deipnosophistae* as a literary text, rather than as an encyclopedia that “encod[es] cultural and literary ‘facts’,” John Paulas argues that the scholars depicted within Athenaeus’ text provide clues for how to read the text (408). Seeing Athenaeus’ text as a “dramatization of the act of reading,” Paulas focuses on how the deipnosophists engage with “intertexts and intratexts,” which allow them to imaginatively create meaning even as they perform their erudition (405).²² Suggesting that what makes a text “literary” is how a reader interacts with it, Paulas illustrates how these fictionalized readers engage in literary reading by forging connections across texts (405, 408). Here, Paulas makes a distinction between “strict” and “creative” intertext: strict intertext describes, within a given text, an explicit reference to a source text that the reader recognizes, whereas creative intertext “describes the reader connecting any other text by means of a common element that the reader imagines” (408). As the deipnosophists imagine connections among texts through “words and their associated concepts,” modern readers of Athenaeus’ work are also invited to “bring seemingly unrelated text to bear” on what they read (Paulas 408). Generating creative intertext allows modern readers

²² See also Alison Sharrock and Helen Morales, *Intratextuality: Greek and Roman Textual Relations* (2000), for a discussion of intratextuality as readerly negotiations with “wholes and parts” of ancient texts.

to bring texts together by moving across the boundaries of time, space, and genre—practices associated with comparative literature.

Both “strict” and “creative” intertextual connection-making can demonstrate a reader’s erudition, or at least the status of being well read, and can therefore contribute to a performance of one’s learning. In many ways, this is true for the deipnosophists: in the context of the Second Sophistic, their familiarity with a vast corpus of ancient Greek texts allows them to be counted among an elite group defined in part by a high level of linguistic and literary training. At the same time, intertextual engagements—especially those of the “creative” kind—allow for one’s encounter with revered ancient texts to be more playful, less rigid, and less bound to cultural expectations about the wisdom and information they might provide. As Paulas argues, the deipnosophists’ employment of intertextual reading practices does not offer up “vast encyclopedic knowledge about literature and past cultural practices related to dining,” but instead offers “a vast number of readings of ancient literature” (412). That is, by paying attention to the intertextual—and thus literary—engagements of the dining scholars, we can think of revered ancient texts as open to “readerly interpretive activity” rather than as repositories for stable knowledge (Paulas 412). In other words, the deipnosophists’ engagements with intertext point to another vision of their scholarly dinner, in which their performance of learning may not, ultimately, prove their mastery of ancient texts, but instead opens up that ancient tradition to future readings.

In *Death of a Discipline* (2003), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak defines her vision of a New Comparative Literature—which is not bound by traditional disciplinary categories—by similar acts of imaginative connection-making that readers can create when reading literary texts. She invites a reading practice that is moved by “imaginative attention,” does not adhere to “traditional disciplinary boundaries,” and, like Paulas’ view of *Deipnosophistae*, does not expect a literary text to produce a “singular fact” (42, 44). Spivak’s discussion of *telepoiesis*, or a reader’s acts of “copying and pasting,” underlines the generative effects of a reader’s creative acts of connection-making across texts that are otherwise distant from one another. Spivak explains that readers engage in a process of copying and pasting, of making connections between texts despite their different historical and cultural contexts, even with the “most restrictive,” that is, historically bound or traditional, text (*Death of a Discipline* 33). This technique is central to thinking a New Comparative Literature because it involves a reader’s imaginative movement across different contexts that would otherwise be restricted by rigid disciplinary boundaries that keep texts from being read together.

A technique of copying and pasting is legible in Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophistae*. To use Spivak’s terminology, Athenaeus “levers off” the ἀγράμματοι from their “original” locations in classical Attic drama; he takes them out of their contexts and places them together in the same text, thus creating a new context in which to read them. This action, in turn, allows future readers to “reconstellate” the ἀγράμματοι as they read—Spivak’s term for gathering different textual elements together to create

new conditions for reading (*Death of a Discipline* 32-33). Because of Athenaeus' copying and pasting, we are invited to see the ἀγράμματοι not only as distinct characters from separate texts but also as a group with something in common. We are also invited to imagine them into new contexts, that is, "outside" of Attic drama and of Athenaeus' text—such as by putting them into a relation with unlearned readers depicted in other traditions, for instance in U.S. Latina/o texts produced in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Both Spivak and Paulas define literary textual engagement as a practice that involves imaginative connection-making, and that invites readers to give up the assumption that they might find stable facts or knowledge within a given text. While Paulas suggests that relinquishing this assumption can create a more pleasurable reading experience when approaching Athenaeus' multi-volume work, Spivak highlights the ethical implications of being unable to use literature to verify cultural "facts" or to master a historical or cultural tradition (Paulas 435; Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* 34). For Spivak, literature's invitation to relinquish our hunt for facts, knowledge, and certainty is central to developing an ethical relation to texts, as well as to others; for Spivak, we learn from literature that "one cannot access another [or a text] directly and with a guarantee" (*Death of a Discipline* 30). The outcome of our imaginative making when reading literature is instead, Spivak writes, that we may generate "unpredictable" results (*Death of a Discipline* 35).

What are the "unpredictable" consequences that arise from Athenaeus' insertion of non-literate figures into the midst of a performance of vast literary and

cultural learning? While the scholars depicted in Athenaeus' text, and indeed perhaps Athenaeus himself, use their practices of citation to cultivate their identities as part of an educated, elite Greek community, Athenaeus' acts of copying and pasting can produce "unpredictable" consequences that extend further than a writer's (or reader's) intentions. Despite the deipnosophists' attempts to define the unlearned readers from Attic drama as "illiterate," I propose, following Paulas' definition of literary reading in the *Deipnosophistae*, that the ἀγράμματοι can be understood as literary readers. They offer a reading of the inscriptions before them that does not strictly produce "knowledge" or "facts" (although we should acknowledge that the scholars at Larensius' table are still able to understand that the solution to their riddles is "Theseus"), and that does not achieve the straightforward or direct communication of a message. Importantly, the ἀγράμματοι's practices undermine the deipnosophists' efforts to regulate, map, and control texts, illustrating the extent to which literary texts evade full mastery. The ἀγράμματοι's practices demonstrate the variability, uncertainty, and lack of guarantees at the heart of the reading experience. They offer a way of understanding reading as an ethical endeavor that involves an encounter with unfamiliarity, and that generates new textual relations but does not efficiently produce certainty or knowledge.

The ἀγράμματοι's appearance in *Deipnosophistae* can help us think about how we read classical texts and produce classical scholarship, the uses to which we put texts from the classical corpus, and the possibilities for performing comparative work with and beyond classical texts. When these "illiterate" readers appear in

citations within *Deipnosophistae*, the deipnosophists have been using literary texts from their version of the “classical past” to cultivate social prestige, construct a line of continuity between themselves and the cultural producers of the past, and debate usages of classical Attic Greek in order to render it as a model for their own language practices. When we, as modern scholars, read texts from a corpus that has accrued value over time, that has been deemed “classical,” do we cull these texts for cultural information? Athenaeus’ text models for us both the possibilities and limits of this practice, demonstrating both the desire to understand the past and the ways in which we actively construct the past when we read ancient texts.²³ Moreover, Athenaeus’ text participates in a long history of mobilizing classical texts for elite and exclusionary projects. Do we, like the deipnosophists, read classical texts to claim prestige or to put up exclusionary boundaries between what counts as being “learned” and what does not?

If we see the resonances between modern ideas of literary comparatism in the practices of both the deipnosophists (as Paulas suggests we do) and the ἀγράμματοι (as I suggest we do), then we can consider the combined value of the deipnosophists’ (and Athenaeus’) distant connection-making, and the ἀγράμματοι’s close, imaginative attention, to modern Comparative Literature. Moreover, the practices of the deipnosophists call attention to the political and cultural investments readers might

²³ See James I. Porter (ed.), *Classical Pasts: The Classical Traditions of Greece and Rome* (2006), in which Porter argues that “the very idea of the classical world is a cultural artifact, not a historically given entity” (19). That is to say, not only do we, as modern scholars, actively construct a relationship with the ancient past, but so too did ancient readers and writers.

(inevitably) have when approaching ancient texts, perhaps allowing us to recognize our own, historically specific investments. At the same time, the ἀγράμματοι offer an approach to reading texts that admits uncertainty and creativity even while closely attending to the smallest details. What might it mean to approach a “classical” text from a place of unfamiliarity, not assuming that we already know the tradition or can master it—saying, as the first ἀγράμματος does, “I am not knowledgeable”? What kinds of readings could we produce if were to approach “classical” texts from a place of creativity—modeled by the ἀγράμματοι’s imaginative figuration as well as by the deipnosophists’ (and Athenaeus’) creative intertextual work—and imagine new textual connections that extend outside of the classical corpus and bear on our own present and possible futures?²⁴

Back to the Letter Alpha: Dehabituating the Letter

Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that the ἀγράμματοι read differently than the deipnosophists, perhaps trusting too much in the very label “ἀγράμματος” that the scholars depicted in Athenaeus’ text give to these characters. This label, provided by Larensius when he introduces the ἀγράμματοι, is mediated by the idea of literate education that shapes both Athenaeus’ text and the depictions of the scholars within it. Perhaps I have too easily made distinctions between the scholars and the ἀγράμματοι—that is, between an educated group, on the one hand, that reads

²⁴ See Page duBois’ engagements with ancient Greek texts in *Sappho is Burning* (1995) and *Out of Athens* (2010). Even while acknowledging the “irretrievability” of the ancient past, she asks in *Sappho is Burning* how this past “can be used in contemporary debates” and “what kinds of empowerment of utopianism or imagination of the future” it can enable (53-54).

extensively and efficiently, expresses concern about the relationship between alphabetic symbols and the sounds they are meant to produce, and cites texts to display vast literary knowledge; and, on the other hand, the uneducated characters who more slowly and painstakingly (or perhaps more playfully) decipher the symbols of a six-letter inscription. In this section, I suggest that the deipnosophists are much more like the ἀγράμματοι than they might like to think. To make this point, I focus on the scholars' approaches to reading fragments from a play cited in Athenaeus' text, a scene of reading that dramatizes the instability of alphabetic letters.

Among the citations included in Larensius' discussion of riddles are the excerpts of a play from the fifth or fourth century BCE called *Grammatikē Theōria* attributed to "Callias the Athenian," whom Larensius credits as "the first one who made a letter visible by means of iambic meter" (454a). That is, in Larensius' account, *Grammatikē Theōria* is the "source" text for other dramatic scenes that describe alphabetic letters in iambic meter, including the ἀγράμματοι scenes. Like the ἀγράμματοι scenes, excerpts from the *Grammatikē Theōria* are cited as examples of riddles that focus on the individual letter. This focus on the individual letter is apparent both in the content of the play and in how Larensius describes the experience of reading it.

Describing the basic organization of Callias' play to his dinner guests, Larensius first explains that the prologue is "composed out of the sounds of the alphabet" and that it includes a list of the letter names (453c). The play also features a chorus of women who sing out alphabetic sounds in strophic response, reciting each

of the consonants severally alongside each vowel: “*bēta alpha ba, bēta ei be, bēta ēta bē,*” etc. (βῆτα ἄλφα βα, βῆτα εἶ βε, βῆτα ἦτα βη...) (453d).²⁵ Larensius also recites snippets of a dialogue in which the speakers distribute the duties of pronouncing the seven vowels of the alphabet, with instructions to repeat them musically in meter (453f). Larensius further proclaims this play’s influence on the great tragedians of Athenian drama, including Euripides and Sophocles (453e). This description of Callias’ *Grammatikē Theōria* thus positions the Ionic Greek alphabet at the center of both Callias’ play and Larensius’ performance of literary knowledge.

When Larensius claims that Callias’ attention to individual letters has influenced famous Attic dramatists, he connects the history of the Ionic alphabet with the literary history of Attic drama. This claim has positioned modern readers of Callias’ fragments, as preserved in Athenaeus’ text, in two primary and often overlapping ways. As Joseph Smith explains, modern scholars have attempted to figure out the production date of Callias’ play based on the evidence that Athenaeus’ text provides. Taking seriously Larensius’ comment that Callias’ play influenced both Euripides’ *Medea* and Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannos* (453e), some scholars propose that Callias’ play necessarily predates these other productions, and so was produced at some point before 431 BCE (Smith 317). Like Larensius, these scholars seek to

²⁵ In his study of reading practices and the education of elite readers in the Roman Empire, William Johnson discusses the methodic systemization and memorization of syllables, as promoted in the first century CE by the Roman writer Quintilian and his ideal oratorical education: “the student learns the varying phonemes systematically and *in context*. Thus, the different phonetic qualities of /a/ in -ba-, -bal-, and -bar- are taken care of in the course of systematic memorization of syllables, and the student does not have to deal directly with the fact (which emerging readers often find confusing) that the letter ‘a’ represents several different sounds” (*Readers* 28). This fact, that a single letter represents several different sounds, is the focus of my discussion of Larensius’ reading practice in *Deipnosophistae*.

situate the fragments of Callias' play within Greek literary history and, in particular, within the known corpus of classical Greek drama.²⁶ Others have used Callias' fragments as a source for evaluating Athenian literacy in the classical period, when the play was likely produced. In this latter context, *Grammatikē Theōria* has been dated to a crucial point in the history of the Greek alphabet. In this approach, scholars read Larensius' claims less literally and more playfully, and date Callias' play later so that it more closely coincides with the Decree of Archinus during the archonship of Euclides in Athens in 403/2 BCE, which reformed the Attic alphabet with the official adoption of the twenty-four letters of the Ionic alphabet (Smith 318).²⁷

More specifically, the Decree of Archinus made changes to several alphabetic letters: the character H, before consonantal, was now to denote the vowel sound *ēta*; *omega* (Ω) now designated a long vowel sound to distinguish it from the *omicron* (Ο); and the characters *psi* (Ψ) and *xsi* (Ξ) replaced the traditional spelling for these sounds, which employed two letters each, ΦΣ and ΧΣ (D'Angour 109).²⁸ As Smith shows, positioning Callias' play in relation to this decree prompts "assumptions not only of greater rates of letter recognition and phonetic reading among the *demos* but also of the general promulgation of literary texts through Attica at the end of the fifth

²⁶ For treatments of Callias' *Grammatikē Theōria* that situate the play in relation to other Greek dramas, see Peter Arnott, "The Alphabet Tragedy of Callias" (1960) and Ralph Rosen, "Comedy and Confusion in Callias' Letter Tragedy" (1999).

²⁷ For example, Jesper Svenbro writes that Callias' play requires the 403 BCE Attic adoption of the Ionic alphabet. See *Phrasikleia: An Anthropology of Reading in Ancient Greece* (1993 [1988]: 183).

²⁸ The acknowledged source for the Decree of Archinus is the *Suda*, the tenth-century CE encyclopedia. The entry reads, "[...] among the Samians the twenty-four letters were first found by Callistratus, according to Andron in his *Tripous*; he, moreover, persuaded the Athenians to use the alphabet of the Ionians through Archinus the Athenian during the archonship of Euclid" (*Suidae Lexicon* 4.318.1-7, qtd. in Witty 282-3).

century” (318). In other words, linking the production of Callias’ play to the official adoption of the Ionic alphabet in Athens often leads scholars to forge a relationship between the alphabet, the genres of Attic drama (specifically tragedy), the development of a common and standardized writing system, and the persistence of democracy in fifth-century Athens.

This particular contextualization of Callias’ play has helped to promote a narrative of Athens as the progenitor of democratic, literate culture. Such a narrative participates in a long history of idealizing classical Athenian cultural production, as visible in Second-Sophistic interests in Athenian textual production from the fifth and fourth centuries BCE.²⁹ Indeed, the presumed link between the standardization of the alphabet and democratic order in the ancient Athenian *polis* is an old assumption; the preservation of democracy may have been an underlying impetus to the Decree of Archinus itself. As Armand D’Angour explains, the decree may not have represented a “radical innovation” in Athenian writing practices; instead, it “proposed simply the official adoption of a form of the Greek alphabet already widely used for some decades on inscriptions,” and was specifically aimed at the writing used for official documents in Athens (109-110). The historical context for this decree may suggest a political impetus: directly after the end of the Peloponnesian War, in which Athens was defeated by Sparta after thirty years of conflict, the archonship of Euclides marked a restoration of Athens’ democratic political order. In this context, the official adoption of Ionic letters, rather than old Attic standards that still held sway in

²⁹ On the complicated relationship between Second Sophistic Atticism and the construction of a classical tradition, see Porter’s *Classical Pasts* (34-38).

inscriptions pertaining to Athenian laws, was a “symbolic” action (D’Angour 110, 120). By adopting a script that had been identified with Samos, an island that aided the Athenians during the Peloponnesian War, Athens may have been commemorating this alliance. In other words, the official adoption of the Ionic alphabet may have been more of a political move than a clear effort at “simplification or standardization” (D’Angour 120).

Classical scholarship has a history of designating the Greek alphabet, more generally, as a fundamentally unique achievement. In the context of the alphabet’s longer history, it has been understood as both an adaptation of and a distinct divergence from the Phoenician system when it was adopted at some point in the eighth century BCE. In the traditional story of this alphabet, Greeks incorporated vowel sounds into the consonantal system of Phoenician writing.³⁰ This innovation has been understood to connect oral and written language in a novel way, lending “voice” to the written word and helping to stabilize semantic ambiguity.³¹ For example, Eric Havelock’s important study of reading and literacy in the ancient world proposes that the Ionic alphabet created an ideal environment for readers. By correlating each graphic symbol with one sound, he writes, the Greek alphabetic system reduced the ambiguity of a purely consonantal system and produced more

³⁰ In *Greek Writing from Knossos to Homer* (1997), Woodard explains that the Greeks who adapted the Phoenician writing system to their language went through a process of matching up Canaanite graphical characters with phonemes in Greek; leftover symbols for which there was no matching phonetic value became vowels (135).

³¹ In addition to Havelock’s *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences* (1983), see also Svenbro’s link between Callias’ play and the development of silent reading (1993), as well as Jennifer Wise’s link between a phonetic writing system and democratic access (1998). On the history of linking classical Athens with the origins of democratic models of literacy, see Patricia Crain, “New Histories of Literacy” (2008).

efficient reading practices by decreasing the number of choices a reader would have to make in “attempting to recognize the sound represented” (*Literate Revolution* 64, 61). For Havelock, more efficient and easier reading led to the spread of literacy, so that the “democratization of reading” relied on the number of phonemes in the written language (*Literate Revolution* 62). In this story of the Greek alphabet, the spread of literacy is tied to the spread of democracy. The conditions for the emergence of this political system include an alphabetic writing system that is more efficient because it habituates readers’ recognition of letters and encourages easy decipherment, and does so by reducing the ambiguities of language.

Such an understanding of alphabetic writing may say more about modern scholars’ notions of writing than it does about the historical situation of readers who read alphabetic script in the ancient world. Pointing to the historical situatedness of modern scholars, Rosalind Thomas asserts that our own notion of writing has already been “conditioned by the alphabet.” The phonetic alphabet has traditionally been conceptualized as maintaining a “proper” writing system that steadies a relationship between sound and sign (Thomas, *Literacy* 55). This conception also constructs the phonetic alphabet as an organized system with which we can arrange and re-arrange a small number of discrete and repeatable shapes (letters) to create meaning—and that these individual shapes remain the same with each use. However, as Thomas reminds us, “even the alphabet [...] represents only an approximation to pronunciation” and “[t]here is *not* an exact fit between sound and sign” (*Literacy* 55). In fact, Roger Woodard argues that reducing ambiguity was not the underlying motivation for the

Greek addition of vowel sounds into the Phoenician alphabet. Reminding us that “writing systems are ‘designed’ for native speakers” and often only need to “provide sufficient graphic clues to direct the language-enriched mind of the reader,” Woodard argues that the Greek adapters actually “introduce[d] ambiguity into the new alphabetic system.” He cites the lack of graphic distinction between long and short vowels as one example of this ambiguity (Woodard, *Greek Writing* 251-252).

The dream of an idealized writing system that accurately reflects a spoken reality participates in a long discursive tradition that privileges the perceived immediacy of spoken language over the mediation of written language, and phonetic writing over other scripts.³² In addition to deconstructing this paradigm, recent scholarship has emphasized the visual appeal and materiality of alphabetic letters, exploring how letters take hold in the imagination in excess of their basic purposes (i.e., formulating words in order to communicate messages).³³ As I will demonstrate, Callias’ fragments in Athenaeus’ text point to both a desire for the stability supposedly guaranteed by the phonetic alphabet, and the vital incongruence between sound and sign that governs what have been conceptualized as the stable units of a phonetic language.

³² See Derrida’s famous critique of ethnocentric views of phonetic writing in *Of Grammatology* (1998 [1967]: 30ff). See also David F. Elmer, “Helen ‘Epigrammatopoiios’” (2005), which complicates the assumption that the “revolution in writing” happened in the Greek antiquity with the “transcribing [of] speech with graphic signs” (2). Likewise, Haun Saussy critiques the definition of orality as a “lack of writing” in “Writing in the *Odyssey*: Eurykleia, Parry, Jousse, and the Opening of a Letter from Homer” (1996: 307).

³³ See especially the trans-historical work of Johanna Drucker, namely *The Alphabetic Labyrinth* (1995). For a fascinating discussion of “nonsense inscriptions” in antiquity, see Porter, *Origins of Aesthetic Thought* (233-234).

The methods for reading Callias' play employed by Athenaeus' deipnosophists demonstrate this toggling between the desire for alphabetic stability and the impossibility of achieving it. Athenaeus' text preserves the only known surviving fragments of *Grammatikē Theōria*, although it appears that Athenaeus learned of the play from another source. Like the definition of riddles that Larensius recites to his guests, this play also comes to the host's attention by way of Clearchus of Soli's late-fourth-century BCE text on riddles. The inclusion of these excerpts in *Deipnosophistae* thus involves a mediated encounter with a text from the classical period. As I will show, the scholarly reader experiences uncertainty and hesitation in his encounter with this mediated text, at the level of deciphering individual letters. This encounter emphasizes the gaps between the written text and readings of it, and reveals that the scholarly reader has much in common with the ἀγράμματοι.

The fragments of *Grammatikē Theōria* are intertwined with directions on how to read them, and thus dramatize the relationship between readers and their reception of texts. When Larensius introduces the fragments from Callias' prologue, he brings attention to the work a reader must perform in order to make sense of the play:

The prologue of it [Callias' play] is made out of the letters of the alphabet, which it is necessary to say <from the letters of the alphabet> while dividing them according to the punctuation (*paragraphas*) [or all the written letters] and making an end in a broken-down fashion back to *alpha*:

'The *alpha*, *bēta*, *gamma*, *delta*, for *ei* is for a god,
Zēt(a), *ēta*, *thēt(a)*, *iōta*, *kappa*, *labda*, *mu*,
Nu, *xei*, the *ou*, *pei*, *rhō*, the *sigma*, *tau*, the *u*
 The *fei* and the *xei* are near to the *psi*, up to the *ō*.' (453c)

πρόλογος μὲν αὐτῆς ἐστὶν ἐκ τῶν στοιχείων, ὃν χρὴ λέγειν <ἐκ τῶν
στοιχείων> διαιροῦντας κατὰ τὰς παραγραφὰς [τὰς πάσας γραφὰς] καὶ τὴν
τελευτὴν καταστροφικῶς ποιουμένους εἰς τάλφα

τὸ ἄλφα, βῆτα, γάμμα, δέλτα, θεοῦ γὰρ εἶ,
ζῆτ', ἦτα, θῆτ', ἰῶτα, κάππα, λάβδα, μῦ,
νῦ, ξεῖ, τὸ οὐ, πεῖ, ρῶ, τὸ σίγμα, ταῦ, τὸ ὕ,
παρὸν φεῖ χεῖ τε τῶ ψεῖ εἰς τὸ ὦ.³⁴

Before reciting the lines from Callias' prologue, Larensius describes a practice of deciphering written alphabetic symbols to make meaning. His description brings attention to the text from which he might be reading (Clearchus' book on riddles), as well as to the reading practices that Second-Sophistic scholars were expected to employ in order to interpret texts. The practice of "dividing letters" refers to a reading practice made necessary by the conventions of writing literary texts in antiquity: they were most often copied out on bookrolls in *scriptio continua*, that is, without spaces between words and with minimal punctuation.³⁵ As William Johnson explains in his study of reading in the Roman Empire, the sparse use of punctuation created the effect of "a radically unencumbered stream of letters" that required "thorough training" for one to be able to "readily and comfortably" read the script (*Readers* 20). This special training in reading included being able "to render the text rhetorically

³⁴ I offer variations in both the Greek and in my translation because the manuscripts of Athenaeus' text are not in agreement. The multiple possibilities (i.e., dividing the letters "according to the punctuation" (κατὰ τὰς παραγραφὰς) or "according to all the written letters" (κατὰ τὰς πάσας γραφὰς)) each bring attention to an encounter with a written text. My translation emphasizes our unstable positions as readers of ancient texts that are mediated by complex transmission histories.

³⁵ Likewise, when dramatic texts from the classical period (fifth and fourth century BCE) like *Grammatikē Theōria* were recorded, they would have been written on papyri in capital letters, without stage directions or clear divisions of speaking roles. Eric Csapo and William Slater (eds.) provide a helpful account of the conventions of publication in the earlier classical era in *The Context of Ancient Drama* (1995).

into sensible statements with meaningful phrasing and intonation,” in addition to the interpretive facility that comes with deep knowledge of genre, allusion, and a larger classical tradition (Johnson, *Readers* 200). By the Second Sophistic, the practice of using *scriptio continua* in Rome was deliberate: borrowing the attributes of ancient Greek literary production, this textual design was an aesthetic choice, meant “for clarity and for beauty” rather than for ease of reading. The use of *scriptio continua* in Rome was thus entangled with the high valuation of Greek cultural and literary production (Johnson, *Readers* 20).

Depending on which variation in the Greek text you choose, Larensius explains that it is necessary to recite the sounds of the written letters in Callias’ play according to either the text’s punctuation or the graphic symbols of the letters. Taking up one variation, Larensius’ instruction is to “divide” Callias’ playtext according to the παραγραφαί, a form of punctuation that was employed in bookrolls: a παραγραφή was a marginal note in a text, usually a horizontal line written at the left edge of the column to signal “sentences and other dividing points” in the text (Johnson, *Readers* 20). In other words, παραγραφαί served as aids to readers, acting as “landing points for breath and mental pauses, and as visual cues for returning to a passage when a reader looks up from a text” (Johnson, *Readers* 20). Taking up the other textual variation, Larensius’ instruction is to “divide” the text according to τὰς πάσας γραφάς, that is, according to each of the letters separately.³⁶ This translation of

³⁶ Here, I understand the use of κατά with the accusative τὰς πάσας γραφάς to perform a distributive function, conveying the sense of a whole divided into parts, or of taking separately each individual unit of a larger whole (Liddell and Scott, “κατά” B.II).

Larensius' reading instructions suggests a particular form of engagement with *scriptio continua* that diverges from the norm of elite reading in the Second Sophistic, which I will discuss further. In general, Larensius' instructions refer to the conventions of reading that a Second-Sophistic reader of Greek needed to know if he wanted to make sense of Callias' play, that is, of the fragments written in a bookroll containing Clearchus' discussion of riddles.

The result of “dividing up” the prologue, Larensius continues, is that the reader will “make an end” by going through the alphabetic letters and arriving back at *alpha*. The phrase “making an end in a broken-down fashion” or, in a more literal translation, “catastrophically” (καταστροφικῶς), may refer to the act of reading a text through to its conclusion. In this definition, the adverb καταστροφικῶς (which shares its etymology with *catastrophe*) may refer to the conclusion or dénouement of a drama (Liddell and Scott, “καταστροφή” A.II). On a smaller level, this process of “making an end” may refer again to the work that a reader must perform when reading a bookroll in *scriptio continua*, that is, it may refer to the act of finding the end of a word, or the end of a phrase, in a written text. In the *Rhetoric* (fourth century BCE), Aristotle utilizes the verb καταστρέφω to discuss his ideal type of sentence construction, and may be helpful in understanding the use of the adverb καταστροφικῶς in Athenaeus' text—which the standard dictionary of ancient Greek (Liddell and Scott) cites as a *hapax legomenon*. In his discussion of written style (λέξις), Aristotle critiques a “continuous” style (ειρομένη, literally “strung together”), which he describes as unpleasant due to its boundlessness. “Everyone wishes to see

the end,” Aristotle writes (*Rhetoric* 1409a). In contrast with—and superior to—this continuous style is what he terms a “κατεστραμμένη,” or more “constrained,” style, which he describes as consisting of discrete periods (ἢ ἐν περιόδοις), as the “opposite of boundless,” and as capable of leading a listener toward clear endpoints. Like Aristotle’s discussion of the proper length of a tragedy in the *Poetics*, here Aristotle praises the “periodic style” because it “has a beginning and an end in itself,” and so the “magnitude is easily grasped at a glance.” Moreover, Aristotle claims this style is ideal because it is “easy to learn” or “easy to make intelligible” (*Rhetoric* 1409a-b). In doing so, he links the ability to easily reach a conclusion in the κατεστραμμένη style with “easy” reading and pleasure.

With Aristotle’s suggestion that a “constrained” (κατεστραμμένη) style allows a reader to easily grasp the beginning and end of a sentence or phrase, we can see how Larensius’ instructions for reading Callias’ play indicate the skills required for a reader to utilize phonetic and metrical conventions to find the beginnings and ends of words and phrases within a long string of continuous letters. For highly educated readers in the Second Sophistic, like the fictional Larensius, the practice of reading *scriptio continua* in ancient books might have felt easy—but only after intensive linguistic and literary training developed one’s facility with written text. With Johnson’s reminder that ancient bookrolls and the practices required to read them were reserved for elite individuals, we can see Larensius’ reading instructions as participating in “a culture that values the sort of philological education necessary to see clearly and without lectional aid the small-scale structure of sentence phrasing

and the large-scale structure of a speech or a poem” (Johnson, *Readers* 201). This ability to “see clearly” the structures of what one reads points to the habits that one must necessarily cultivate—through intensive training—in order to be able to read efficiently.

For Aristotle, the cultivation of habits—in social practice and in one’s learning—is central to the development of one’s character, or disposition (*ethos*). In relation to learning in particular, Aristotle insists that students must “accustom” or “habituate” themselves to the difficult practices of “diligent attention, effort, and intense application” in order to begin to find these practices more pleasurable (*Rhetoric* 1370a). This approach to learning, which celebrates the cultivation of pleasant ease and efficiency through habituation, extends to the nature and style of written language—and thus to how one reads. Aristotle suggests that one’s ability to easily read a text depends not only on a writer’s use of the “constrained” style, but also on his proper use of the Greek language. To describe this proper usage, he employs the term τὸ ἐλληνίζειν, which is sometimes translated as “purity” and literally means “to (speak or write) Greek”—or, as James Porter puts it, to use Greek as it “should” be used (*Classical Pasts* 35-36). For Aristotle, such a way of writing can be achieved if a writer deploys the Greek language in appropriate ways, by adhering to particular linguistic and syntactical rules (*Rhetoric* 1407a). Proper language use can ensure a reader’s easy recognition of words and, therefore, his ability to understand and to make meaning. Aristotle implicitly connects this goal of easy recognition and reading efficiency with what is already most familiar to the

reader. A writer, Aristotle explains, will “make *ethos*”—that is, he will aid in the construction of a reader’s habituated character—when he uses “proper” or “fitting” words (τὰ ὀνόματα οἰκεῖα) (*Rhetoric* 1408a). The Greek adjective employed here, οἰκεῖος, invokes the enclosure of the home, so that one’s disposition (*ethos*), as cultivated through reading good Greek, relies on what is most familiar and proximate.

The use of habituation in the process of learning remained important for later thinkers and writers who inherited a philosophical tradition from Aristotle and his teacher Plato. Nearer to the time when Athenaeus was writing, Plutarch advocated a set of interpretive practices in *How the Young Man Should Attend to Poetry* (first century CE) that reveals the extent to which habituated reading practices can involve actively excising what is unfamiliar in a text in order to promote a particular program of moral training. In this text, Plutarch’s notion of poetry as ethical training does not just concern the content of the text (i.e., using virtuous characters as models).

Plutarch’s text also focuses on training young readers how to read, which involves teaching them how to pay attention to poetry as imitation and how to select out the good from the bad. As part of this process, Plutarch aims to align the interpretations of young readers with a pre-determined set of moral codes. The practice of “clinging close to that which leads toward virtue and that can mold one’s character” within a text involves clinging to what is already familiar to a reader (Plutarch 26a-b, 28e).

This attachment to familiarity can be seen when Plutarch offers a reading of a passage from Homer’s *Iliad*, in which he concludes,

Forethought, therefore, is a Greek and refined characteristic, while excessive boldness is a barbaric and cheap characteristic; it is necessary to emulate one and to detest the other. (29f)

Ἑλληνικὸν οὖν καὶ ἀστεῖον ἢ πρόνοια, βαρβαρικὸν δὲ καὶ φαῦλον ἢ θρασύτης: καὶ δεῖ τὸ μὲν ζηλοῦν τὸ δὲ δυσχεραίνειν.

This interpretation demonstrates that the moral qualities Plutarch promotes are entangled with exclusionary political categories; it is unclear whether Homer attributes a “bad” quality to a non-Greek character in order to code that quality as morally corrupt, or if Plutarch assumes that the qualities of a “barbarian” are “bad” because he is non-Greek. In any case, a preservation of Greekness and an expulsion of foreignness undergird Plutarch’s interpretive training. Such exclusions are further attested in one of the first metaphors Plutarch utilizes in *How the Young Man Should Attend to Poetry*: “shut gates do not guard an unassailable city, if through one they admit enemies,” he writes, claiming that a young reader will not attain virtue if he abandons himself, without discrimination, to everything that he hears or reads (14f). In this philosophical tradition, from Aristotle through Plutarch, the role of habituation in a person’s moral development involves preserving the familiar, rejecting what has been deemed foreign, and promoting an idealized sense of Greekness.

Larensius’ instructions for reading Callias’ play evoke the ways in which one’s ability to read with efficiency and ease in the Second Sophistic required the cultivation of reading habits, so that one could become accustomed to a difficult task that otherwise could not be taken for granted—that is, reading strings of letters on bookrolls. Further, Aristotle’s and Plutarch’s arguments elucidate that such habituated practices were linked with a set of conventions for textual production and reception—

including expectations for the proper use of Greek, as defined by elite, highly educated groups and based on an idealized notion of the Greek language. As I will show, however, the fictional scholar's engagement with Callias' play does not indicate "easy" or automatic reading. In fact, when Larensius attempts to employ the familiar habits of reading on which he has come to rely, he finds that they do not always yield intelligibility when reading Callias' play from classical Athens.

Larensius' reading of Callias' prologue in Clearchus' text highlights the instability of the smallest units of alphabetic language, that is, alphabetic letters (when written) and syllables (when spoken).³⁷ Without a reader's proper phrasing or intonation, these small units of language can hinder a reader's process of meaning-making. In order to show how Callias' letters, as copied in Clearchus' text, might hinder Larensius' ability to make meaning, I turn to Joseph Smith's suggestions that Larensius' reading of *Grammatikē Theōria* is a game or puzzle. Referring to the conceit of the *Deipnosophistae*—the text is Athenaeus' report to his friend, Timocrates, about what happened at a dinner party he recently attended—Smith suggests that the fragments of Callias' play can be read as a "mimetic representation"

³⁷ In his description of Callias' prologue, Larensius notes that the prologue is composed "out of the letters of the alphabet" (ἐκ τῶν στοιχείων) (453c). As it is used here, the term στοιχεῖον connotes a "fundamental element" or the smallest component of speech or writing. Porter explains that στοιχεῖα can be understood as the "neutral, colorless equivalent of *grammata*," that is, as the "alphabet converted into the smallest components of a systematic whole" (*Origins of Aesthetic Thought* 214). Further, στοιχεῖα represent the "potential" for sound and meaning, and because they are "intrinsically meaningless" they only make sense when thought of relationally, as part of a system (Porter, *Origins* 215, 222-24). In other words, there is a gap between the material unit of alphabetic language, the στοιχεῖον, and the sound it might produce when a reader activates that material in his reading practice, often by reading out loud. This gap creates the possibility for variability between written letter and spoken sound, between a constructed, systematized linguistic system and its actual use.

of what Athenaeus heard when Larensius recited those fragments from Clearchus' book on riddles at the dinner (Smith 318). Smith proposes that what modern readers see printed in *Deipnosophistae* as the fragments of Callias' play is the transcription of an oral reading that Larensius performs after having read Clearchus' written text. While many of the names of the letters in Callias' play are spelled out in full in Athenaeus' text (as illustrated in the previous citation of Callias' prologue), Smith proposes that Larensius is reciting these lines from a bookroll that could have instead included the graphic representations of those letters. That is, where ἄλφα is printed in Athenaeus' text, Larensius may have pronounced "ἄλφα" as he read (or recited from memory) the letter "A" in Clearchus' rendering of Callias' play. Below is a comparison between the two texts:

Figure 1.1 Callias' printed script in Clearchus' text (Smith 319)

T O A B Γ Δ Θ Ε ΟΥ Γ Α Ρ Ε
Z H Θ I K Λ M
N Ξ Τ Ο Π Ρ Τ Ο Σ Τ Τ Ο Υ
 ΠΑΡΟΝ ΤΟ Φ ΤΟ X ΤΕ ΤΩΙ Ψ ΕΙΣ ΤΟ Ω

Figure 1.2 Larensius' reading as represented in Athenaeus' text (453d)

τὸ ἄλφα, βῆτα, γάμμα, δέλτα, θεοῦ γὰρ εἶ,
 ζῆτ', ἦτα, θῆτ', ἰῶτα, κάππα, λάβδα, μῦ,
 νῦ, ξεῖ, τὸ οὔ, πεῖ, ρῶ, τὸ σίγμα, ταῦ, τὸ ῥ,
 παρὸν τὸ φεῖ τὸ χεῖ τε τῶ ψεῖ εἰς τὸ ῶ.

Figure 1.1 shows a possible reconstitution of Callias' script, as provided by Smith, in lines of capital letters as was conventional in the practice of *scriptio continua*. Figure 1.2 shows the fragment of Callias' prologue as it is printed in modern editions of Athenaeus' text. As Smith emphasizes in Figure 1.1, the underlined letters show that

the letter names in Athenaeus' text could have been written in Clearchus' text as the graphic representations of those letters (A, B, Γ, etc.), rather than the names of the letters (ἄλφα, βῆτα, γάμμα, etc.).

As a reader, Larensius might approach the written script of Callias' play, as presented in Clearchus' text, by employing a habitual mode of reading, expecting to create recognizable words by grouping together consonants and vowels according to the familiar practice of syllabification (Smith 318). But it is precisely this naturalized way of reading that Larensius must resist: if he were to read the capital letters of the text this way, the words produced would be unrecognizable. (For example, τὸ ἄβγδ is not a known Greek word.) Instead, Larensius has to read according to at least two different systems simultaneously, determining when a letter needs to be read syllabically in connection with the other letters around it to create a word (for example, the letters ΘΕΟΥ in Figure 1.1 do render an intelligible Greek word), and when a letter name is embodied in a single letter (for example, when Α stands for ἄλφα) (Smith 319).

From Smith's suggestions, the "riddle" here involves a reader interrupting his inclination to adhere to a predetermined set of reading rules, with which he has become familiar in his educational training. Although the deipnosophists' understanding of riddles emphasizes the search for an "answer" and the rewards that come with that discovery (448c), the game of reading Callias' fragments suggests the disruption of conventional reading practices and thus delays the achievement of an easy resolution. In this game, a reader encounters the limits of habituated reading.

When the text fails to “render a sensible Greek word” (Smith 321), a reader has to attend to every letter differently.

The disruption of Larensius’ accustomed ways of reading, and the necessity of deciding how to read each letter written in Callias’ play, illustrates a central paradox in Aristotle’s discussion of ethics in relation to learning. For Aristotle, the development of one’s character or disposition (*ethos*) toward a virtuous life involves a complex interplay of habituated action and deliberation (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1106a-1107b). In this articulation of ethics, the repetitive nature of habit is difficult to reconcile with the necessary process of deliberation that, as Aristotle explains, must be present in order for one to make a decision and then to take (virtuous) action (*NE* 1112a). If the aim is to cultivate a habitual response, that is, to consistently act in a way that inclines one toward virtue, the repetition of these actions begins to steady them and risks making them knowable in advance—and thus not open to deliberation. As Aristotle points out, one cannot deliberate that which is already established as knowledge (*NE* 1112a-b). Among the forms of stable “knowledge” that Aristotle argues cannot be doubted is writing (*γράμματα*); he claims that writing falls outside of the realm of deliberation because “we do not doubt how letters ought to be written” (*NE* 1112b 3-4). His articulation of writing as stable knowledge, and of habituation as that which inclines us toward what is already familiar, promotes the idea that acts of reading and writing can be predictable and, therefore, able to be fully mastered. Larensius’ reading of Callias’ play disrupts this idea. Athenaeus’ scene of reading demonstrates that one cannot fully know in advance how to read the written letters

one will encounter in a given text. This scene thus brings ethical deliberation back into the reading process.

In *Deipnosophistae*, Larensius has to provide special directions for reading the fragments of Callias' play, demonstrating that the conventional, habitual, and predetermined rules for reading do not consistently apply to every text, or even to every letter within a single text. This suspension of expected reading habits creates moments of uncertainty; a scholar (ancient or modern) reading the fragments of Callias' play will most likely, in a revision of Aristotle, "doubt how the letters ought to be [read]." This scene also confirms the necessity for a reader to deliberate on the most "basic" units of language before creating meaning from an assembly of written letters, affirming, in Derrida's words, that "even if a decision seems to take only a second and not to be preceded by any deliberation, it is structured by [an] *experience and experiment of the undecidable*" (*Limited Inc* 116, emphasis original). The moments before a reader can decide a reading of a text confirm that the experience of reading cannot be fully dictated by a predetermined program or set of rules, while the necessity for a reader to make an interpretive decision shows that a reader cannot make the text mean absolutely anything.³⁸ That Larensius, when faced with the many possibilities that a written letter presents, must make a decision in order to render the text intelligible (within his own cultural and linguistic frameworks), does not indicate that the final meaning of the text has been reached. Rather, a reader's process of

³⁸ In an interview printed in *Limited Inc*, Derrida responds to the comment that "some American critics" have accused him of "setting up a kind of 'all or nothing' choice between pure realization [...] and complete freeplay or undecidability" (114). Derrida confirms that "there can be no completeness," for either freeplay (*jeu*) or undecidability (115-116).

decision-making demonstrates that a written text can never be fully governed by a systematic set of linguistic rules or reading practices. As Derrida emphasizes, a decision marks only a moment of temporary stability (*LI* 116).

Callias' fragments do not stabilize the visual and aural relationships of the phonetic alphabet; rather, Larensius' reading of these fragments demonstrates their instability. I emphasize that it is at the level of the στοιχεῖα—those “fundamental units” of the alphabet—that this destabilization happens. In Larensius' reading of Callias' play, the very link between a letter and its associated sound—a celebrated aspect of the Greek phonetic alphabet—is shown to be unstable. This reading also destabilizes the idealization of a classical past that was common among elite Second Sophistic readers and writers. The fictional scholar Ulpian in *Deipnosophistae* offers an example of one version of this idealization of the classical past: the texts from ancient Athens provide for him an authorized vision of proper linguistic usage. Larensius' reading of Callias' play demonstrates that reading classical texts during the Second Sophistic was an encounter with difference—that is, the difference between the Greek language and culture of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE and those of the second and third centuries CE. Larensius' reading is also an encounter with the difference between a written letter and the sound that scholars, centuries later, imagine it should produce.

As Whitmarsh explains, the imitation of classical models, both linguistic and literary, during the Second Sophistic, “necessarily marks the difference between past and present at the same time as it produces sameness [...] the *assertion* of continuity

of the past indicates (by simultaneously asserting the *need* to assert) the presence of discontinuity” (*Greek Literature* 47, emphasis original). That is, the very study and utilization of classical texts to perform literary knowledge and to claim continuity from an idealized past to the present necessarily marks a temporal distance. Efforts to imitate an idealized Greek literary language in the Second Sophistic necessarily required that an elite reader diverge from the language more “naturally” used by Greek speakers during the period. Thus those who studied and imitated literature from centuries earlier must have developed a heightened awareness of their separation from it, perhaps even seeing themselves as “foreigners” in relation to those texts (Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature* 127).³⁹ At the center of an idealized vision of classical Athens was also a heightened sense of difference, unknowability, and foreignness.

The preservation of *Grammatikē Theōria* in Athenaeus’ text, as framed by Larensius’ instructions on how to read these mediated fragments, highlights a sense of unknowability and unfamiliarity. Larensius’ reading of this classical text, like the “illiterate” reading of alphabetic letters in the ἀγράμματοι scenes, stresses his lack of mastery when confronted with alphabetic writing. The letters of Callias’ play in *Deipnosophistae* open up a tangled network of reading practices that emphasizes the mediation of readerly performance, textual reception, and proliferating variations between written symbol and spoken utterance. Instead of idealizing classical Athens

³⁹ Here, Whitmarsh cites Lucian, an author who is attentive to his status as an outsider, both to Greek culture and to the texts he reads and imitates. The “gulf” between himself and classical texts is a necessary condition of his learnedness (*Greek Literature* 127-128). Lucian’s foreignness is the major topic of Chapter Three.

and the Greek adoption of a phonetic alphabet, Athenaeus' preservation of Callias' play can be read as a subversion of linguistic purism and Attic idealization.⁴⁰

Athenaeus' text invites us to focus on the moments of uncertainty—or, to follow Larensius' categorization of Callias' text as a riddle, the playfulness—before a reader can determine any particular reading of a text, or even before he can determine which sound(s) to produce when reading a single letter.

The scenes of reading in *Deipnosophistae* revise an ancient philosophical tradition, as illustrated in Aristotle's and in Plutarch's writings, that equates the development of one's ethical formation with the cultivation of habitual ease in learning, and with the excision of the unfamiliar from one's reading experience. Athenaeus' fictional scenes of reading offer a different notion of the relationship between reading and ethics, in which the ethical dimensions of reading involve an encounter with uncertainty, unknowability, and unfamiliarity. Both the ἀγράμματοι and one of the most celebrated scholars among Athenaeus' fictional erudite readers (Larensius) demonstrate that these ethical dimensions are relevant when reading at the level of the alphabetic letter. In the next chapter, the practices of unlearned readers who, like the ἀγράμματοι, attend to the figuration of alphabetic letters, similarly demonstrate the ethical dimensions of reading. In a novel produced in the United States in 2000, readers in the Dominican Republic similarly revise common narratives about the exceptional status of alphabetic writing, but do so in the context

⁴⁰ For the argument that Athenaeus' text might take a "polemical attitude" toward the Atticist conception of "correct Greek," see Maria Broggiato, "Athenaeus, Crates and Attic Glosses: A Problem of Attribution" (2000: 366, 368).

of the Americas. While the literary qualities of the ἀγράμματοι's imaginative figuration disrupt the elite norms of literate reading as defined in the Second Sophistic, the practices of unlearned readers in the next chapter disrupt perceptions about literate reading that are embedded in the colonial histories of the Americas.

CHAPTER TWO

Touching Letters: Reading (and) the Colonial Legacy in the Americas

“[W]hat would it mean to read from a position of radical deauthorization in order to expose the contingent authority in the text? That struck me as a feminist critical practice, a critical reading practice that I could learn from [...]”

—Judith Butler, “The Future of Sexual Difference” (19)

Introduction: Learning to Read in the Americas

Tivisita, a young Dominican woman, sits at a table in an empty parlor, a room that serves as a classroom from which students have recently dispersed. Taking up a schoolbook that she has not been trained to read, she runs her hands along the text inside the binding, “reading haltingly, her finger touching each word.” Upon being discovered by the teacher, Salomé—who has previously seen this young woman “running her hands over the charts of letters” posted on the classroom walls—Tivisita worries that her secret moments of reading will become known to her father, who has mandated that his daughters remain uneducated. Assuring the safety of this secret, Salomé sits down at the table to begin a lesson in reading: “Now you must stop pointing with your finger and learn each word with your eye” (Alvarez, *In the Name of Salomé* 265-266). This command, which inaugurates Tivisita’s formal instruction, suggests that these ways of interacting with the text—with one’s fingers or with one’s eyes only—constitute two competing modes of reading, each defined by different modes of perception (touch or visualization). Moreover, the teacher’s command

suggests that one mode of reading must override the other: the visual practice must overcome the tactile one, the formalized mode must become dominant.

With its movement from an untrained to an educated reading practice, this scene rehearses a common history of reading in the west, traditionally narrated as the shift, over centuries, from a more corporal mode of reading (oral, performative) toward a silent, more visually oriented reading practice (Littau 15, 17-18; Poblete, “Reading” 188-189). It also calls attention to the complex history of alphabetic literacy as both a colonizing and liberating force in the Americas. Beginning in the sixteenth century, literacy in alphabetic writing was central in the effort to convert and “civilize” indigenous American peoples, who maintained other communicative practices, often non-written or non-alphabetic.¹ In the ensuing centuries, literacy and access to texts has been restricted to elite groups in order to maintain class, race, and gender hierarchies.² Given these histories, literacy instruction has also been

¹ Indigenous studies scholars debate whether we should label Amerindian communicative practices as “writing.” For the spectrum of approaches to this question, including the argument for an expanded definition of “writing,” and the argument that the category of “writing” reifies evolutionary models and hierarchies, see Elizabeth Boone and Walter D. Mignolo (eds.), *Writing without Words* (1994) and Matt Cohen and Jeffrey Glover (eds.), *Colonial Mediascapes* (2014). The history of privileging alphabetic writing is entangled with a hierarchy of faculties. In Samuel Purchas’ seventeenth-century, multi-volume travel book, *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas His Pilgrimes*, the specialness of alphabetic letters is linked to their visual appeal. Although he acknowledges that “[t]he Mexicans had writings,” and “[i]n Honduras they had Bookes of paper made of Cotton-Wooll, or the inner Barke of Trees,” Purchas writes that the “Americans [...] admire the Spaniards” for their specific form of writing: alphabetic letters (1.494; 486-7). His emphasis on letters allows him to construct reading as a visual activity: writing “entertaineth the Eyes,” and so reading “speakes to” the “nobler Senses” and allows readers to be “husht and silent at our pleasure” (1.486).

² In Latin America, the printing press was used in the sixteenth century for the “explicit purpose of aiding missionaries in the Christianization of native populations,” and later, by the mid-seventeenth century, to serve “the growing prosperity and intellectual needs of lettered urban *criollos*, Europeanized white or *mestizo* colonists” (Calvo, “Latin America” 139).

envisioned as a method for undoing these sociopolitical hierarchies. In this chapter, I address why it matters that literary practitioners, and especially to teachers of literature, consider what is overridden or disregarded in teleological narratives of literacy and reading. I contend that the practices that are overridden in the so-called progression toward an educated, literate reading practice—a training that, as I will explore further, bears a colonial legacy—contain literary value. This conclusion becomes particularly important, and more complicated, in the context of a gendered social hierarchy, introduced in this scene with the disciplining of a young woman’s body. This chapter therefore addresses how devaluing the role of the body in reading and in knowledge production contributes to the colonial and patriarchal legacies of literacy instruction in the Americas.³

This scene, which juxtaposes an untrained reading practice with an educated one, appears in Julia Alvarez’s novel *In the Name of Salomé*, published in the United States in 2000. This novel is a fictionalized account of the Dominican national poet Salomé Ureña de Henríquez and her daughter, Camila Henríquez Ureña: the story traverses Salomé’s childhood to Camila’s late adulthood, spanning the late 1850s to the early 1970s. Incorporated into their personal histories is the larger history of the Dominican Republic during these women’s lives, including the country’s First

³ In *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (1995), Elizabeth Grosz explains how the devaluation of the body and of materiality in Western thought has affected how we conceive of knowledge. Noting the “historical privileging of the purely conceptual or mental over the corporeal,” and the “inability of Western knowledges to conceive their own materiality and the conditions of their (material) production,” Grosz demonstrates how knowledge has historically been considered “perspectiveless” and indifferent to embodied diversity (26-28). Further, the Western binarization that has positioned the mind over the body has also linked these categories with sex/gender hierarchies, linking the mind, and thus knowledge production, with the masculine (Grosz 31-32).

Republic, a period of Spanish re-colonization, the governmental instability of the Second Republic, U.S. American occupation, and the rise and fall of the military dictatorship under Trujillo. This national history branches out to a wider view of Caribbean-U.S. American relations, including Cuba's relationship to the United States and Latin American transnational relations. The novel therefore explores the legacies of colonization—both the continuing effects of long-term colonization, primarily by Spain in this case, and of neo-colonial U.S. occupations that install military dictators in newly independent Latin American nations.⁴ The novel does so by focusing on Salomé and her daughter Camila, shifting our attention away from the (perhaps) more well known members of the family: Salomé's husband, Francisco Henríquez y Carvajal, who was the (very short-term) president of the Dominican Republic before being ousted with the U.S. American occupation in 1916, and Pedro and Max Henríquez Ureña, their sons, who became scholars and university professors (Pedro was Harvard's Norton Lecturer in 1940-41).⁵ Focusing on Salomé's poetic production and her commitment to women's education, and on Camila's pedagogical commitments as a professor in the United States and then as a participant in Cuba's

⁴ For the importance of attending to the “history of the US imperialist economic and military policies” when reading literary fiction that addresses immigration, see Sarika Chandra, “Re-Producing a Nationalist Literature in the Age of Globalization” (2008: 831). Noting how “hardly any attention is given [by literary critics] to the ways in which historical processes of Americanization have influenced immigrants even before leaving the Dominican Republic,” Chandra warns against “reproduc[ing] a nationalist imaginary” in one's critical practices (837, 835). I will return to this rethinking of the nation when I more fully address the use of the word “patria” in *In the Name of Salomé* in the final section of this chapter.

⁵ On the effects of bringing Dominican history to the consciousness of U.S. American audiences, see Maya Socolovsky, “Patriotism, Nationalism, and the Fiction of History in Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* and *In the Name of Salomé*” (2006). See also Steve Criniti, “Collecting Butterflies: Julia Alvarez's Revision of North American Collective Memory” (2007).

literacy campaign in the 1960s, the novel revives women's voices in Dominican-U.S. American political and literary history—and foregrounds the effects of gendered social hierarchies in the telling of this history.

Alvarez's juxtaposition of untrained practices with educated reading makes this novel a productive companion to Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*, as discussed in Chapter One. Not counted as "proper" reading by an educated elite, these untrained practices allow us to examine the assumptions that underpin notions of proper reading and the hierarchies they create. Athenaeus' citation-heavy *Deipnosophistae* indicates the sociopolitical significance of reading and demonstrates the literary qualities of deciphering alphabetic letters—which resonate with the depictions of reading Alvarez's novel. While Athenaeus' ἀγράμματοι supplement the deipnosophists' masterful, distant reading with close, imaginative attention, Tivisita's tactile practice in Alvarez's novel revises the historical privileging of a visual, controlled reading practice by suggesting the centrality of the body in acts of reading. As this chapter argues, the tactile mode of reading in Alvarez's novel provides a definition of reading as a collective act and thus disrupts the primacy of the autonomous reading subject. Alvarez also locates her readers in the specific context of the Americas to show how reading instruction bears a colonial, as well as a patriarchal, legacy. *In the Name of Salomé* meditates on the ways in which colonial histories may be revived, or revised, in acts of reading—and in acts of teaching reading. Recognizing the literary value of "untrained" reading practices in this context, then, requires recognizing the complex uses and effects of literacy training in the Americas.

Alvarez's novel constructs its relationship to these historical legacies through a non-linear narrative that intertwines personal and transnational histories. In *Salomé*, the impetus for telling the story of Salomé's life is Camila's attempt to hold on to the memory of her mother—which, Camila explains, is inextricably linked to the “birth of la patria,” that is, the formation of an independent Dominican Republic (8). In the process, Camila attempts to locate, in the contours of her mother's story and in those of la patria, her own identity. The novel performs this collective identity with a structure of paired chapters, with two chapter ones, two chapter twos, and so on; the first chapter of each pair is dedicated to a portion of Salomé's life as a poet and teacher, and the second to parts of Camila's life as an educator and activist. While written in English, Salomé's chapters bear Spanish titles. They also move forward chronologically, from her early childhood in 1856 through Camila's birth in 1894. Camila's chapters bear English titles and move in reverse-chronological order, beginning with her last semester as a professor at Vassar in 1960 before she decides to “join the revolution” in Cuba, and ending in 1897 when, as a young child and after her mother's death, she leaves Santo Domingo to join her father in Haiti where he lives after fleeing from the Dominican dictator Ulises “Lilis” Heureaux. The prologue and epilogue chronicle, respectively, Camila's choice to leave her professorship at Vassar in 1960 to join Cuba's literacy campaign and, afterward, her return to Santo Domingo in 1973. This non-linear narrative traverses great temporal and spatial distances, while conveying an experience of fragmentation and the necessity of multiple perspectives in efforts to narrate the past.

In her search for her mother's history, Camila acknowledges the necessary acts of imagination that occur when recalling the past and when telling another person's story. This role of the imagination becomes especially apparent when Camila works through boxes of archival material that hold remnants of her mother's life ("What these things mean, only the dead can tell") and when she discusses the inaccurate depiction of her mother's racial identity in her only surviving portrait ("Everyone in the family [...] touched up the legend of her mother") (43-45). So, too, does Alvarez perform creative acts of imagining the past: her novel is a reading of the materials of Salomé's and Camila's lives, which include letters, diaries, poems, and oral histories.⁶ Salomé Ureña de Henríquez's poems are a centerpiece of the novel: Alvarez's English translations of parts of these poems are scattered throughout the text, forming the chapter titles as well as Camila's reading material. Alvarez's inclusion of Ureña de Henríquez's poetry throughout the novel affirms literary texts as historical sources, while also allowing historical re-creation to correspond imprecisely with reality. In other words, just as literary texts and the events they depict are not expected to bear a one-to-one correspondence with the world, so too might the attempt to responsibly recount historical truth necessitate imagination.

Alvarez's choice to focus on the stories of Salomé and Camila in a larger historical portrait of the Dominican Republic, and of Caribbean nations' struggles against colonialism and U.S. imperialism more generally, highlights the effects of

⁶ Of these sources, Alvarez writes in the Acknowledgements, "[they] enabled me to recover the history and poetry and presences of the past," but then adds that this recovery project is "not biography or historical portraiture or even a record of all I learned, but a work of the imagination" (357).

poetry and education on sociopolitical realities. Alvarez's novel imagines the Dominican Republic's quest for independence after centuries of Spanish colonization (and after shorter but no less significant periods of French rule and Haitian occupation), the realities of violent dictatorships and civil unrest, and the imperialism of U.S. American occupation, through the eyes of poets and educators. More specifically, *In the Name of Salomé* explores how reading and writing—both the teaching of these skills and their enactment—can produce, maintain, and transform a social and political order. The novel brings special attention to acts of reading, and especially the reading of poetry and love letters, to demonstrate how literacy holds both a colonial legacy and revolutionary possibility. For example, Salomé's poems are understood to inspire action: they are read by Dominicans who are stirred by the poetry's political message to fight for independence from Spanish re-colonization in the 1860s (61-63); by the Dominican President Ignacio María González to reinforce his message of peace in the 1870s (90-91); conversely, by the military general and dictator Lilís to inspire his troops before enacting violence against his political rivals in the 1880s (187); and by Camila, to feel closer to her mother and, employing a divinatory reading practice, to consult the poems like an oracle that directs her actions (32-33). Like these different uses of Salomé's poetry, the novel's scenes of reading instruction demonstrate that reading is a multivalent act. Linked to political empowerment in anti-colonial movements in the novel, literacy is also shown to be a technology of colonization, and more generally, of political oppression. Alvarez's

novel teeters between these two possibilities—literacy as a colonizing and as a liberating force—to show how acts of reading bear on sociopolitical realities.

The novel's educational scenes also emphasize the ethical effects of reading, that is, how one's methods of reading affect how one relates to others. Different reading practices are afforded different values, so that one practice is at times privileged over another to create a hierarchy. As seen in Tivisita's lesson, a visual mode of reading is equated with an educated reading practice that ought to override a more noticeably gestural reading practice informed by touch. Through this hierarchization of reading practices, *In the Name of Salomé* suggests that each of these two modes of reading can create a different kind of social structure. As I will argue, the visual mode of reading is aligned with a regulated, hierarchical social order that produces gender inequity and the disciplining of female bodies; it is also at times a practice that allows for the otherwise forbidden education of women, outwardly maintaining the inequitable social order while secretly challenging it. The tactile reading practice, as depicted in the novel, indicates a fuller subversion of this hierarchical order and the possibility for revolutionary change. As this chapter will show, tactile reading is imagined to be socially transformative because it enacts a form of relationality that is not hierarchical. As discussed in the Introduction, "relationality" refers to a form of being with others that does not require knowing, dominating, or being the same as others. Reading, Alvarez's novel demonstrates, can be practiced in a way that restructures social relations around interdependence and difference rather than hierarchy or sameness.

The ethical implications of reading depicted in *In the Name of Salomé* offer an important account of relationality in the context of current pedagogical discussions in the discipline of literary studies. Commenting on “critical reading” as the current pedagogical objective in university-level literature classrooms in the United States, Michael Warner not only emphasizes the hierarchies created by institutionally sanctioned reading practices but also demonstrates that critical reading is not merely a “transparent medium for knowledge” (“Uncritical” 13-14, 18). Since the way one reads orients one toward a particular ethical disposition, Warner demonstrates, the reading style we teach creates a particular kind of subject (“Uncritical” 18-19). Instead of seeing modes of reading that diverge from “critical reading” as “different technique[s] of text-processing,” or as “different attitude[s] about the text,” Warner asks about the type of subject that is formed through any particular reading technique (“Uncritical” 19). The scenes of reading in Alvarez’s novel expand Warner’s notion of reading technique as subject-formation. Whereas Warner’s notion of ethics draws from a tradition that emphasizes the formation of discrete subjects, Alvarez’s novel focuses on reading as a relation-producing gesture.⁷ In its depictions of reading, *In the Name of Salomé* emphasizes relationality between beings, rather than discrete persons, as the center of ethical formation. As I will show, this focus allows both for the

⁷ Warner draws his notion of ethics from Foucault’s notion of “self-cultivation,” or “the relation to oneself by which one constituted oneself as the subject of one’s acts,” that Foucault argues intensified in the Hellenistic and Roman world in the first centuries CE (Foucault, *The Care of the Self* 41-43). My reading of *In the Name of Salomé* aligns with an “other-oriented” ethics explored by theorists like Jacques Derrida (who draws from the work of Levinas), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Derek Attridge, and Peggy Kamuf; and with the feminist, anti-colonial ethics of Chela Sandoval and Gloria Anzaldúa.

recognition of the particular, embodied perspectives of readers, and for the recognition that an individual is constituted by her relations with others.

The link between ethical relationality and politics is essential to my reading of Alvarez's novel. For Salomé and for Camila, imagining new sociopolitical structures in de-colonized Caribbean nations involves imagining new forms of relationality that can subvert existing hierarchies and structures of gendered inequity. These forms of relationality resonate with a wider Latina/o politics, in which emphasizing relations rather than discrete identities can allow for a necessary recognition of difference within any named group. Examining how political categories and critical scholarship have attempted to define a "Latina/o" identity, Marta Caminero-Santangelo emphasizes that this search for a definition has always been an attempt to pin down a single community despite various differences—including national, linguistic, ethnic, and generational. Reviewing the fluctuating parameters for this "elastic" term, Caminero-Santangelo advocates that we understand "Latina/o" not through a claim to essential commonality, but by recognizing how it always designates a collective defined by difference (29).⁸ More specifically, she calls this identity category an expression of a "commitment to attending to the historical and present differences among Latinos" (219). That is to say, Caminero-Santangelo asks us to consider what it means to forge alliances out of difference, and to recognize that such alliances will always be re-envisioned and only temporarily defined. Enacting this kind of

⁸ For further discussion of the term "Latina/o" both as a label produced by U.S. American census and media categories, and as a politically strategic term, see Arlene Dávila, *Latinos, Inc.* (2001) and Suzanne Oboler, *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives* (1995).

relationality can preserve difference within a collective; it also disallows a single individual or group to define the parameters for inclusion, and acknowledges the sociopolitical importance of creating collectivities that do not require sameness. “Difference” may be the only viable, though hardly stable, ground from which to “imagine community” (Caminero-Santangelo 92).⁹

In this chapter I argue that *In the Name of Salomé* invites us to think about a form of relationality that depends on difference. In Alvarez’s novel, “difference” especially pertains to gender and sexual difference within a patriarchal social order that bears the legacies of colonialism. More generally, this “difference” pertains to the embodied differences that readers bring to texts. Importantly, the novel shows that ethical relationality is made possible through a particular practice of reading—a practice that can re-orient readers toward a different social world, one that holds the promise of disrupting colonial hierarchies and gendered norms. As such, this reading practice, as depicted in the novel, exists in tension with the type of reading taught in educational settings under a political paradigm that bears a colonial legacy.

In the Name of Salomé thus invites us to examine the ethical and political implications of our own pedagogical practices. That is to say, it invites us to consider how the type of reading privileged in formalized education produces a particular social relation—and, therefore, how the exclusion of other reading practices can

⁹ In *Life in Search of Readers* (2003), Manuel Martín-Rodríguez discusses how Chicana/o writers integrate signs of this constitutive difference in their texts, especially when they utilize several sets of linguistic norms when writing for linguistically diverse readerships (123). In Chapter Four, I explore the ethical effects of engaging with these multiple sets of norms through reading.

exclude alternative ways of relating to others. When Warner discusses the ethical project implicated in critical reading, for example, he identifies the “normative stance” of a critical reader as one of “critical distance,” a stance that “in turn produce[s] kinds of subjectivity” based on “autonomy, individuality, freedom, citizenship, enlightenment” that are “structured by a hierarchy of faculties” (“Uncritical” 25). In this example, a reader’s stance produces an individuated subject who values autonomy and associates personal freedom and individual intellection with citizenship, a form of collective belonging. The practices that do not fit within this norm—for Warner, these are the practices deemed “uncritical,” such as pious or emotionally inflected reading styles—would allow a reader to adopt a different ethical stance, and could generate alternative sociopolitical relations that are not founded upon the autonomous subject. To recognize, as Alvarez’s novel does, the value of “untrained” or “uneducated” reading practices (according to established educational norms), means attending to the forms of relationality that those practices might produce. It also requires asking what social worlds are made possible, and which are excluded, when we teach a certain method of reading.

Colonial Paradigms and the Literate Body

A complex relationship between the subversive status of literacy and the discipline enacted in formal education is introduced early in Alvarez’s novel, in Salomé’s first chapter, which takes place in the political turmoil of the years leading up to the re-colonization of Santo Domingo under Spanish rule (1956-1961). Young

women convene in local homes transformed into schoolhouses by female teachers, while civil unrest and multiple government changes continually occur just beyond the walls of the schoolhouse. In these early scenes of learning, literacy training involves the regulation of young women's bodily gestures and postures, and the logic of colonization structures this education. In their first schooling experience with Ana, Salomé's aunt,

the little girls learn how to sit properly in a chair, how to hold their hands when they are sitting down, and how to hold them when they are standing up. They learn to recite the alphabet and how to pour a glass of water and how to pray the rosary and say the stations of the cross. (16)

In this catalogue of customary lessons, the recitation of the alphabet is one component in the overall management of the female body, as the young women learn the “proper” gestures for their gendered sociopolitical positions. Here, the text pays attention not only to the positioning and posturing of the whole body, but also specifically to the activity of the young women's hands, as they are directed to move in disciplined, contained ways. This gendered model of instruction highlights the essentially embodied nature of education, even if it involves a careful constriction of the body's movements.

A catalogue of gestural regulation repeats in the following description of the young women's education when they graduate to the school of the sisters Bobadilla—“pure Spaniards,” Salomé insists, who later raise the Spanish flag during the period of re-colonization (17, 56)—where Salomé and her sister Ramona also receive their adolescent education:

[...] the older girls learn manualities, which means they learn how to sew and how to knit and crochet; they learn how to read—the *Catón cristiano* and *Friends of Children*, and *Elements of All the Sciences* [...] But they will not learn how to write, so that even if they receive a love letter, they will not be able to write one back. (16)

The classification of the first set of activities as “manualities” reminds us that the girls’ hands are trained to promote a gendered division of domestic labor. They are taught to read—an activity that may, in the uncertain grammar of the passage, be recognized as a “manual,” embodied practice—but this activity is qualified by a list of a limited set of texts. In particular, the *Catón cristiano* indicates the ongoing influence of Spanish colonial rule and Catholic missionary activity on the island Hispaniola/Quisqueya: a reading primer, the text contains Catholic prayers in Spanish, lessons in Christian virtues, and stories about Christian religious figures.¹⁰ The inclusion of this reading primer indicates that the young women continue to be trained to read within an educational paradigm established by Spanish colonialism, in which literacy in alphabetic writing, either in Spanish or in alphabetized indigenous languages, was a primary means by which missionaries sought to convert indigenous

¹⁰ This text could be either *Catón Cristiano, con ejemplos y un tratado de buena crianza* (1850), or *Catón cristiano, con ejemplos para uso de las escuelas*, guided by “las reglas de la ortografía de la real academia española,” and reprinted multiple times (1823, 1838, 1845, 1854). Both texts were printed by Spanish presses, and both include prayers, in Spanish, that are printed in large type, with many of the words hyphenated to indicate syllabic division. The latter text begins with very large print and, as one moves through the text and ostensibly becomes a more confident reader, the type size decreases. This text also includes a list of the letters in the Spanish alphabet, a chart of the letters divided into consonants and vowels, and a list of each consonant paired with each vowel in alphabetical order (for pronunciation practice). While each of these texts includes examples for writing “por reglas,” by the rules, these texts are first and foremost primers for reading.

groups.¹¹ Learning to read alphabetic script in the Americas is necessarily marked by this colonial encounter.

That the young women are not taught to write when they are taught to read at the school of the sisters Bobadilla reveals that their previous alphabetic training at Tía Ana's school aimed at proper recitation, rather than creative composition. The inadequacy of this model is not simply that the girls cannot write a love letter; rather, Alvarez's text specifies that they cannot "write one back." What is missing from this gendered model of education is, therefore, the ability to respond. Young women's bodies are regulated to maintain an existing sociopolitical structure—a social order tied to a colonial paradigm that hinges on the refusal of the possibility for a response. This educational model, which associates writing with agency and the ability to respond, implies that reading is a passive activity. In order to challenge and subvert this educational model, not only will women need to be taught to write, but also the very notion that reading is a non-agential practice will need to be revised.

¹¹ The colonial histories of the Americas highlight a longstanding equation of alphabetic writing with literacy and "civilization." Even Bartolomé de las Casas, who reported in *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de Las Indias* (1542) the unjust violence committed by the Spanish on indigenous populations in Hispaniola and New Spain, based his defense of "los Indios" on their simplicity ("crió Dios las más simples"), child-like nature ("eran... niños o muchachos de diez o doce años"), and a concern that they might be left in the "darkness of ignorance" ("en la oscuridad [sic] de ignorancia") without the "light" of Christian doctrine ("sin lumbre y socorro de doctrina") (75, 88, 76, 79, 132). Similarly, in the seventeenth century, Samuel Purchas attributed success in European exploration (and the attendant goals of Christian conversion) to "two Artes," that is, "Printing and Navigation" (1.173). In a section on "the diversity of Letters used by the divers Nations of the World," Purchas summarizes a hierarchy of creation, in which humans are superior to animals because they have speech, while men with writing "excell" the "Brutish, Savage, Barbarous" men without writing—this is what he calls a "literall advantage" (1.485-6). On the fallacy of these assumptions about alphabetic literacy, see especially Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions* (1991); Boone and Mignolo (eds.), *Writing without Words* (1994); and Cohen and Glover (eds.), *Colonial Mediascapes* (2014).

Although Salomé attends both of these schools, her earliest instruction in both reading and writing begins at home. As a young child, she notices the crucifix that hangs on the wall of her home and asks her mother and Tía Ana about “those letters written above his head, *I, N, R, I*” (17). The result of Salomé’s education in reading and writing—by means of Christian symbolism and Latin alphabetic script—is, first, that she uses her Catholic reader in ways that it was not intended to be used. Salomé’s “illegal” verse writing in the back of her *Catón cristiano* summons a longer history of subjected peoples using the tools of colonization in ways other than they have been intended (15).¹² With alphabetic writing as one of the primary factors that many European explorers and missionaries mobilized to imagine their superiority over Amerindian peoples, literacy in alphabetic writing became a tool in “civilizing,” converting, and subjecting those who were imagined to be on the lower end of a developmental hierarchy. To adopt and then use this literacy to undermine colonial power was and has been a common approach within anti-colonial movements, seen especially in the more recent literacy campaigns in Latin America.¹³

¹² For the transformative, transgressive uses of European literacy practices, including alphabetic writing, among indigenous groups in the Americas, see Joanne Rappaport and Tom Cummins, *Beyond the Lettered City: Indigenous Literacies in the Andes* (2012) and José Rabasa, “Thinking Europe in Indian Categories” (2008). Likewise, Stephen Greenblatt’s interest in the figure of the indigenous translator highlights the potential for using the language of the colonizers to subvert the colonial project: “At what point will the native, initiated into the European language and system of exchange, begin to realize that his people are being robbed?” (*Marvelous Possessions* 108).

¹³ For *In the Name of Salomé*, the most salient example is Cuba’s literacy campaign in 1961, part of the revolution led by Fidel Castro to oust U.S.-backed dictator Batista. This movement, which cut across class and racial divisions to combat the effects of colonization and U.S. American imperialism, demonstrates the significance of alphabetic writing to anti-colonial movements: its textbook for instructors was called *Alfabetecemos* (“Let’s alphabetize”) (Abendroth 75-76).

Later, Salomé puts her writing to explicitly anti-colonial uses. After passing along her poetry to a family friend under a pseudonym (“Herminia”), her poems—which explicitly call for political change in la patria, re-colonized by the Spanish—begin to appear in the newspaper *El Nacional*. This poetry causes “an uproar,” acting as a catalyst for readers to refuse Spanish rule (62). The reactions to her published poems range from declarations about her ability to “bring down the [Spanish] regime with pen and paper,” to the “eruption” of rebellions around the occupied country that lead to the siege of the capital and the “toppling” of the government (62-65). Salomé’s acts of writing and their consequences show that when a woman writes—an act that resists the prevailing gendered educational paradigm—her actions can disrupt an oppressive political order.

It is not just an explicitly anti-colonial message that makes Salomé’s poetry dangerous. The poem that Salomé writes for Francisco “Pancho” Henríquez y Carvajal, whom she will later marry, exemplifies the sensuous, embodied experience that is anxiously withheld from young women’s education when they are denied the ability to write. Salomé’s description of writing her poem to Pancho, “Quejas,”¹⁴ makes explicit the gendered hierarchy that informs the decision to withhold writing from women’s education: “It was if by lifting my pen, I had released the woman inside me and let her free on paper. But even as I wrote, I knew such frank passions in a woman were not permissible” (143). It is not only because a poem expressing “such

¹⁴ “Quejas” translates to “complaints,” or “moans”; “quejarse” means to feel pain or discomfort, or to groan as the result of such discomfort. The poem’s title, therefore, brings attention to a body in pain.

frank passions” would be signed by a woman (this time bearing the signature Salomé Ureña de Henríquez, rather than Herminia), and therefore linked to her subjectivity, that it would pose a problem to the existing sociopolitical order. As Salomé’s sister Ramona emphasizes, this poem is an admission that a woman has a desiring body. Insisting that Salomé cannot publish the poem, Ramona declares, “You’re la musa de la patria, for heaven’s sake [...] Nobody thinks you have a real body” (143), exposing a conflict between a woman writer’s political commitments and her embodied passions.

Yet publishing the poem “Quejas” becomes for Salomé a political move. Although this poem’s politics differ from those of her earlier poems written expressly about la patria, the political gesture is not detached from anti-colonial thinking or from hopes for social change. Salomé resolutely decides she will publish “Quejas” in the literary periodical *El Estudio*, allowing not only Pancho but also a wider readership to access it, after she learns that an adolescent, unmarried woman in her neighborhood has been disowned by her family for having a sexual relationship. What distresses Salomé, and aligns her with other women conceived as a political group, is the acknowledgement that the young woman’s lover, like Salomé’s own father when he was unfaithful to her mother, will not endure any social consequences. Observing this gendered inequity that punishes women for their sexuality, Salomé decides, “There was another revolution to be fought if our patria was to be truly free” (144-5). Soon after publishing the poem, Salomé performs an act that might be understood as part of this “other” revolution when Pancho appears at her door, poem

in hand: “I moved toward him with a confidence that surprised me. Perhaps by writing my poem, I had discovered I had a body” (146). In this moment, acting on her private desires becomes for Salomé a political act. She recognizes her body and uses it in a way that rejects the embodied forms of discipline she underwent in school.

Ureña de Henríquez’s poem “Quejas” (1879), referenced in this scene in Alvarez’s novel, emphasizes the inability of its addressee to fully understand the desires and experiences of its speaker. The speaker exclaims, “¡Ay, que mi angustia comprender no puedes, / que por mi mal ignoras / cuán lentas son de mi existir las horas!” (Oh, you cannot understand my anguish, / and to my detriment you ignore / how slow are the hours of my existence!) (ll. 10-12). Here, the addressee of the poem—whether understood as a desired male subject or a wider, multi-gendered audience—is asked to acknowledge, but not to fully comprehend, the pain of the speaker. With these lines in mind, Salomé’s response to structural gender inequity, as depicted in Alvarez’s novel, is not to promote a form of equality in which men and women are understood to experience the same desires. Rather, the act of making public, through publishing the poem, the embodied desires that a woman is expected to keep to herself, signals the limits of knowing the experiences of others. The poem is an insistence on difference, which, the novel shows, has been, in part, created by structural sociopolitical inequality. At the same time, Salomé understands that this poem puts into words what other women are unable to publicly express (145). Perhaps writing her poem allows other women to “discover they have a body.”

Salomé's acts of writing defy the educational norms that seek to make women only partially literate—norms that bear colonial legacies of subjugation through the dominance of alphabetic literacy, and that uphold patriarchal paradigms in their vision of restrained, disciplined women students. Moreover, Salomé's most transgressive acts of writing are not necessarily the composition of anti-colonial poems, but rather the kind of writing that brings about touching—that is, writing that inspires a woman's body to move in non-disciplined ways. Her moments of transgression suggest that an anti-colonial and anti-patriarchal educational model requires a commitment to the embodied particularities of students, especially as they relate to gender and sexual difference. Women must be taught to read and write, and this instruction must acknowledge how one's particular embodied subjectivity affects one's experiences—that is, if the routinized, disciplinary methods of learning are to be revised, and if education is to promote equitable social relations.

Reading by Touch

With a gendered educational model established as a norm—a model that disciplines women's bodies, denies them the ability to respond with writing, and is linked with a colonial legacy—the social and political undertones of Tivisita's reading lesson become clearer. Salomé teaches Tivisita to read in her instituto, a secondary school for young women that trains them to become teachers, modeled on the Normal School for young men that Pancho, now Salomé's husband, establishes in their home. Both of these schools are, in turn, modeled on the positivist thinking of

Eugenio María de Hostos, an educational reformer and political thinker from Puerto Rico, who appears as a character in Alvarez's novel. Hostos, like other Latin American positivist thinkers, emphasized rational thought and scientific empiricism as the basis for political revolution in the Caribbean; this focus on reason and on a universalizing conception of "progress" made liberal education a significant factor in anti-colonial independence movements in Latin America.¹⁵

Alvarez's references to Hostos' teachings remind readers of the key role of positivist education in Latin America's independence movements and acts of nation-building.¹⁶ They also highlight the uncertain role that literary texts might play in the creation of decolonized educational paradigms. For example, Salomé's interest in positivist education grows as her "faith in poetry" decreases. Highlighting the uncertain interpretive status of literary works, she notes that her own poetry has been

¹⁵ For Hostos' pedagogical focus on rationalism, and the democratic commitments of his teaching, see Carlos Rojas Osorio, "Eugenio María de Hostos and His Pedagogical Thought" (2012). For the role of Enlightenment-style rationalism in both the decolonization movements and the development of racism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Latin America, see Graciela Montaldo, "Transculturation and the Discourse of Liberation" and Gabriela Nouzeilles, "The Transcultural Mirror of Science: Race and Self-Representation in Latin America" (2004). Of the uses of political rationalism by the *criollo* classes (the class of cultural and economic elites, descended from Spaniards), Montaldo writes that it provided "an ideological weapon over the Colonial oppressor but also over the indigenous 'barbarian'" (240). Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo: Civilización y barbarie* (1845) exemplifies the use of a rhetoric of barbarism to explain internal differences within Argentina, where he saw an internal battle between barbarism and civilization, between cultural backwardness and modernity, in the development of a modern state (Nouzeilles 286). Whereas many, including Sarmiento, looked to Europe for political, literary, and economic models, Hostos was among the thinkers who sought a more hemispheric, that is, Americas-centered, approach to political and educational liberalism; see Thomas Ward, "From Sarmiento to Martí to Hostos: Extricating the Nation from Coloniality" (2007).

¹⁶ For an overview of several iterations of positivist education in Latin America, and its role in nation-building, see Juan Poblete, "Literary Education and the Making of State Knowledge" (2004). Here, Poblete argues that, across Latin America, positivist educational and political models in the nineteenth century served not only to develop independent nations, but also to keep socioeconomic hierarchies in tact (300).

recited by the military general Lilís before enacting violence against his political rivals. “The last thing our country needed was more poems,” Salomé reflects. “We needed schools. We needed to bring up a generation of young people who would think in new ways and stop the cycle of suffering on our island” (187). This dichotomy between the imaginative, creative aspects of poetry and the practical, rational aspects of concrete social or political thought, also affects Salomé’s daughter Camila during her lifetime. When she attempts to become a poet like her mother (but instead takes a professorship at Vassar), Camila’s third-person voice contemplates: “Now that she is writing, she is developing the bad habits of writers, creating the world rather than inhabiting it. Perhaps that is why her mother’s good friend Hostos banished poets from his rational republic” (112-3).¹⁷ The novel therefore asks, What role (if any) can poetry, or literary texts more generally, play in the transformation of a political or social community? This question, which becomes most explicit when Salomé adopts positivist thinking, also underlines the hierarchization of reading practices as entangled with a hierarchy of faculties: here, a visual (rational) method of reading is positioned as superior to the tactile (sensual) method.

With a belief in rationalism over the passionate effects of poetry, Salomé teaches young women in her parlor, including Tivisita. Within Salomé’s model of

¹⁷ Here, Camila’s narration cites Plato’s fourth-century BCE *Republic*, namely, Socrates’ exclusion of both poetic texts and poets from an ideal republic. See especially Books 2 and 10; in Book 2, Plato’s Socrates describes an education whereby a citizen can learn to reject the “bad” stories and accept the “good” ones, according to a moral code (*Republic* 377b). For a brief overview of the “Platonic” banning of fiction in the Spanish “New World” colonies in the sixteenth century, see Juan Poblete, “Reading as a Historical Practice in Latin America” (2004: 179-181).

education as “peaceful revolution” (182), Tivisita’s education is marked as socially subversive. Her reading instruction is done in secret and against the law of Tivisita’s father, for the same reason that young women do not learn how to write while at the school of the sisters Bobadilla: Tivisita’s father “did not believe in education for his girls, who might learn how to read and write love letters” (265). The fact that Tivisita is taught to read threatens to de-stabilize an existing patriarchal order that restricts women’s capacity for response. However, how she is taught to read risks maintaining this social hierarchy, even if this instruction is done under the auspices of a positivist model of anti-colonial education.

Tivisita’s education is a lesson in a particular practice of reading, as it encourages her to replace one method of encountering text with another. Her lesson begins when Salomé “catches” Tivisita touching text, “running her hands over the charts of letters as if she could make sense from just touching them” (265). The conditional “as if” perhaps takes a dismissive tone, suggesting that what Tivisita is doing is not, in fact, an act of reading, because it cannot produce “sense”—where the notion of “sense” as intellection and meaning-production is privileged over “sense” as embodied feeling or intuition.¹⁸ Similarly, when Salomé assigns copy work to Tivisita, this tactile mode of reading is understood as inefficient: Salomé finds Tivisita “sitting at the long table, with the [schoolbook] opened before her, reading

¹⁸ For these different notions of “sense,” see Karin Littau, *Theories of Reading: Books, Bodies, and Bibliomania* (2006), which argues that the trend in literary studies in the past century has been to treat “reading as a reducibly mental activity” and to ignore a longer tradition that “assumed that reading literature was not only about sense-making but about sensation” (3).

haltingly, her finger touching each word” (266). Tivisita’s tactile practice is associated with hesitancy, and this slower practice is more visible to an observer. This reading method’s association with both visibility and inefficiency is affirmed when Salomé demands that Tivisita “stop pointing with your finger and learn each word with your eye.” Reading “with one’s eye” means reading without noticeable bodily movement: to practice reading in this way, Tivisita must “keep her finger still” (266). The teaching of a visual practice is understood here to override and replace the tactile mode, marking progress toward a more efficient (and also clandestine) recognition of words without the extra, “halting” mediation of touch. Importantly, Salomé introduces this visual practice after she makes a commitment to conceal Tivisita’s new reading ability: “‘It’s our secret,’ I promised her” (266). In this moment, the novel suggests that a woman’s act of reading, which undermines her father’s authority, can be better concealed, or at least more controlled, through the regulation of bodily gesture. Now, Tivisita’s reading practice is less obvious to others and less available to punishment, but at the cost of her own body’s movements.

This education that trains Tivisita to read secretly and unnoticeably rehearses a common narrative of reading, in which private reading is privileged as a development, over centuries, away from a more communal and more embodied model of reading. Karin Littau brings attention to the material reasons for this shift, noting especially the shift from scroll to codex and, further, the “introduction of interword spacing” in the codex, that allowed readers to adopt a silent reading practice, no longer needing to speak out the unbroken strings of written letters in

order to transform them into words that make sense.¹⁹ This practice is “less corporal” because it is “both silent and visual,” and since it ostensibly allows for more efficient reading, it became the mode of reading adopted by institutions of learning and also by the aristocracy (Littau 15). This narrative is magnified in the context of “New World” contact, and more specifically in the interaction of European and Amerindian semiotic systems beginning in the sixteenth century. Scholars of Amerindian communication systems highlight the performative and embodied nature of these systems. For example, Elizabeth Boone shows how Aztec pictorial histories act more like “scripts” than books, triggering a reader’s memory of a story that is then performed orally; John Monaghan highlights the centrality of the body not only in the enactment of Mixtec codices but also in the “encoding of information,” as many of the signs in these codices are bodies; Tom Cummins demonstrates how *quipus*—sets of cords and knots used by the Incas of the Andean region to abstract and record information—were among the most difficult of the Amerindian communication systems for Spanish colonizers to recognize as a system of representations; while Walter Mignolo emphasizes that it was specifically the tactile dimension of the *quipu* that was difficult for “Renaissance men of letters” to perceive as meaningful, because they were accustomed to the visuality of alphabetic letters (Boone and Mignolo 71-2;

¹⁹ Silent reading was adopted by readers before the late seventh century CE date that Littau cites as the introduction of interword spacing. For the dynamics of oral and silent reading in Greek antiquity, see Jesper Svenbro, *Phrasikleia: An Anthropology of Reading in Ancient Greece* (1993 [1988]) and Bernard M.W. Knox, “Silent Reading in Antiquity” (1968).

91-92; 192; 237).²⁰ When European explorers and missionaries sought to convert and alphabetize these populations, this effort was either based on the recognition that Amerindians had competing representation systems that were not aligned with Christianity (often deemed to be either demonic or idolatrous), or the notion that these communities lacked proper literacy.²¹ As Mignolo puts it, “‘To read’ meant unmatched activities for the Spanish and for [...] Amerindian communities” (Boone and Mignolo 256). These differences in the conception of reading are, in part, based on the embodied, oral, and performative aspects of Amerindian semiotics.

Tivisita’s tactile reading practice is therefore informed by a sense of embodiment that has a longer history—a history that is specific to the Americas. The scene of Tivisita’s reading instruction does not simply rehearse this dominant narrative of progress toward a silent, visual mode of reading; it also complicates this

²⁰ The scholarly focus on Mesoamerica and the Andes (in addition to North America) is based primarily on the available records from these regions. Among the methods of subjugating indigenous populations included the destruction of their communication systems (i.e. of codices, images, and sculptural figures) and/or the assimilation of these systems into European ones. The languages of the Taíno people of the Greater Antilles, who inhabited Hispaniola/Quisqueya, are primarily recorded in the documentary accounts of Europeans during the period of initial contact; one of the primary pieces of documentary evidence is de las Casas’ *Historia de las Indias* (Granberry and Vescelius 2, 7). The archaeological evidence from this region, which is studied in order to understand Taíno linguistic history, primarily includes ceramics and other items that attest to cultural differences, similarities, and creolization between (linguistic) communities (Granberry and Vescelius 43-4).

²¹ For Bishop Diego de Landa to burn Mayan codices in the 1560s, for example, required a recognition that these texts were carriers of knowledge that competed with Spanish Christian tenets of civilization and conversion. Mignolo argues that this assimilation of the Maya *vuh* to the notion of the “book” was a misunderstanding of the indigenous communication system altogether. He writes of the “spread of Western literacy” as “a massive operation in which the materiality as well as the ideology that Amerindians built around their own semiotic interactions began to be combined with or replaced by the materiality and ideology of Western reading and writing cultures” (Boone and Mignolo 237). This argument emphasizes not just the “replacement” of one semiotic system with another (Amerindian displaced by European), but also the “combination,” and assimilation, of the two, so that the specificities of Amerindian communication systems are left unrecognizable.

developmental narrative to account for the patriarchal and colonial structures that might necessitate visual reading. In other words, this scene reveals the need to deprivilege the body and a more haptic experience in order to participate in the dominant form of written literacy, and the privileges it allows, at all. In this scene, Tivisita must learn to privilege the visual mode of reading in order that she may read without punishment from her father. The secrecy enabled by this reading practice encodes within it a level of subversiveness within the existing patriarchal social order. In this instance, the developmental model of reading—from hesitant, tactile reading to steadied, silent, visual reading—acknowledges the limitations of the existing social order and creates secret alliances amongst women. However, the visual mode of reading also maintains established sociopolitical structures: the bodily discipline that a woman undergoes while learning this style of reading risks maintaining the social status quo and its colonial legacy.

The techniques by which Tivisita attempts to read before she receives her formal instruction offer an alternative to this developmental narrative of reading, as her methods more fully acknowledge that a reader has a body. If teaching the visual mode of reading acknowledges the existing hierarchical social order but cannot change it, the tactile mode of reading offers the possibility of an alternative social relation. Like Tivisita, Salomé practices this tactile mode of reading early in her childhood, well before she starts her instituto. Her early method of reading, informed by touch, is first presented when Salomé recalls a reunion with her exiled father. She recites the precise date, March 18, 1861, on which her father returns to Santo

Domingo after the defeat of the Blue Party, a political faction, ensures his safety: “The exact date is not hard to remember. Every time I think of it, which is often, I bring my hand to my heart as if the date were carved there and I could feel the numbers and letters with my fingers” (25). The insistence on chronological precision legitimates her practice of “feeling” numbers and letters, as imagined to be inscribed on her heart, by aligning it with accurate historical knowledge; her tactile reading practice therefore produces “sense,” that is, both physical sensation and intellection. What is more striking is that this moment reveals a peculiar temporal dimension in the relation between reading and knowledge production. First Salomé recalls the date, which then spurs her gestural action. Tactile reading does not serve as the means to the end of historical verification; reading is not utilized for the purpose of retrieving information. Instead, Salomé already knows the “exact date” and recalls it “often.” Here, the text is not imagined as a stable document of information, nor is the act of reading imagined to be a method for retrieving this information.²² Salomé’s ritualized

²² Alvarez’s description of tactile reading recalls Plato’s discussion of memory in the *Phaedrus*. Plato’s Socrates introduces the myth of Theuth to demonstrate that a true philosopher, in contrast with a rhetorician, relies on internal ‘inscriptions,’ that is, on his own memory, rather than on external writing, which introduces forgetfulness. The point is that writing “from without” makes one dependent on the “signs” of others, rather than self-sufficient, such as when one controls one’s own knowledge production (*Phaedrus* 275a). Derrida’s famous deconstruction of this myth, in “Plato’s Pharmacy” (1968), demonstrates that Plato’s attempt to distinguish writing from “living, breathing discourse” does not work in the way he might want it to (*Phaedrus* 276a). Salomé’s reading of an internal inscription has the opposite effect of what Plato hopes will happen when one relies only on internal memory: it opens up new relations beyond herself. Jane Gallop also addresses the difference between relying on others and relying on oneself while reading, in her introduction to *Polemic: Critical or Uncritical* (2004). Our current notion of “critical reading” can be traced to Kant’s distinction between “critical reading” and “replicative reading,” in which critical reading “is an example of independent thinking,” and replicative reading is condemned as “immature” because it “relies on external authority” (Gallop 7).

method of reading the inscription on her heart instead recalls Amerindian models of reading, in which pictographic and other forms of abstract representational systems signal memories of which the interpreter already has knowledge (Boone and Mignolo 72, 284). This model of reading allows for plurivocality and variety: many of these systems of communication, primarily in Mesoamerica and the Andes, “allowed for linguistic diversity” and for variant readings because their pictorial or abstracted representations were legible to communities who spoke different languages but shared a cultural base (Boone and Mignolo 19, 301). In this instance, Salomé’s tactile practice shows that alphabetic (and numeric) writing can produce a similar result.

More specifically, Salomé’s reading method allows her to imagine connections that extend beyond her relationship with her father as well as beyond her relationship with her internally divided country. The repeated recollection of this historical date and her readings of her imagined internal inscription do not simply evoke a memory of her father; rather, her thoughts extend out to a broader community. The memory of this date—and more specifically, the subsequent act of reading the “inscription” on her heart—causes her to “think of Cuba and Puerto Rico about to fight for their independence, and of the United States just beginning to fight for the independence of its black people, and then I think of my own patria willingly giving up its independence to become a colony again” (25). Salomé’s awareness of this network of American revolutions stems from the advantage of temporal distance in the narrative, as she adds, “back then when I am living it, I have no idea what is going on” (25). However, this temporal gap does not indicate a position of distance

that might guarantee one's objectivity in the reading process—a stance of distance that has become important to current ideals of textual critique that Warner traces to Kantian aesthetics (“Uncritical” 24-5). Rather, the novel stresses that this temporal gap allows for repeated recollections of the date (“every time”) and for repeated readings of that date, as “carved” on Salomé’s heart. These repetitions over time allow Salomé to imaginatively align her personal memory with the struggles of others across national lines, linked by the possibility for a shared, albeit generalized, politics—the “fight for independence.”

Thus the practice of tactile reading opens up an individual’s enclosed, internalized locus of personal memory to new relations. The individual—Salomé’s chapters are characterized by their first-person narration—is now linked up to much more than herself. An extension outward, beyond the self, and the possibility of an interconnected politics with others who are not personally known, are the effects of this tactile mode of reading. Her reading practice does not produce a discrete, individualistic subject, who might celebrate her critical faculties and her ability to maintain distanced objectivity. Instead, her reading practice produces a set of relations, an extension outward across individual bodies and national boundaries to connect moments of political resistance, which is renewed “every time” she practices this particular mode of reading.

Although this reading practice produces verifiable historical fact (an “exact date”), the grammatical construction used to introduce it places us in the realm of the hypothetical rather than the factual. The moment in which Salomé touches the

imagined inscription on her heart is presented as a non-factual occurrence, articulated with the use of the English subjunctive: “*as if* the date *were* carved there and I *could* feel the numbers and letters with my fingers” (emphasis added). The grammar of this sentence might simply signal that the inscription on her heart is not to be interpreted literally. However, the subjunctive has particular significance in Alvarez’s novel. In the prologue, which is narrated from the third-person perspective of Camila, the subjunctive encourages shifts in perspective and allows one to notice “positive” change; such positive change is specifically linked to Camila’s contemplation of revolutionary energy in Cuba in 1960. Camila reminds herself: “Use your subjunctive [...] Make a wish. *Contrary to possibility. Contrary to fact*” (2, emphasis original). Tivisita’s tactile reading practice is also aligned with the non-factual status of the English subjunctive: she is described as running her hands over the letters “*as if* she could make sense from just touching them” (265, emphasis added). This grammatical mood aligns Tivisita’s gestures with the young Salomé’s tactile reading practice—a practice that is legitimized, in Salomé’s case, for its precision and historical exactness. The subjunctive opens up the possibility that “sense” can be produced through touch, that is, that one can make meaning through a sensual, more obviously embodied experience of reading.

What might it mean that a tactile reading practice participates in the logic of the subjunctive—the logic of possibility and desire? In order to forge new political possibilities—that is, a politics that might serve as an alternative to the long history of colonization in the Dominican Republic and other Latin American nations—one must

think beyond what one already knows. The subjunctive attests to the ways that this practice of reading can break open the historical cycle of colonization and repression to make way for a different politics. This new politics becomes possible through Salomé's imagined connection with strangers, an act that Warner argues is necessary to create new forms of belonging. When Warner discusses the formation of publics, he emphasizes the importance of an open address in public discourse, which allows for "the possible participation of any stranger" and therefore "orient[s] us to strangers in a different way" (*Publics* 113, 75). This re-orientation happens precisely because the open address preserves strangerhood, thus refusing to put those whom we do not know "on a path of commonality"; instead, it fosters new forms of belonging regardless of the "categorical classification" of individuals—that is, regardless of social status, racial identity, or citizenship (Warner 75, 88). Strangerhood preserves difference, or that which is not identical to or knowable by me, at the same time that it allows for alliances across constricting categories and classifications.

The correlation of the subjunctive mood with tactile reading in Alvarez's novel indicates similar, necessary acts of imagining. Salomé's imagined connections across national lines envision a generalized politics of resistance, and this generalization may be necessary if one is imagining what is not yet known. For Warner, an open address to strangers makes possible major social changes: it "puts at risk the concrete world" and can become "an engine [...] for social mutation" (113). Salomé's politics of the "fight for independence" takes the form of an open address to strangers in order to think anew the "concrete world" of her colonized patria.

The possibility for this new, generalized politics is aligned with a particular mode of reading in Alvarez's novel—a mode of reading that, as elucidated in Tivisita's lesson, is perceived to be at odds with the style of reading favored in formal instruction. As I have shown, the kind of reading favored in formal instruction rehearses a developmental narrative of reading—from more fully corporal to a more reserved, visual practice—that is linked to the existing colonial and patriarchal order. Why does Salomé, who in her younger years is able to recognize and enact the political potential of tactile reading, now choose to privilege the visual practice in her lessons? Salomé's denial of poetry and of the poetic functions of language, and the novel's ambivalent relationship to Hostos' significant, but perhaps limiting, contribution to educational reform through positivist methods, may supply a partial answer to this question. An education focused on empirical science and logical methods of reasoning also contains a certain ideology of language that restricts the poetic. Warner explains that the common assumption that discourse can be “propositionally summarizable” leads to a disregard for the “poetic or textual qualities of any utterance [...] in favor of sense” and to the idea that reading is “replicable and uniform” (*Publics* 114-5). This ideology is at work in Alvarez's novel when a visual mode of reading is privileged, or when reason is favored over passion. When young women are disciplined at school to move in predetermined ways while they recite the alphabet, or when the extra, “halting” mediation of the body's touch is trained out of Tivisita's reading practice, the underlying assumption is that what one

reads is “transparent,” that one makes sense of texts in an unmediated way, and that reading is an act of “silent, private, replicable decoding” (Warner *Publics* 117, 123).

What I have termed “tactile reading” in Alvarez’s novel offers a different understanding of reading. It foregrounds the mediation (bodily, interpretive) inherent to all reading, and shows that reading cannot be a perfectly replicable act because it requires the embodied practices of each particular reader. By refusing efficiency and uniformity, this practice opens up the possibility for imagining beyond the concrete world, that is, beyond what already exists. These imaginative dimensions align tactile reading with poetic language and with literariness—that is, with the ways that language refers imperfectly to reality. Tactile reading in Alvarez’s novel thus generates an alternative to the already-existing, normative sociopolitical order based on colonial legacies and entrenched gender hierarchies. It does so by introducing a form of relationality that depends on maintaining difference.

Reading as Writing: Producing a “She”

In the Name of Salomé suggests that reading—and more specifically, women reading—is a potentially subversive activity. In order to maintain the existing sociopolitical structures, which in the novel bear the legacy of colonialism and patriarchal oppression, reading must be regulated in order to control the behaviors of women. As I have shown, the text presents more than one method of reading, and aligns the tactile, more fully embodied practice with the possibility for political change (for Salomé, it allows her to consider multiple political revolutions

simultaneously) and with the subversion of a social order (for Tivisita, it more explicitly undermines the law of her father). In this section, I highlight how tactile reading also advances a notion of reading as writing, that is, as an agential mode of engagement that leaves a reader's mark upon a text. With the pervasive anxiety that young women will learn how to respond to love letters, the authorized educational model in Alvarez's novel attempts to divorce the act of reading from the act of writing. In other words, literacy is regulated—either only reading is taught, or not at all—in order to stop women from writing and being read. At the same time, this separation of reading from writing imagines writing as an active, responsive gesture, whereas reading is positioned as a passive, self-disciplining experience. The novel proposes an alternative to this model in tactile reading, which suggests that reading is a kind of writing, in that reading leaves the mark of one's response to a text. One may critique this notion of reading, arguing that the reader *qua* reader “disappears” when her acts of reading are conceived as acts of writing—a critique often mobilized against deconstructionist notions of writing, which have been seen, especially by feminist thinkers, as theorizing the reader as “an effect of the text” rather than as a real, historically and socially constructed, embodied actor (Littau 122). However, as I will argue, the model of reading-as-writing presented in Alvarez's novel importantly recognizes a reader's embodied particularity.

In the Name of Salomé presents a scene of reading-as-writing when the young Camila encounters her mother's poetry in a collection stored in her father's library. She locates a particular poem that she remembers as the last her mother wrote in her

failing health. According to Camila's memory, Salomé originally wrote this poem for Camila's brother Pedro, but by reciting it to Camila with some improvisation—"some quick rhyme changes and feminine endings"—she insisted that it "*is* also for [Camila]" (118-119). When Camila finds this poem in the collection, she enacts a similar improvisational reading—and rewriting—of her mother's poetry: "With a pencil, line by line, she had changed all the pronouns and masculine endings—her first poetic endeavor!—so the poem was addressed to her, not Pedro" (120). Whereas Salomé's tactile reading of the date "carved on her heart" emphasized the significance of a generalized relation to unknown others, this scene highlights the importance of a specific textual address. It matters that the poem be "addressed to her."

The particularity of this address, while different from an open address to strangers, achieves a similar effect of generating relations. As Peggy Kamuf points out, the special ambiguity of the English phrase "to be addressed" highlights a multidirectional relationality: the grammar of this phrase "suspends the certainty of 'voice': active or passive," so that to say that something "is addressed" can mean that it is "delivered [...] to another's address" and also that it is "addressed *by* another" (*Book of Addresses* 3, emphasis original). This ambiguity shows how we are constituted in and through our relations with others, rather than defined by an essential identity. "Both the sender and the recipient are determined and positioned by the *relationship* of addressing that produces them and ties them to one another," Kamuf writes (*Book of Addresses* 286, emphasis original). Camila's relationship with her mother, who died when Camila was a child, is mediated not only by Camila's

memory but also by the poetic address, which positions them in relation to each other through acts of reading. While Camila's revision could be understood as a violent erasure of the poem's address to her brother, the novel suggests that her act of rewriting can allow the two addresses of the poem to exist simultaneously—that is, for Camila's and for Pedro's relationship to the poem and to their mother to exist at the same time. Later in her life, Camila rediscovers this edition of Salomé's poetry in her father's library and finds the trace of her "erased pencil marks" on this poem (157). This moment emphasizes the difference between the printed words on the page and Camila's pencil marks, which would allow the poem to be read with both its address to Pedro and its address to Camila. By writing herself into the poem's address, Camila allows the poem to address more than one person simultaneously.

The specificity of the poem's address, that is, the difference between the poem addressing Camila and the poem addressing Pedro, relies on the way that Spanish inflects gender. The poem referenced in Alvarez's scene, Ureña de Henríquez's "Mi Pedro," contrasts the speaker's young son with empire-builders and war heroes, and instead praises his capacity for learning and his commitment to "progress"—praise that references Hostos' positivist model of socioeconomic development through decolonization.²³ The poem contains masculine adjectives to describe the addressee, Pedro, as in the penultimate stanza, "Así es mi Pedro, *generoso y bueno*; / todo lo grande le merece culto; / entre el ruido del mundo irá *sereno*" (Thus is my Pedro,

²³ For a discussion of Hostos' (and Martí's) interest in Latin American socioeconomic "progress" in their efforts to decolonize Caribbean nations, see Ward, "From Sarmiento to Martí and Hostos: Extricating the Nation from Coloniality" (2007).

generous and good; / everything grand he deserves refined; / amongst the noise of the world he will be serene) (ll. 17-19, emphasis added). Likewise, “Mi Pedro” contains other markers of gender, such as direct objects and pronouns—“Nunca la guerra le inspiro sus fuegos: / la fuerza del progreso *lo* domina” (Never does war inspire his spirit: / the force of progress rules him) (ll. 7-8, emphasis added). These gendered parts of speech complicate an easy transference of the poem’s address to Camila. She rededicates the poem by changing these gendered aspects of the text, and in doing so, she asks to be addressed in her singularity as a reader—which is, in this instance, marked foremost by sexual difference.

While this re-writing is done “with a pencil,” without explicit reference to Camila’s touch, I consider this a moment of tactile reading because it is definitively a hands-on reading moment. And while Camila works with the poem “line by line,” her creative act demands attention to the specificity of each letter: “changing all the pronouns and masculine endings” of the Spanish words necessitates the revision of single letters (120). That is, this action requires, most basically, attention to the difference between an *o* and an *a*. Each letter matters in the construction of the poem’s address; attention to these basic units of alphabetic writing transforms the addressee of the poem. This rewriting allows Camila to be recognized in her particularity as a *female* reader of the poem, and in order to gain this recognition, she must literally leave her mark on the poem as she reads it. Camila’s rewriting of her mother’s poem therefore makes two seemingly contradictory gestures. First, it is an act that demands attention to her specificity as a reader, gendered female. Second, it

is an act that acknowledges that her relation to her mother—and to her own self—is constituted by a relation to a text, and to a (gendered) address that creates her position as a reader. In other words, her revision affirms her specificity as an individual, female reader while it also affirms the impossibility of being an individual without being in relation with others. Camila's relation to others (e.g., to her mother) is defined, in this scene, by her relation to a text; her social relations are thus shown to be mediated by acts of reading and editing.

Camila is not the only one who edits Salomé's poems. Early in his relationship with Salomé, Pancho begins managing her poetry, editing her poems for different editions and proposing alternatives to what she has already written. In one scene, Pancho asks Salomé about one of her poems, "are you really sure you want to say *brilliant* palms? How about *fecund* palms? It goes better with the meter, don't you think: 'And martyrdom beneath the fecund palms?'" (170). The difference between "las brillantes palmas" and "las fecundas palmas" in this poem (Ureña de Henríquez's "Melancolía") is a gendered one: Pancho suggests that Salomé exchange a descriptor that can designate (masculine) intellect (*brillante*) with a descriptor that designates (feminine) fertility (*fecunda*). In contrast, when Camila revises "Mi Pedro," she writes a female addressee into a poem that praises a form of educated intelligence previously coded as masculine.

Later, too, when Salomé's sister Ramona gives Camila a copy of Salomé's "original poems," we learn that Pancho "tinkered" with the poems in the published book. Reading the text that Ramona herself copied from Salomé's poetry, Camila

“can make out the small differences” between Pancho’s edited versions and Salomé’s original poems (282). She also notices that Pancho “omitted many of [Salomé’s] ‘intimate verses’” from the published work, that is, he refused to publish the poems that are not explicitly political and that emphasize a woman’s passions (161). In a novel that acknowledges the inevitable mutability of texts, and especially the inability to control the reception of texts, Camila’s and Pancho’s acts of editing are positioned as different undertakings. Pancho, who also commissioned a portrait of Salomé that “beautif[ies] and whiten[s]” a woman otherwise described as “mulatto” (205), expresses an interest in managing Salomé’s future (170), that is, in shaping the ways that others will remember her by intervening in her poetry and in the production of her image. In contrast, Camila seeks to recover memories of Salomé that might otherwise be erased because of interventions such as Pancho’s. After all, Pancho calls Camila’s story about her mother’s double-dedication of her final poem a “fabrication” (120), perhaps unable to comprehend how a young woman could be the addressee of a poem that praises a form of education primarily reserved for men. Camila’s act of editing might therefore be considered an act of feminist revisioning, on par with the ways that feminist critics have sought to uncover—and, at times, rewrite—the histories, texts, and languages we inherit that are marked by patriarchy.²⁴

²⁴ See, for example, the landmark feminist literary criticism of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), and Luce Irigaray’s discussion of the gender of language in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993 [1984]) (133-141). As a whole, *In the Name of Salomé* is an excellent example of a revisionary literary and political history that has been dominated by male figures. See also Alvarez’s *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994) for another example of a feminist literary-historical revisionist project.

Indeed, Camila works within a colonial-patriarchal model to effect a new tradition for Salomé's poetry. She uses her father's punishment for her act of "desecrating books"—"she was made to copy over her mother's whole book of poems by hand"—to forge a closer relationship with her mother as mediated through Salomé's poetry. By "commit[ing] all of Salomé's poems to memory," Camila remembers her mother in ways that often contradict the images curated by Pancho (120). This scene of copying and memorization also inaugurates a relationship with Salomé's poetry that contradicts the methods of reading that we are likely to consider as legitimate forms of textual engagement in today's academy. In Camila's first chapter, which takes place in 1960, we learn that Camila has "started consulting her mother's poems" in order to deal with her "unsettled" life (31). What Camila seeks in her mother's poetry is unclear, but her reading practice is to "close her eyes, and part the pages, then glance down" at whatever poem appears on the page to which she has opened the book. The novel suggests that Camila's internalization of Salomé's poetry helps to create a new tradition in which to read that poetry—one that runs counter to Pancho's "official," but partial, image of Salomé Ureña de Henríquez.

In one instance of Camila's oracular reading practice, she opens the book up to Salomé's poem "La llegada del invierno," which is about winter on the island Quisqueya. When Camila goes outside to find that the long-awaited snowfall has arrived where she lives, she thinks, "Maybe the game is working. The answers are coming at last" (31-33). Here, Camila's ritualistic reading is more aligned with what Michael Warner might identify as a "pious" reading practice, in which a reader does

not treat a text as a distanced object over which she has control. In this instance, Camila does not “extract [herself] from the immediate situation of address” as figured by the text; likewise, her reading practice is guided by chance rather than by her own agency (Warner, “Uncritical” 34, 31). In other words, this method of reading relinquishes a particular notion of agency, that is, a notion of a subject who is in control of the text or able to master it.²⁵ It is important to note, too, that Camila rarely “reads” her mother’s poems from a text. Because she has memorized these poems, Camila engages with the text to remind her of what she already knows—a practice that recalls Amerindian methods of recollecting stories that I described in the previous section. Like the date of her father’s return from exile “carved” on Salomé’s heart, these poems serve as internal inscriptions that allow Camila to define her identity through her relation to another—a relationship that is necessarily indirect because it is mediated by text.

Although Camila is punished by her father and made to copy out her mother’s poetry, her act of readdressing Salomé’s poem demonstrates that reading is not an act of simple decoding nor of replicating what is written in a text. Indeed, Camila’s reading practice, when she rewrites her mother’s poem in her father’s library, suggests that the simple reproduction of the text, as it is printed, would involve

²⁵ In his discussion of “pious reading,” Warner focuses on Mary Rowlandson’s reading of the Bible: she opens the Bible to read whatever “apparently arbitrary selection” she lands on. As Warner explains, “The apparently random movements offered by the codex format are the medium not of critical agency but of providential direction. The chance opening of pages helps to ensure that her reading will *not* be an expression of her agency” (“Uncritical” 31). Rowlandson’s position as a captive contributes to this different view of agency; she practices a form of reading that is marked by her own lack of control and personal freedom.

denying her specificity as a reader. This scene seems to ask, How does one read a text faithfully when it has, in truth, more than one address? For Derrida, Kamuf, Derek Attridge, and other deconstructionist thinkers, producing a reading that diverges from a dominant interpretation or from “existing conventions” names an ethical encounter with a text (Attridge, *Singularity* 80). For example, Attridge makes a loose distinction between a dominant mode of reading that he calls “mechanical reading,” and a more “creative” practice of reading, in order to argue for the necessity of producing readings “that [are] not entirely programmed by the work and the context in which it is read” (*Singularity* 80). A “creative” reading strays from the “necessary objectivity and accuracy” of mechanical decoding, and may even be deemed an “unfaithful reading” because of this swerve (Attridge, *Singularity* 79-80). However, Attridge argues that an “unfaithful,” “creative” reading might be a more ethical, hospitable way to approach a text (here, he includes all kinds of texts, not just literature), because it can acknowledge new interpretive possibilities that extend beyond the preexisting norms for reading (*Singularity* 80).²⁶ Alvarez’s scene suggests that a reader may only be able to respond to a text’s (multiple) address(es) by moving beyond an exact reproduction of that text.

²⁶ For Derrida, the loose distinction is between a “doubling commentary” and reading that “transgress[es] the text.” A “doubling commentary” is the first reading of a text that aims to produce an accurate summary of or commentary on a given text; it is a method that Simon Critchley describes as “faithfully repeat[ing]” a text—but Derrida clarifies that this, too, is an interpretive practice (Derrida, *Limited Inc* 143-147, *Of Grammatology* 157-158; Critchley 25). Kamuf makes a distinction between a reply and a response: whereas a reply is a “replication” or “re-application” of a text’s address, a response cannot be determined in advance and can only take place if a text’s address does not seek to prescribe what the response, from a reader, will be (*Book of Addresses* 256).

Camila's reading and revision of her mother's poem concretizes this theoretical notion of response: as Camila retraces the text with her eye and with her pencil, she also changes it—so that she is more fully in the text, so that it is more fully addressed to her. Moreover, Alvarez's narrative calls her revision a "poetic endeavor," suggesting that Camila's small changes constitute a legitimate act of creative composition. Not only is her creative response to the text an act of reading; it is also an act of writing that creates a new work. Of course, both Camila and we, as readers, know that this new poem is not fully "her own" work; the poetic authorship is shared. Alvarez's scene proposes that the poem, as a creative work, is constituted by both reader and writer—and the reader is a writer, too, because she leaves a creative mark on the text.

Camila's rewriting changes the grammatical gender so that the poem is now addressed to a woman, that is, to her gendered specificity. These changes also allow the poem to address any reader who might also respond to this gendered address. Although the poem can now address Camila in her particularity, and can therefore remain faithful to a memory of Salomé that was not otherwise recorded, the address also remains generalized. Camila's revision allows the poem to potentially address a wider readership of women, making the address simultaneously specific and general; the poem's address cannot be absolutely limited to one reader.²⁷ Although the

²⁷ See Kamuf's *Book of Addresses* (2005) for further discussion of the simultaneous singularity and generality of an address. Discussing the fictional letters in Henry James' *The Aspern Papers*, Kamuf explains that letters can be addressed to a particular person because "they *can* be addressed to anyone at all, only because they are repeatable. Since they are repeatable, which is the condition of their arriving at an address, they also not arrive once and

revisions that Camila makes do not circulate to a wider readership—they are not published, but remain on the shelves of her father’s library—it is the possibility that her writing can address anyone at all, and more specifically, any woman at all, that is significant here. We might even say that the revised poem “circulates” in Alvarez’s novel, which writes in the possibility that Salomé Ureña de Henríquez’s poem about masculine education could also address a woman; readers of *In the Name of Salomé* mobilize this possibility.

In Camila’s revised address, which is both particular and general, the possibility for a feminist politics emerges. That the poem can address a specific reader (one woman, Camila) and also address a wider, hypothetical readership (many women), inaugurates the possibility for a new, not-yet-known relation to emerge, much like Salomé’s tactile reading practice allowed her to imagine a relationship with strangers. In her discussions of feminist politics, Kamuf explains that “politics” has often been defined in opposition with “poetics” and constrained by “a stable referential system,” which demands that the term “woman” only refer to “an ontologically pre-determined being” (*Book of Addresses* 120). Inviting instead a “politics that must also be a poetics,” Kamuf writes that “woman” can, “like any other term,” also be “expropriated from any ‘actual’ referent”; the term can both be used to refer to “actual, social beings” as well as to “*something else, something other than this apparent actuality*” (*Book of Addresses* 120). In other words, politics become

for all, if ever” (40). Here, Kamuf is working with Derrida’s definition of writing and, indeed, of communication more generally. “The condition of discourse is that it be intelligible *in the absence* of its object,” and a piece of writing must function without its author if it is to be read (Kamuf 53).

possible when we can suspend the need for a referent to correspond with an already-existing reality. In Camila's case, the political possibility lies in a woman's inclusion in an educational model coded as masculine, and in the poem's address to many women in general. A non-correspondence between word and thing, between sign and referent, creates the possibility for referring to that "which is not"—that is, to something that is not yet known, a future, and a politics that is not already determined by a pre-existing, normative social order.

In Alvarez's scene, a feminist politics emerges in a double act—reading-and-writing—that is either restricted or denied by the normative model by which many women are educated in the novel. Directly addressing the political stakes of reading, conceived as a response, Kamuf notes her concern about the "future of democracy when the formal possibility of response is increasingly confined and limited in a public space increasingly saturated by media supposed merely to reflect or represent public opinion" (265-266). In other words, she asks whether democracy—a politics of participation—is possible when the public's response is increasingly predetermined. Alvarez's novel is concerned with similar questions. Is a feminist, anti-colonial politics possible when the responses of many, particularly women, are increasingly predetermined and limited—primarily in the educational models that restrict the ability of women to read, write, and thus to creatively respond to texts and to each other? The novel suggests that a less restricted way of responding must emerge in order for a new sociopolitical relation to come about—and this emergence is located within acts of reading that do not conform to the limited instructional models already

in place. It follows, then, that both Salomé and Camila are invested in educational reform as a way of reimagining the current political order—which is defined for Salomé by a more immediate legacy of European colonization, for Camila by U.S. imperialist occupation, and for both by patriarchy. For Camila, as she encounters her mother’s poetry in her father’s library, addressing these legacies involves a revisionary mode of reading.

Reading the Curves of the Letters: Producing a “We”

In the Name of Salomé closes with a scene of reading instruction that suggests a preference for the political and social possibilities that the tactile practice of reading can inaugurate. In this section I will show how the final scene, in which Camila uses touch to read, and teaches another to read by touch, revises earlier scenes of reading instruction in favor of an embodied—and, I argue, literary—reading practice. Moreover, the final scene explicitly links this reading instruction to the revolutionary work that Camila has performed in Cuba’s 1960s literacy campaign, demonstrating that the relationality generated by tactile reading is connected to re-envisioning a prevailing sociopolitical order. If, as my discussion of Alvarez’s novel has shown, certain practices of reading and writing (and the instruction of them) can perpetuate a gendered social hierarchy, then a different mode of reading and writing can generate an alternative social space.

The relationality created through tactile reading is presented in a moment when a new imagining of political and social interconnection is most needed. In the

epilogue, Camila has returned to Santo Domingo in 1973 after her participation in the revolutionary “experiment” to create a new patria in Cuba. Camila’s memories of her thirteen years in Cuba are interwoven into this epilogue, highlighting her work with literacy brigades as she taught alongside educators from rural schools, in both university settings and in *factorías*. We learn that her commitment to this revolution was less a commitment to Castro’s particular politics, but to a wider, education-based revolution: “The real revolution could only be won by the imagination. When one of my newly literate students picked up a book and read with hungry pleasure, I knew we were one step closer to the patria we all wanted” (347). In her notion of a “revolution won by the imagination,” Camila’s vision allows for the sensual experiences of reading to guide her students—affirming their “hungry pleasure,” for example—and imagines a “patria” that is not limited to a single nation’s boundaries. Her time spent in Cuba before and after attending university in the United States—in exile from the Dominican Republic because the U.S. occupation would not recognize her father’s presidency—allows for Camila to claim both the Dominican Republic and Cuba as her “patria,” putting pressure on what the word “patria” can refer to. For Camila, this term is also not bound by its etymological history—which traces its roots, by way of Latin, to the Greek word for “father” (πατήρ)—as her imagining of a patria adopts an anti-patriarchal and decolonizing stance. For example, Camila’s frequent thoughts about her “wandering family” that is “scattered across the Americas” (343) affirms the transnational links that José Martí imagined in “Nuestra

América” (“Our America”) (1891), a political writer and work that are referenced frequently by Camila and her brother Pedro in the novel.

Adopting Martí’s anti-colonial thought, which refused to reproduce European and North American political and educational models while affirming a transnational Latin American politics,²⁸ Camila also adopts teaching strategies that stray from the educational models already in place—even those that are advocated by Castro’s party. For instance, Camila recalls being at a *factoría* in Cuba, setting aside her suggested reading list (*Granma*, the official newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party; the works of Marx and Martí), and instead reading her mother’s poetry to women as they sort coffee beans. After the women hear one of Salomé’s poems—which is written from the perspective of a mother who has recently given birth—they disrupt their work, “drown[ing] out the compañera,” as she “shout[s] for order, in the name of Fidel, in the name of the revolution” (347-8). This scene is another example of women reading; here reading is not a private, visual activity but a collective experience of listening and responding. This collective model, which incorporates a

²⁸ In “Our America,” Martí articulates knowledge production as the key site from which to decolonize Latin America, and proposes that the region stop basing its educational models on Europe: “The European university must yield to the American university. The history of America, of the Incas until now, must be learned by heart [...] Our Greece is better than the Greece which is not ours” (“La universidad europea ha de ceder a la universidad americana. La historia de América, de los incas a acá [...] Nuestra Grecia es preferible a la Grecia que no es nuestra). On the significance of Martí’s hemispheric thinking and critique of U.S. imperialism to American Cultural Studies, see Jeffrey Belnap and Raúl Fernández (eds.), *José Martí’s “Our America”: From National to Hemispheric Cultural Studies* (1998). See especially Belnap’s “Headbands, Hemp Sandals, and Headdresses: The Dialectics of Dress and Self-Conception in Martí’s ‘Our America,’” for Martí’s account of the reproduction of elite culture and racialized hierarchies through a European educational system inherited through colonization (192-3).

woman's poetry rather than political tracts and essays, is positioned in opposition to, and even a disruption of, the official educational paradigm of the Cuban revolution.

This factoría scene, which integrates work with learning, indicates the interconnection of the Cuban revolution's educational and economic goals; Cuba's anti-imperialist goals included efforts toward economic independence and development without the aid (or intervention) of the United States. Hearing Salomé's poem, which brings attention to a woman's body and her intimacy with her newborn child, the women workers disrupt their mechanized labor, demonstrating the inefficiency of the revolution's educational model and chosen texts in addressing them in their embodied particularity.²⁹ Camila's act of reading her mother's poetry envisions the possibility for revolution through a different model, that is, through a kind of reading that allows for pleasure, personal connection, and the acknowledgement of readers'—and more specifically, women's—bodies.³⁰

This is the kind of reading that Camila teaches in the last scene of the novel, when she meets Duarte, a young boy who weeds gravesites at a cemetery in Santo Domingo. At this point in the novel, Camila's eyesight has begun to fail, and her sense of touch correspondingly heightens to become her primary mode of obtaining knowledge. She has arrived at the gravesite in order to confirm that her stone has

²⁹ These women workers also critique the capitalist logic of economic development, common to Latin American revolutionary movements. See María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development* (2003), for a critique of discourses of development in post-World War II revolutionary movements in Latin America.

³⁰ This scene of reading thus revises José Martí's masculinist critiques of United States imperialism. See Beatrice Pita, "Engendering Critique: Race, Class, and Gender in Ruíz de Burton and Martí" (1998), for a discussion of Martí's gendered and sexualized critiques of the uneven power relationships between the United States and Latin America (137).

been corrected and is now inscribed with her full name, Salomé Camila, after her family has already ordered a stone that listed her first name as Camila only. “I would feel the stone and know the difference,” Camila thinks to herself as she contemplates her grave’s inscription (344). Much like the exactness of the date that the young Salomé imagines to be inscribed on her heart, here the novel claims that reading by touch can produce a kind of knowledge—more specifically, a knowledge of “difference.” This statement refers to the difference between two possible inscriptions, between two possible ways of naming the same woman. This difference therefore insists on particularity: it matters to which name the tombstone refers, just as it matters to whom a poem is addressed.

This attention to particularity—the inscription must bear *this* name and no other—is what, perhaps paradoxically, allows for relationality that extends beyond the individual. That is to say, the recognition of particularity in the proper name is not equated in this scene with the identification of an exceptional individual. Rather, the novel redefines what is particular as that which is in relation with others. By the time we reach the epilogue, the name Salomé Camila already bears special significance for readers of Alvarez’s novel. In an earlier chapter, we have learned that Salomé, whose life expectancy is uncertain because she is pregnant while bedridden with tuberculosis, wants her daughter to have her own name, Camila, but has also promised her son that she will name her daughter after herself, Salomé. “Suddenly,” she thinks, “it seemed a good thing that our names always be together” (306). In the final chapter before the epilogue, Camila hides from her family when they are moving

to Haiti after her mother has died. When she is called by her full name, Salomé Camila, she finally answers, “Here we are” (331). Her response to this address, which uses a proper name to indicate a single person, produces a “we,” a plural subject.

It follows, then, that when Camila wants to “feel the stone and know the difference” at her gravesite, the novel affirms this plurality by introducing a second reader to the scene. Duarte, whom Camila realizes has not received formal training in reading, becomes a second reader as he “leads [Camila’s] fingers over the cut letters,” allowing her to “feel the satisfying curves of [her] full name” (353). This tactile reading allows for a specific kind of attention: instead of seeing the letters all at once to “learn each word with [one’s] eye,” as Tivisita was trained to do, Camila must trace each letter with her hands (and with Duarte’s hands), allowing her to feel each curve, each figure of each letter. Attention to these curves reminds us that, just as when Tivisita read by touch, tactile reading is not a strictly linear process of reading, which would allow the reader to move from left to right with perceived efficiency. Rather, this reading practice slows a reader down and refuses a clear *telos* in the reading process: when tracing each letter, a reader’s hands must at times move “backward” (left) as well as “forward” (right) across the stone. This non-linearity recalls Camila’s response to her niece, who doesn’t “think Castro is the answer” in Cuba: “It was wrong to think that there was an answer in the first place. [...] It’s continuing to struggle to create a country we dream of that makes a patria out of the land under our feet” (350). Camila’s political vision allows for continual change, and this politics without closure or finality leaves room for a “we,” a collective imagining

that is also embodied (“our feet”). Moreover, Camila and Duarte’s efforts to read by touch also allow for pleasure in the reading practice: Camila finds the experience of touching the “curves” of her name “satisfying,” a description that allows for reading to include the senses, and that recognizes both the body of the reader and the body of the text. That is, the inscribed letters have figures—“curves”—that touch the body of a reader to produce sensation.

The reading instruction that follows, when Camila teaches Duarte to read by touch, revises Salomé’s lesson with Tivisita. Placing her hands over Duarte’s, Camila affirms tactile reading as a legitimate way to read: “Together we trace the grooves of the stone, he repeating the name of each letter after me,” until he is able to perform the task by himself, “again and again, until he gets it right” (353). Just as Camila’s full name produces a plural subject, a “we,” so too does this moment of reading: “Together *we* trace the grooves” (353, emphasis added). This plural subject importantly includes sexual difference: while Salomé’s lesson of visual reading formed an alliance with her female student Tivisita in secret defiance of Tivisita’s father, Camila’s lesson maintains the feminist politics that tactile reading has produced thus far in the novel and also allows for inclusive, cross-gender alliances. Camila’s lesson also requires repeated attention to each letter, so that reading turns back on itself to undermine completeness through linear progression. Such attention to each letter pluralizes the proper name to a greater degree: within the proper name Salomé Camila are many other names—the “name of each letter.” Even as this practice proliferates plurality—both of readers and of names—it still produces a

correct reading; Camila insists that Duarte “get it right,” demonstrating that this mode of reading can, like Salomé’s reading of the “exact date” written on her heart, produce precise knowledge. This scene of reading instruction therefore recognizes that knowledge can be produced through a kind of reading that, in other instances in the novel, has been devalued as inefficient or as relying too much on the reader’s embodied sensations. It is an undoing of a certain history of reading, rehearsed in Tivisita’s reading instruction, that narrates a movement from corporeal to silent, visual reading, and from collective reading experiences toward private, individual acts.

A reading practice that affirms the embodied experiences of a reader, allows for pleasure and sensation, and complicates an efficient *telos* that leads from a written message to a reader’s comprehension, is also explicitly linked to an anti-colonial, revolutionary politics. When Camila first asks Duarte for his assistance, she thinks to herself, “In Cuba, he would know how to read” (352), demonstrating that her instruction of Duarte extends from her efforts to create a patria out of new educational, and thus new sociopolitical, structures. If the model of reading, and of reading instruction, that has been privileged also participates in the oppressive legacies of colonization, then a different method of reading and of instruction will be a significant factor in imagining a new politics. This new politics extends from a recognition of relationality, which in Alvarez’s final scene is defined by a sense of social connectedness that is not based on an essential commonality that would fuse together the different subjects that constitute the “we,” but that preserves singularity.

Alvarez's novel thus foregrounds Caminero-Santangelo's provocation that "difference" might be the best basis from which to "imagine community" (92). A politics based on "knowing the difference" is generated through a mode of reading that has, in other educational scenes in the novel, been devalued. The final scene thus invites us to account for what this undervalued reading method can offer: it produces non-hierarchical social relations and imagines anti-colonial political futures.

When Camila and Duarte allow their hands to be guided by the contours of each letter, their actions allow reading to be something more than the efficient deciphering of the written word. Their method of reading has much in common with how Spivak describes literary reading—and its ethical effects. In *Death of a Discipline*, Spivak offers the provocation that literary studies "must take the figure as its guide" (71). This focus on figurality opposes what Spivak identifies as a demand for "immediate comprehensibility," which, if practiced on literary texts, would seem to promise definitive knowledge of the object of study (71). Such a demand is linked with rational calculation, efficiency, and standardization, which, if adopted in one's reading practice, can translate to treating a literary text "as cultural information" (*Death of a Discipline* 61). What literature can "teach us," Spivak clarifies, is not any kind of definitive knowledge—about people, cultures, languages—but rather "that there are no certainties" (*Death of a Discipline* 26). This lesson in uncertainty occurs through an "open process" of reading that follows the "logic" of the figure—which means acknowledging that from figural language many readers will actively make many meanings (Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* 26, 71). The basis of this

acknowledgment is that literary language suspends direct reference to the “real,” allowing for a reader to “literalize” figural language in many different ways. For Spivak, then, the “cultural good” of literature radiates from the nature of literary texts as well as from the reading practices that readers bring to those texts. A literary reader must also suspend her desire for “immediate comprehensibility,” which would be a denial of the way figural language works (*Death of a Discipline* 71).

Although Duarte and Camila are not reading a literary text in the final scene of *In the Name of Salomé*, the inscribed name bears qualities we might identify with the literary. The name does not simply refer to Camila, the woman in front of the inscription; it is already pluralized, containing within it many more names (letter names) and summoning more than one individual (both Camila and her mother, Salomé). With Spivak’s suggestions in mind, Duarte and Camila practice a form of literary reading when they attend to the contours of the figures inscribed on the stone. Their practice allows for a suspension of immediate comprehension, of the demand to know, which is often associated with visual comprehension within a hierarchy of faculties. What mediates comprehension here is touch, sensation, and an attention to the non-linear figures of letters.

This mediation—literature’s lesson in deferred comprehensibility—makes literary reading an ethical practice for Spivak. Drawing from Derrida’s *Politics of Friendship*, in which he calls for a notion of democracy that “has no relation to [...] inequality or superiority” (Derrida, *PF* 232), Spivak remarks on what Derrida has termed the “originary curvature of social space”: “one cannot access another directly

and with a guarantee,” she writes, suggesting that the inability to access fully determinate meaning in texts, or the cultural realities “behind” those texts, has an effect on how we imagine our relations with others (*Death of a Discipline* 30). These ethical implications are visible in Duarte and Camila’s tactile reading that generates a “we” while refusing to collapse differences into sameness. The final scene also makes explicit the political import of teaching Duarte to read by touch—it is linked to an anti-colonial, anti-patriarchal revolutionary stance—and therefore demonstrates Spivak’s point that the “social curvature,” the inability to access any other with a guarantee, is “not a deterrent to politics” (*Death of a Discipline* 30).

These ethical and political relations are generated from a reading practice that, in previous instances in the novel, had been seen as untrained or as needing correction—and yet, their reading practice has much in common with a notion of literary reading that holds currency in the U.S. American academy. However, Camila and Duarte’s reading practice also diverges from the common notion that reading literature, no matter its social consequences, is at its core a private act of intellection—an idea about reading that can be identified in recent claims that reading is in “crisis” due to new technologies and emergent screen cultures. For example, Lutz Koepnick shows that the current notion of “proper reading” is linked to an “older tradition” that understands reading to be “a private act of communication that largely rests on our ability to screen out both distractions of the surrounding world and the urges of our bodies” (“Reading on the Move” 232-3). Reading is currently understood to be “in crisis” with the use of media platforms like e-readers, Koepnick

explains, because this model of silent reading has come to stand for “good reading,” in which a reader is able to escape into the text by dismissing the body’s senses and the outside world’s stimulations (233). Just as emerging forms of reading in a digital era can bring attention to the haptic realities of reading more generally—Koeppnick and others consider the act of touching screens, the online communities that form around online text, and the kinetic activity of listening to e-books while traveling³¹—tactile reading in Alvarez’s novel is informed by a sense of embodiment that has a longer history. As I have shown, this longer history is deeply rooted in the colonial context of the Americas, in the conflict between European and Amerindian systems of communication and knowledge production, and in the efforts for Latin American communities to revise colonial and neocolonial structures. When we discuss and debate what kinds of reading are proper or legitimate, both in the academy and outside of it, these older conflicts and erasures are also present.

In Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophistae*, the ἀγράμματοι characters practice a form of imaginative attention that, while illegible as “proper” reading to the highly educated scholars depicted in the same text, shares qualities with literary reading. Similarly, at the end of Alvarez’s novel, Camila and Duarte practice a style of reading that, in their own context, challenges a prevailing notion of reading as efficient, private, and disembodied. While their practice suspends immediate comprehension or quick

³¹ More specifically, Koeppnick explores how listening to audiobooks becomes a “kinesthetic activity” that can “commingle the private and public attributes of reading,” undermining the notion of reading as a spiritual, private activity (“Reading on the Move” 235). On the possibilities for new social configurations through online networks, see Lisa Nakamura, “‘Words with Friends’: Socially Networked Reading on Goodreads” (2013).

knowledge—like the reading practices of the ἀγράμματοι—it is also collective and sensual. Camila’s instruction of this form of reading at the novel’s end orients her pedagogical practices toward previously undervalued methods of reading and toward alternative, anti-colonial structures of relationality. Her teaching reminds us that hierarchizing methods of reading or levels of literacy devalues and often erases other ways of knowing and of being with others. Camila’s teaching also suggests that the complex histories of literacy and education in the Americas enter into our classrooms whenever we teach literature and methods of reading. By breaking with existing colonial and gendered norms, her teaching demonstrates that how one is taught to read can effect the creation of more equitable ethical, political, and social relations.

CHAPTER THREE

Encroaching Letters: Foreign Tongues and Marginalized Bodies in Atticist Satire

“Are there forms of naturalization of ancient assumptions, [...] vestiges, traces of ethnocentrism, conscious or not, that mark [our] visions of the future?”

—Page duBois, *Out of Athens: The New Ancient Greeks* (198)

Introduction: Foreign Encroachments

In a fictional court of law, the Greek letter Sigma (Σ) stands before a jury of the seven vowels to indict the letter Tau (T) for stealing words. According to Sigma, Tau has snatched up words that have traditionally included, in writing and pronunciation, the letter *sigma* (σ), and then replaced that letter with his own, *tau* (τ). In his speech, Sigma appeals to long-established laws that maintain social order and class distinctions among the letters. If Tau continues his lawless activities, Sigma claims, “he will squeeze me out of my own proper place, so that if I keep quiet I will be very close to not counting among the written letters, and may not even have a sound” (Lucian, *Consonants* 2). Sigma’s fear of losing his rightful place and his concerns about impending alphabetic chaos position Tau as a foreign threat. As Sigma narrates, the first time he noticed the encroachments of Tau on his letter-territory was at the house of a “foreigner,” who “shamelessly” pronounced words by using *t*’s instead of *s*’s (7-8). At the culmination of the speech, Sigma argues that this foreign encroachment attacks not only the long-held laws of alphabetic writing but also the human social order, for Tau “does not allow humans to use their tongues in

an upright way” (11). This imaginative indictment underscores a complex relationship among appropriate pronunciation, social status, political inclusion, and the embodied discipline of linguistic training—all entangled within the placement of a single letter.

Sigma’s speech forms the text *Consonants at Law: Sigma v. Tau in the Court of the Seven Vowels* (Δίκη συμφώνων τοῦ σῖγμα πρὸς τὸ ταῦ τοῖς ἑπτὰ φωνήεσιν), a second-century CE satire attributed to the Second-Sophistic writer Lucian (c. 120-180 CE).¹ Lucian’s texts, which range from comic dialogues to imaginative narratives to sardonic invectives, often adopt a satirical view of Atticism, that is, the imitation of a centuries-old Attic Greek dialect and style associated with classical Athens (fifth to fourth centuries BCE) in order to cultivate an elite, educated Greek identity. At the same time, Lucian participates in the tradition that his works problematize: he writes primarily in Attic and imitates genres associated with this dialect. In *Consonants at Law*, which employs the techniques of Attic forensic oratory,² Lucian’s playfulness with Atticism in its generic and linguistic forms is palpable. Sigma’s critiques of Tau offer a complex engagement with the linguistic aspects of Atticism: Tau is accused of replacing the double-sigma (–σσ–), a form employed in the *koine* (common) dialect of Greek in the second century CE, with a double-tau (–ττ–), characteristic of the

¹ The inclusion of *Consonants at Law* in Lucian’s corpus has, at times, been doubted, due in part to the inclusion of a few *koine* forms; however, many characterize this text as Lucianic for its characteristically satirical view of Atticism (Hopkinson 152).

² On the oratorical “techniques of persuasion” present in Lucian’s text, see Neil Hopkinson’s stylistic assessment of *Sigma v. Tau* (151). Students in the upper levels of second-century CE rhetorical training composed speeches by practicing, among other genres, the techniques of forensic oratory: “pupils were required to write and declaim speeches for both defense and prosecution in preposterously improbable hypothetical cases,” such as the case of Sigma v. Tau (Hopkinson 4).

classical Attic dialect. In a reversal of the elite rhetoric of the Second Sophistic period, which claimed Attic as a “purer” and better form of Greek, Sigma claims that an Attic form, the double-*tau*, marks a foreign encroachment upon a pre-existing language system. As I will explore further, Sigma appears to be critiquing the “spread of Attic dialect” within and beyond preexisting elite circles (Goldhill, *Who Needs Greek?* 92), and Lucian’s text uses Atticist rhetoric against Atticism.

For Lucian and many other elite figures writing in Greek during the Second Sophistic (c. 60-230 CE), appropriately navigating classical Attic both indicated and maintained one’s class status within the Roman Empire. Primarily a prestige language used for high literary writing and in certain oratorical speech contexts, classical Attic marked a further distinction from the educated register of *koine*, or common Greek dialect (Swain, *Hellenism* 20-21). One of the dominant languages of the Roman Empire, *koine* was used for conversational and written communication especially in the eastern parts of the empire, but also was adopted by many in Rome’s center.³

Koine’s geographical span and availability was, in turn, the result of earlier Greek

³ Rome’s use of Greek language and educational models can be attributed to widespread Hellenistic influences across the Mediterranean world starting in the late fourth century BCE. Bilingual education in Greek and Latin was common among Roman youth in the third century, and Rome’s expansion into the eastern Mediterranean gave further “impetus” to Greek linguistic instruction in Rome (Souris and Nigdelis 899). Further, Rome’s adoption of Hellenistic education may have also been “seen to provide an effective means of socio-political control,” as it was already an established method for both acculturating diverse populations and differentiating them from one another (Morgan 23-24). However, Rome’s adoption of Greek education was also an ambivalent development: Hellenism was “both a resource and a threat,” as it represented a “civilizing” force for Rome but also threatened to undermine Rome’s own authority (Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature* 10). In order to deal with this ambivalence, Hellenism came to be equated with “culture” and Roman rule with “politics,” so that “Greece’s status as ‘educator’ was intrinsically linked with Rome’s as conqueror” (Whitmarsh, *GL* 14-15).

imperial expansion, starting with Athens' ascendancy over other Greek city-states in the fifth century BCE⁴ and later, in the late fourth century BCE, serving as the official language of the Hellenistic kingdoms that spread throughout the eastern Mediterranean and Asia Minor as a result of Alexander's conquests (Panayotou 409, 413; Horrocks 618-9; Bubenik 345; Swain, *Hellenism* 18). Adopted by imperial subjects whose first languages ranged from Coptic, to Aramaic, to other Anatolian languages, the *koine* underwent many linguistic changes by the second century CE—and thus lost much of its prestige status (Swain, *Hellenism* 30; Bubenik 345). In response to this perceived loss, linguistic training in classical Attic helped to “differentiate the leaders of Greek letters and speech from a broad mass of Greek speakers” and to indicate their “cultural superiority” (Swain, *Hellenism* 21). Using classical Attic, therefore, not only helped to distinguish one's class status, but also allowed one to claim a privileged “Greek” heritage—traced through classical Athens—within an increasingly diverse and ever-changing empire. Investment in this elite language was therefore inextricable from imperial expansion.⁵

⁴ Itself originally a prestige dialect, the *koine* was based on the Ionic-Attic dialect that developed in the fifth century BCE with Athens' increasing cultural and political dominance over other Greek city-states. Through Athens' economic and political contacts with Ionic populations, Attic (spoken by Athenians) and Ionic dialects began to share linguistic features. Before the ascendancy of the Attic-Ionic dialect, Ionic was a prestige literary language as well, used for epic, lyric, and prose writing (Panayotou 409). In its contacts with Ionic, the Attic dialect had to negotiate its characteristic –ττ– with Ionic's characteristic –σσ– (Panayotou 412). Lucian primarily imitates Attic, but in *On the Syrian Goddess* he uses Ionic to imitate and revise Herodotus' ethnographic perspectives. For a helpful reading of *On the Syrian Goddess*, see Jaś Elsner, “Describing Self in the Language of the Other: Pseudo (?) Lucian at the Temple of Hierapolis” (2001).

⁵ For the argument that Greeks utilized this prestige language in order to define themselves against Rome, see especially Tim Whitmarsh's *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire* (2001) and Simon Swain's *Hellenism and Empire* (1996). Despite this self-definition, the

Within this imperial context, linguistic training in classical Attic was a key component of an idealized Greek cultural education, or *paideia*, in the Second Sophistic. *Paideia* was the primary means by which youth learned how to be “Greek”—that is to say, this education centered on the social, political, and ethical formation of young men to produce a sophisticated, idealized version of Greekness.⁶ The mechanisms of *paideia*’s socialization and cultural training demonstrate the inextricability of linguistic training from specialized reading habits and an embodied imitation of texts from a privileged past. Founded on what Simon Goldhill calls a “Greek-dominated syllabus,” *paideia* required the ability to read and write according to the linguistic features of centuries-old Greek dialects, especially Attic (*WNG?* 74). The major texts on this “syllabus” included Plato’s dialogues, Homeric poetry (though, not uncomplicatedly, not written in Attic), Aristophanic comedy, Thucydides’ historical writings, and Demosthenes’ orations.⁷ These texts served as

relationship between Romans, Greeks, and Attic purism was complex. Swain highlights the influence of Dionysius of Halicarnassus on the Second Sophistic, whose first-century BCE investment in Attic purism was attentive to the influence of Roman tastes on the Greek pursuit of purism (*Hellenism* 22-23). Focusing on Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Emilio Gabba argues in “Political and Cultural Aspects of the Classicistic Revival in the Augustan Age” (1982) that an Atticist revival was made possible by Roman empire, that is, “propelled by the new reality of Roman dominion” (48). The interconnection between Greek and Roman imperialist interests was, therefore unstable; Goldhill points out that Rome’s investment in political hegemony even caused “repeated Roman suspicions of [...] Greekness” (*WNG?* 74).

⁶ For a history of the long-standing and “integral connection between the social and political formation of the citizen and the scene of reading” in the ancient world, see Goldhill, “Literary History without Literature: Reading Practices in the Ancient World” (1999).

⁷ In *Classical Pasts: The Classical Traditions of Greece and Rome* (2006), James I. Porter argues that we not understand such privileged texts as inherently “classical,” but instead that we examine the mechanisms that produce “classical objects” (52). For Porter, such idealized texts of a “classical” education were constructed as “deposits from the past” that preserved an ancient “voice” with which students wanted to “commune,” so that studying these texts

models of both style and content (i.e., they provided examples of good character) to be imitated and internalized. Moreover, as Plutarch's first-century CE *How the Young Man Should Attend to Poetry*, suggests, students were trained how to read these texts in order to select out and then embody their ethical content (15d). *Paideia* can be imagined as a process of "continuous reading and writing from the classical texts" (Swain, *Hellenism* 90), so that one needed the appropriate resources to, first of all, gain access to textual materials, and then obtain the linguistic and interpretive training required to read the privileged canon. Then, one needed to internalize these texts, through continuous instruction and practice, to the degree that quoting from and imitating them in oratorical speeches and in literary writing became second nature. To be deemed "educated," or *pepaideumenos*, therefore depended on what, how, and in what language one read, so that "understanding Greekness in this period [...] is inseparable from processes of sophisticated literary interpretation" (Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature* 17). *Paideia* thus produced Greek identity out of the embodied practices and habits of a specialized form of literary reading.

Indeed, the methods of training and outcomes of *paideia* reveal its highly performative nature: *paideia* held out the promise of an elite, masculine, Greek identity, but this identity had to constantly be performed through one's ability to adeptly read, imitate—and importantly, to embody—a "prestigious past" (Whitmarsh, *GL* 6; Andrade, *Syrian Identity* 249). The opportunities for demonstrating one's education during the Second Sophistic ranged from high-drama public performances,

allowed Greeks to claim ancient writers as their "classical forbears" (314, 308). That is, reading these texts helped to create a tradition from which to claim a cultural inheritance.

to official legal hearings, to civic orations, to declamations in school settings.⁸ These performances put the body in center stage, to be observed and scrutinized. *Paideia* thus centered on the bodily comportment of the student or speaker—including his speech patterns (overall control of the voice, through proper pronunciation and enunciation), bodily gestures and facial expressions while reading and speaking, style of dress, and signs of gender expression. As Maud Gleason explains, rhetorical performance was a mode of “self-presentation” that involved “much more than mastery of words” and allowed one to “display” one’s “cultural capital” (xxi-xxii); as such, being Greek required, as Goldhill puts it, “know[ing], properly, how to walk, talk, think, and act Greek” (*WNG?* 82). *Paideia* trained students not just how to read but how to be read and interpreted by others *as* Greek, so that one’s class status was bound up with one’s bodily comportment. This focus on self-presentation and display suggests that *paideia*’s identity-shaping functions were unstable. On the one hand, *paideia* helped to distinguish an elite identity and provided a “justification for established social hegemonies.” On the other hand, the highly performative nature of *paideia* made its associated prestige available to those outside of the traditionally elite classes, and this avenue for self-fashioning could provide a “means of social mobility” (Whitmarsh, *GL* 129-30; Goldhill, *WNG?* 62). Although highly policed, the performativity of *paideia* made its associated behaviors and privileges (in theory, at least) imminently adoptable.

⁸ For a discussion of Second-Sophistic performance opportunities for educated classes, including the drama of the public declamation, see Graham Anderson’s “The *pepaideumenos* in Action: Sophists and their Outlook in the Early Empire” (1989: 89-104).

In Lucian's *Consonants at Law*, Sigma's claims against Tau highlight the tenuousness of defining one's class status through the performance of proper language use, one of the key components of *paideia*. When Sigma claims that his distinctive status within the alphabet is threatened by Tau, he associates himself with an elite, educated group, the membership to which has been traditionally closed to outsiders (3-8). Much like a *pepaideumenos*, or member of the educated class during the Second Sophistic, Sigma asserts his elite membership through ancient pedigree, but he does so by claiming the social distinction of a non-Attic dialect; he refers to the sanctity of a long-standing alphabetic law, first instated by the mythical inventors of the alphabet in Greece,⁹ that privileges Sigma's place over Tau's (3-6). This claim to a non-Attic law destabilizes the notion underpinning Second-Sophistic Atticism that the Attic dialect had a particular claim to ancient wisdom. However, Sigma's claims may also express anxiety about the ease with which aspects of the Attic dialect could be adopted and linguistic prestige could be performed. As Swain points out, "one of the easiest ways to make one's Greek Attic was to substitute a –ττ– for the usual educated and non-educated –σσ–" ("Three Faces" 30). That is, one could "fake" a cultured education by adopting a few linguistic tricks. Is Sigma undermining Atticism,

⁹ Lucian's text cites three possibilities for the mythical alphabetic lawgiver: Cadmus, Palamedes, and Simonides. For the mythic figure Cadmus as the bringer of the alphabet to Greece, and the notion that Palamedes and Simonides each invented letters of the alphabet, see Hyginus' second-century CE *Fabulae* (277). For a historical view of the Greek adoption of the Phoenician alphabet, see Roger Woodard, *Greek Writing from Knossos to Homer: A Linguistic Interpretation of the Origin of the Greek Alphabet and the Continuity of Ancient Greek Literacy* (1997).

or does his distaste for the double-*tau* reveal a worry that Attic is spreading too quickly—that it is too easily adopted by those who have no business adopting it?

The complexity of this question surfaces when Sigma assumes that Tau arrives from outside the community. Sigma begins to notice the “arrogance” of Tau’s encroachments in the speech of a “foreigner” (ξένος) (7). His suit against Tau may indeed be fueled by the concern that any foreigner could simply adopt the double-*tau* (–ττ–) in his speech and therefore “sound” like an educated Greek. At the same time, Sigma’s complaint reverses the common assumption that outsiders threaten to corrupt pure Attic speech: in Lucian’s text, the foreigner corrupts a purer form of Greek by bringing Attic elements to it. Attic, here, is the foreign dialect that threatens to corrupt one’s tongue.

Sigma’s emphasis on Tau’s foreignness brings attention to Lucian’s own complex position as a Syrian who performs Greekness in the Roman Empire.¹⁰ A writer from Samosata, located in the Syrian region of the Roman Empire as it was configured in the second century CE, Lucian comes from the Near East.¹¹ This was a region understood, from the viewpoint of imperial centers like Athens and Rome, as a

¹⁰ While I do not read Lucian’s works biographically, in this chapter I do account for the positionality of this writer, that is, for the way that one’s social and political position shapes one’s textual and discursive production. On the history of biographical criticism of Lucian’s texts, and how this criticism has shifted Lucian’s identity from Greek to Syrian depending on the cultural context of the critic, see Daniel Richter, “Lives and Afterlives of Lucian of Samosata” (2005). See also Ruth Webb, “Fiction, *Mimesis* and the Performance of the Past in the Second Sophistic” (2006), on the ambiguity surrounding a speaker’s identification with his persona in declamation practices during the Second Sophistic.

¹¹ Samosata, positioned on the north bank of the Euphrates, was the location of the capital of the Commagene kingdom, which surrendered to the growing Roman Empire in 72 CE. Located in what is now southeast Turkey, near the modern Syrian border, Samosata was at the eastern edge of the Roman Empire in the second century CE.

geographical and cultural periphery of the empire. As Nathanael Andrade explains, “imperial power-holders” in Greek and Roman centers constructed the provinces of the Near East, including Syria, as “foreign,” even as these regions were being organized into Greek civic structures. They did so in order to “inhabit positions at the imperial hierarchy’s summit,” defined by cultural prestige (Andrade, *SI* 20-21; 27-8). Before Rome’s annexation of Syria in 64 BCE, both Greek and Syrian identity maintained ethnic connotations, that is, each was defined as an *ethnos* within the Hellenistic Seleucid empire. However, in the Roman Empire, “Greek” was a civic—and cultural—identity that became available to many more people than “ethnic” Greeks (Andrade, *SI* 6-7). In the majority of his texts, Lucian demonstrates his own linguistic and literary training in classical Attic, signaling his participation in and adoption of an elite Greek identity. At the same time, the writings gathered under his name exhibit a heightened interest in Syrian characters and other foreignized figures who navigate the social complexities of *paideia*. From the perspective of a Syrian writer in a region of the Roman Empire where Greek is the prestige culture and language, perhaps Attic is a foreign dialect that threatens to displace other practices even as it promises social and cultural inclusion.

Lucian’s texts engage ambivalently with the central components of *paideia*, and especially with the linguistic politics of Atticism. As we have seen in *Consonants at Law*, it is unclear whether the rhetoric of social exclusion so often tied to Atticism is undermined or upheld. In many ways, Sigma’s complaints about Tau’s encroachments on his “proper place” (τῆς οἰκείας ἀποθλίψει χώρας) (2) and his

concern over the “customary” and “originary” social order (αἱ συντάξεις τὰ νόμιμα, ἐφ’ οἷς ἐτάχθη τὰ κατ’ ἀρχάς) (3) exhibit Tim Whitmarsh’s definition of *paideia* in the Second Sophistic as “a site of intense intellectual concern over the distribution of social power” (*GL* 129-30). That social status is both stabilized and de-stabilized through *paideia* makes especially uncertain the status of the foreigner: the blurry and contested boundaries of “Greekness” hypothetically allow for all kinds of bodies, from all over the empire, to adopt this Greek model of education and its promise of social inclusion. Within this context, how is one to accurately say what is properly Greek and what is foreign? After all, the centuries-old linguistic and literary models for Second-Sophistic *paideia* were sufficiently distant to anyone in the second century CE. For instance, Swain describes “Atticizing Greek” as “the repristination of linguistic features [...] that were becoming or had become obsolete,” including the Attic double-*tau* (*Hellenism* 35, n. 43). This linguistic obsolescence, combined with the historical distance between the Second Sophistic and the “classical” period, prompts Whitmarsh to compare using the classical Attic dialect with speaking a foreign language: members of the educated class are “‘foreigners’ to texts they study and seek to replicate” (*GL* 127-8).¹² Swain highlights additional traits that make the Greek language foreign to itself: the Greek alphabet is a “Phoenician import”; the early versions of the language assimilated “a vast amount of non-Indo-European vocabulary”; and the language has “great internal variation” in its dialects, especially

¹² Swain, too, emphasizes that this historical distance introduces “risks” into any classicizing project: an idealization of the past is “always open to negotiation to say what the past actually was [...] and to say what authority it conferred on whom” (*Hellenism* 7).

in the archaic and classical periods (*Hellenism* 18). The notion that there is a “pure” form of Greek has always been an illusion—and it is the mechanisms that produce this illusion that Sigma’s claims against Tau point out.

But illusions can have material consequences. Although anyone—whether from Athens or Samosata, from a cultural center or a border province of the empire—may hypothetically be a “foreigner” to the Second Sophistic’s prestige tradition and language, the effects of *paideia* would have been especially significant for those who were socially marginalized. Speaking specifically about people from Lucian’s side of the empire, Andrade emphasizes the socio-economic effects of *paideia*: “it empowered Syrians who mastered it, but it replicated the marginalization and arguably the socio-economic oppression of others” (*SI* 24-5). Those who gained access to training in the prestige language and culture could gain entry into an elite community, defined by a performance of Greekness tied to socio-economic privilege. However, even as formerly ethnic distinctions between “Greek” and “Syrian” began to collapse with the spread of Greek civic systems in the eastern side of the empire, *paideia* and its privileges remained mostly inaccessible beyond the “minority of erudite aristocratic citizens and [...] intellectuals” who “produced” its prestige (Andrade, *SI* 24). Likewise, *paideia*’s reproduction of imperial knowledge suppressed and irrevocably reshaped any perspectives that we might call “purely Near Eastern” (Andrade, *SI* 24-5). In other words, for inhabitants of the eastern side of the empire, there was much to be gained through assimilation to the cultural models espoused through *paideia*, and much to be lost. Likewise, assimilating to the cultural practices

of the intellectual elite—if one had the resources to do so—may not, ultimately, undermine the hierarchical social structures that *paideia* helped to produce.

This chapter attends to the political and social consequences of *paideia*, as depicted in and complicated by Lucian’s texts. Among these consequences, Lucian’s work exhibits an acute awareness of the effects of Greek education, especially linguistic training, upon the body. *Consonants at Law* exhibits this bodily attention by demonstrating, first, the materiality of language and second, the material effects of linguistic training on the human body. Through their personification, alphabetic letters are shown to be embodied entities. At one point in his speech, Sigma appeals to the vocalic jurors Alpha (A) and Upsilon (Y) by calling them “good and proportionate to look upon” (ἀγαθοὶ καὶ καθήκοντες ὀραθῆναι) (6). At another point, Sigma refers to Theta’s (Θ) complaints against Tau: “Listen [...] to Theta, as he cries and pulls out the hair from his head for having even his *squash* taken from him [i.e., the *theta* in the word for squash, κολοκύνθη, has been replaced by a *tau* to produce the Attic form κολοκύντη]” (ἀκούετε [...] τοῦ Θῆτα δακρύνοντος καὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς τὰς τρίχας τίλλοντος ἐπὶ τῷ καὶ τῆς κολοκύνθης ἐστερῆσθαι) (10). Sigma’s concerns about an encroaching Tau exemplify the notion that letters have bodies that move and act upon each other. From this understanding of linguistic materiality, it follows that the bodies of letters can act upon human bodies.¹³ When Sigma argues that Tau has also been unjust to humans, it is specifically the human body that is under attack: Tau,

¹³ For the history of “aesthetic materiality” in ancient thought—that is, the idea that the sensations produced in an aesthetic experience are the result of a body (the subject) interacting with other bodies (the matter of writing and/or art)—see James I. Porter, *The Origins of Aesthetic Thought in Ancient Greece: Matter, Sensation, and Experience*.

Sigma admonishes, has changed not only the spelling of the word for “tongue,” but also the way in which humans use their tongues (11). Tau has replaced the double-sigma in γλῶσσα, the Greek word for “tongue,” with a double-tau, in the Attic formation γλῶττα. In doing so, Sigma laments, the human tongue can no longer move itself in a “straight” or “upright” manner (οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπει γε αὐτοῦς κατ’ εὐθὺ φέρεσθαι ταῖς γλώσσαις) because Tau tortures and enslaves it: “he attempts to distort and tear their speech with chains” (δεσμοῖς γὰρ τισι στρεβλοῦν καὶ σπαράττειν αὐτῶν τὴν φωνὴν ἐπιχειρεῖ) (11). Here speech, as an extension of the tongue, undergoes twisting or stretching (στρεβλοῦν), a verb that indicates a metaphoric distortion of language and also invokes a form of torture, often in the context of extracting information from slaves (Liddell and Scott A.II.2). Likewise, Tau’s metaphorical fetters (δεσμοῖς) indicate the physically constraining and violent effects that letters can have on the body. In *Consonants at Law*, alphabetic letters have a powerful influence on the human body, and adopting Attic elements in one’s speech becomes a form of physical subjugation.

In Lucian’s text, the focus on the bodily effects of one’s language practices brings attention to the ethical consequences of linguistic training. When Sigma laments that Tau does not allow humans to use their tongues in a direct manner, his argument bears moral implications. One’s ability to employ the tongue in an “upright” way (κατ’ εὐθὺ), a description that also connotes one’s “upright” character (Liddell and Scott A.2), is equated with one’s ethical persona. Improper use of the tongue equates to moral degeneracy and, in the Second-Sophistic context, this link between

one's linguistic performance and one's ethical character accords with the ways *paideia* was understood to produce political and social identities. In *Consonants at Law*, Tau's encroachments suggest that Attic elements can corrupt one's character—a reversal of the usual assumptions about *paideia*'s ability to shape an ideal Greek, elite, masculine subject. Lucian's text thus raises questions about the suppression or erasure of certain kinds of linguistic styles and practices in the process of Greek cultural education. Insofar as linguistic training in the prestige Greek dialect required intensive training in reading ancient texts, Lucian brings further attention to the complex role of embodied reading habits in the shaping of one's tongue—and one's social identity.

Much like Julia Alvarez's *In the Name of Salomé* (Chapter Two), Lucian's texts resist teleological narratives of education and of reading instruction. For Alvarez's fictional readers, this teleology relates to a common narrative about the history of reading in the west, which prizes a movement from embodied, gestural, and social practices to more private, silent, individuated ones. For Lucian and his fictionalized "foreigners," that teleology relates to the transformation a reader is meant to undergo through proper Greek *paideia*. On the one hand, because *paideia* required resources and access to special training, the higher forms of this education were primarily reserved for elite classes; with this in mind, education might simply confirm and maintain one's preexisting class status. On the other hand, because Rome's imperialist context allowed *paideia* to potentially become more widely available, this education also performed an assimilatory function, seeming to many to

be a method for gaining access to a higher class status—and, indeed, to “Greekness” as a both social and political identity. Out of the Second Sophistic, where Greek writers tend to acknowledge the performative aspects of both education and social status, Lucian’s texts invite further attention to the material and ethical consequences of one’s education. That is to say, in addition to demonstrating how one’s linguistic and literary training affects how one acts and is perceived by others, Lucian’s texts explore how readers’ bodies both shape and are shaped by their textual practices.

The Question of “Barbarian” Knowledge

The Sigma of Lucian’s *Consonants at Law* first notices the encroachments of Tau when he visits the house of a “foreigner” (τῷ ξένῳ). While on a trip to the small town of Cybelus, Sigma meets Lysimachus, named in Lucian’s text as a comic poet. When Sigma discusses Lysimachus’ heritage, he reveals a conflict between his own claims about the poet’s foreignness and the poet’s own self-construction: “It appeared that he was Boeotian by descent, from up north, though he deemed himself to be from the middle of Attica” (Βοιώτιος μὲν, ὡς ἐφαίνετο, τὸ γένος ἀνέκαθεν, ἀπὸ μέσης δὲ ἀξιῶν λέγεσθαι τῆς Ἀττικῆς) (7). Lysimachus’ effort to trace his lineage to the heart of Attica is most obvious, of course, in his use of characteristically Attic forms in his speech—that is, replacing instances of double-*sigmas* with double-*taus*. Sigma’s comment that Lysimachus “appears to be from Boeotia” is not benign: within ancient Greek literary production, Boeotia “had a proverbial reputation as a semi-civilized backwater to [...] Attica” (Whitmarsh, *GL* 106). Calling Lysimachus a Boeotian

allows Sigma to characterize this poet not only as foreign—i.e., not actually from the heart of Attica but from the north—but also as uneducated.

Another text that is near contemporary with Lucian’s elucidates these associations between Boeotia and ignorance, as distinct from the learnedness associated with the heart of Attica, or Athens. In Philostratus’ *Lives of the Sophists* (late second century CE), a rustic character named Agathion, who himself claims Boeotian descent, appears in a chapter about Herodes Atticus, an Athenian sophist and patron of Greek cities active in the first three-quarters of the second century.¹⁴ Described as a goat milk-fed, fur-covered man from Boeotia, Agathion receives linguistic training and a proper education by traveling to the very central district of Athens. He explains that only the heart of Athens still remains a reliable and uncorrupted source for *paideia* since, he reports, “youth from Thrace, Pontus, and other barbarian peoples” have been “flooding” into Athens and are “corrupting their speech more than they [Athenians] are able to bring them [barbarians] toward fluency of speech” (Θράκια καὶ Ποντικὰ μεϊράκια καὶ ἐξ ἄλλων ἐθνῶν βαρβάρων ξυνερρηκότα παραφθείρονται παρ’ αὐτῶν τὴν φωνὴν μᾶλλον ἢ ξυμβάλλονταί τι αὐτοῖς ἐξ εὐγλωττίαν) (553; 2.7). This image of a barbarian infiltration of Athens illuminates possible readings of Lucian’s alphabetic court case. On the one hand, Sigma’s complaint is a reversal of Agathion’s: it is the Attic-users who are foreign in

¹⁴ In Tim Whitmarsh’s reading, Herodes and Agathion are positioned as opposites to represent “two different modes of Hellenism,” where Agathion’s “rugged primitivism” exemplifies “the ancient, ingrained authority of the land of Greece” and Herodes’ prestige and influence represent “the progressive cosmopolitanism of the present” in Rome (Philostratus 552-554; 2.7; Whitmarsh, *GL* 105-8)

Lucian's letter trial, and they threaten to corrupt a better, *sigma*-safe form of Greek. We might also read Sigma's criticism of Lysimachus' *tau*-happy tongue as a complaint about the ease with which an uneducated foreigner can simply adopt a characteristic Attic form in their speech and therefore "sound" educated—and even claim for himself a new genealogy. In this reading, Lysimachus' foreign tongue has no business using the double-*tau*, and it is his uneducated foreignness that threatens to disrupt established Greek traditions.

This uncertainty about the place of the foreigner, and his relation to the prestige Greek language and culture, relates to a longer history of defining "Greekness" based on language use and form of education. In the fifth century BCE, for example, Herodotus claimed that the defining feature of Greeks was their language, which remained unchanged since their beginnings (τὸ δὲ Ἑλληνικὸν γλῶσση μὲν ἐπέιτε ἐγένετο αἰεὶ κοτε τῇ αὐτῇ διαχρᾶται) (*Histories* 1.58). Thus, a common term for identifying a non-Greek often contained a linguistic meaning: βάρβαρος, or "barbarian," may have first signified those who did not speak Greek—or who did not speak Greek well—and expanded to include those who did not adhere to Greek behaviors and customs.¹⁵ Jonathan M. Hall locates the development of this "oppositional" sense of self-definition, in which "perceived differences served as a basis for the construction of a specifically Hellenic identity," in the fifth century BCE

¹⁵ An example of the linguistic meaning of "barbarian" is available as early as Homer; the *Iliad* describes Carians as βαρβαροφώνων, or barbarous-in-speech (2.867). Jonathan M. Hall suggests, however, that there may not have yet been a strong "consciousness of a shared Greek language" among the "myriad regional dialects" in the archaic world (112, 116). For an example of "barbarousness" indicating non-Greekness in both language and customs, see Aeschylus' fifth-century BCE *Persians* (l. 255).

when Athens gained cultural and political hegemony after its successful resistance to the Persians in the Greco-Persian Wars (179, 188). Hall's argument for Athens' strong interest in this "negative stereotype" suggests that, when Second Sophistic writers and readers looked to "classical" texts produced in fifth- and fourth-century Athens as their literary models, they also found models for self-definition based on these forms of exclusion (188). Further, the model for Greekness that most affected the Second-Sophistic world was one based in culture and education—a model that particularly developed in Athens in the late fifth and fourth centuries BCE and was carried into the Hellenistic period (Hall, *Hellenicity* 221). In what Hall calls an "Athenocentric conception of the world," Athens was imagined as the cultural center of the Greek world, so that both Greekness and barbarousness were "measured in terms of [a] convergence or nonconvergence with Athenian-centered cultural norms" (202-203).¹⁶ The ancient texts that Second Sophistic writers often used as their literary models, demonstrate how these cultural norms became methods for excluding others from political and social recognition. Often in these texts, those who are identified as "barbarous" are not only deemed "not-Greek" but are also hardly recognized as human. Again in Herodotus, speaking in a foreign tongue (βαρβαρίζω) is associated with the cries of doves, a trope also employed in Aeschylus' fifth-

¹⁶ In a famous example from the fourth century BCE, Isocrates defined a common educational heritage (*paideia*), rather than shared origin or race, as the condition for inclusion in a "Greek" community (*Panegyricus* 50). This potentially more inclusive definition of Greekness still placed "cultural authority" in elite models of Athenian education (Hall, *Hellenicity* 209). Pericles' funeral oration, a speech in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* (late fifth century BCE), likewise positions Athens as a center of cultural authority: "In short, I say that our whole *polis* [i.e. Athens] is a means for educating the Greeks" (*History* 2.41.1; Hall, *Hellenicity* 202).

century BCE tragedy *Agamemnon* when Cassandra’s “strange and barbarous speech” (ἀγνώτα φωνὴν βάρβαρον) is compared with a swallow’s voice (*Histories* 2.57; *Agamemnon* ll. 1050-52). Creating a distinction between “Greek” and “barbarian” during the Second Sophistic was, then, “an expression of the archaizing mentality of the period,” a sign of one’s engagement with an idealized past, as well as an expression of one’s concern for status and identity in the early centuries of the common era (Romeo 31).

While associated with Greek self-definition since at least the fifth century BCE, the term “barbarian” was, however, slippery. Even those who wrote in Greek and claimed a Greek heritage, either through culture or ethnicity, could “commit a barbarism.” Aristotle made this point when discussing *lexis*, or written style, in the *Poetics* (fourth century BCE). If a writer used too many words that Aristotle categorized as “foreign” (τὸ ξενικόν)—that is, words that went beyond ordinary use (τὸ παρὰ τὸ κύριον), including metaphors, obsolete, and non-native words—then a writer risked producing a “barbarism” (βαρβαρισμός) (1458a). Under Roman rule in the first century BCE, Dionysius of Halicarnassus categorized as foreign any writing that diverged from the “pure” dialect of Attic. A precursor to the Atticists of the second century CE, Dionysius opposed clear Attic writing to a corrupted and bloated style he termed “Asianism” (Swain, *Hellenism* 22-27; Dionysius, *Lys.* 8).¹⁷ In the

¹⁷ The distinction Dionysius of Halicarnassus makes between “Asian” and “Attic” style is a reference to Cicero’s writings. Swain thus argues that Greek interests in purity and stylistic Atticism were the product of a complicated mix of Greek and Roman interests. In the first century BCE, Romans turned to the Greek grammatical model in order to systematize and

Second Sophistic, the ability to read the classical Attic dialect and then employ it in one's speeches and literary writing signified one's Greekness, as doing so produced a sense of cultural and social continuity with an ancient and idealized Greek past. At the same time, misusing Attic forms—or overusing them, as Lucian's texts often point out¹⁸—could mark one as foreign or barbarous. Linguistic training, as part of the broader educational paradigm of *paideia*, was therefore a high-stakes enterprise. It offered a sense of political inclusion, but the fluid parameters for this inclusion constantly threatened to draw new borders.

The shiftiness of both Greek constructions of identity and of the Greek language itself makes doubtful any assumption about who or what counts as foreign, and who or what counts as educated. Such dizzying uncertainty is a key element of the Lucianic corpus, especially in texts like *Consonants at Law* in which foreignized characters navigate their relationship to Greek identity, language, and *paideia*. As Laura Nasrallah puts it, Lucian's texts “draw upon a long tradition [...] of Greek concerns about alien or barbarian wisdom and thus Greek anxiety about what constitutes Greek identity and knowledge” (Nasrallah 292-3). *Consonants at Law* exhibits such an interest in “barbarian wisdom”: it not only complicates what counts as Greek and what counts as foreign, but also demonstrates a concern for the influences a “foreigner” can have on Greek traditions. This text thus brings attention

“purify” Latin (*Hellenism* 23-24). Greek models thus became the basis of a “Roman taste” for purity, which were then transformed back into Greek concerns.

¹⁸ See especially Lucian's *Lexiphanes*, in which the title character reads parts of his book out loud to Lycinus. Because of Lexiphanes' heavy use of archaisms—he “distorts his tongue” and speaks from “a thousand years ago”—Lycinus calls upon a doctor to cure him of his ills (Lucian, *Lex* 20).

to processes of transculturation, a term that, employed in other contexts, describes the “mutual influence” of two or more cultures or traditions on one another, especially when the distribution of power is noticeably uneven in colonial or imperial contexts (Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman 1).¹⁹ In this vein, Sigma’s comment that Cybelus, the town where he met the “foreigner” Lysimachus, is a “settlement of the Athenians” (πολίχγιον [...] ἄποικον [...] Ἀθηναίων) offers another dimension to Lucian’s engagement with Greek-foreigner relations. Perhaps Lysimachus adopts Attic elements in his speech and claims Attic heritage as a strategy for surviving under colonial rule. In other words, Lysimachus has figured out how to navigate a social terrain—which is also a linguistic terrain—that is defined by Athens’ political and cultural authority. The threat posed by this foreigner, then, is that he might reveal the shaky grounds on which Atticist claims to social and linguistic superiority stand.

In another text that stages a court scene, Lucian pursues further inquiry into the relationship between Greek and “barbarian” knowledge. In the dialogue *Twice Accused* (Δίς κατηγορούμενος), an unnamed Syrian stands trial in the heart of Athens,

¹⁹ The term “transculturation” was coined by Fernando Ortiz in 1940 to theorize the mutual transformation of cultures in Cuba (see *Cuban Counterpoint*). Many (Latin) Americanists have adopted this term to explore how colonial contexts cause reciprocal cultural transformation in both “dominant” and “subordinate” cultures. See, for example, Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) and Frances R. Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman, *Tropicalizations: Transcultural Representations of Latinidad* (1997). Addressing contemporary uses of postcolonial terminology to describe the relationship between ancient Greek or Roman traditions and Near Eastern practices, Nathanael Andrade cautions against imagining these cultures as “static.” Further, the distinction between “colonized” and “colonizer” within Roman Syria’s Greek civic structures was not always clear (Andrade, *Syrian Identity* 8, 12-14). It is precisely this indistinctness that Lucian’s texts explore.

at the Areopagus, the ancient site of an Athenian judicial court.²⁰ In the culminating trial of the day, the Syrian man (Σύρος) stands doubly accused before Hermes, Justice, and a jury of Athenian men. A personified Rhetoric accuses him of ill-treatment (κάκωσις), while Dialogue indicts him of *hubris* (ὑβρις), the transgression that denotes a prideful over-stepping of one's social bounds. These two indicters represent key aspects of *paideia*: Rhetoric comes from the oratorical tradition, while Dialogue comes from the philosophical (and especially Platonic) tradition. The Syrian, who receives no other name in the course of the text, is defined by his foreign, or non-Greek, status throughout the trial. From the start, Justice complains that she must hear a foreigner's trial at all: "Are we now to vote on cases from outside of our borders in the district of Athens, on the hill of Ares—cases which were able to be tried rightly beyond the Euphrates?" (ἰδοῦ, καὶ τὰς ὑπερορίους ἤδη Ἀθήνησιν ἐν Ἀρείῳ πάγῳ ἀποκληρώσομεν, ἃς ὑπὲρ τὸν Εὐφράτην καλῶς εἶχε δεδικάσθαι;) (14). Her complaint positions the Syrian as an outsider to Athens; confronted with a non-Athenian and moreover, a non-Greek, Justice wonders whether the Athenian court even has jurisdiction over the Syrian. Nonetheless, the trial proceeds, and the Syrian's foreign status constitutes the pivot around which both accusations turn.

²⁰ In Greek literary history, the Areopagus connotes a site for defining political inclusion, based on the Athenian model of (masculine) citizenship. This setting recalls, for example, the culminating tragedy in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* trilogy, the *Eumenides* (458 BCE). Here, Orestes is brought to trial at the Areopagus for killing his mother, Clytemnestra, because she, in turn, killed his father, Agamemnon. Orestes' guilt remains uncertain because, as Apollo explains, killing a patriarch (Clytemnestra's action) is worse than killing a woman (Orestes' action). When the jury is split, Athena's vote results in Orestes' acquittal. As a result, the Furies, who at the play's beginning torment Orestes for his act, are by the end tamed, renamed (the Eumenides, or Kindly Ones), and housed in the ground under the Areopagus to provide good fortune for Athens.

For Rhetoric, the accusation of ill-treatment arises from the Syrian's neglect, in spite of what she perceives to be her own magnanimous treatment toward him. She begins to explain how she helped the Syrian to adopt Greek cultural values through *paideia*:

Gentlemen of the jury, when this man was just a boy, still barbarous in speech and clothed in garments according to the Assyrian manner,²¹ I found him still wandering in Ionia, not knowing what he should do with himself, and I took him in and educated (*paideia*-ed) him. (27)

ἐγὼ γάρ, ὧ ἄνδρες δικασταί, τουτονὶ κομιδῆ μαιράκιον ὄντα, βάρβαρον ἔτι τὴν φωνὴν καὶ μονονουχὶ κἀνδυν ἐνδεδυκὸτα εἰς τὸν Ἀσσύριον τρόπον, περὶ τὴν Ἰωνίαν εὐροῦσα πλαζόμενον ἔτι καὶ ὅ τι χηρήσαιτο ἑαυτῷ οὐκ εἰδὸτα παραλαβοῦσα ἐπαίδευσά.

Here we catch a glimpse of what the anonymous Syrian was like before he received *paideia*, or more accurately, how he was then perceived by a Greek cultural insider. In Rhetoric's eyes, the Syrian's speech, clothing, and location mark him not only as foreign, but also as an immature and directionless boy. Rhetoric locates him in Ionia, on the coast of Anatolia, distant from the center of Athenian cultural production—confirmed a few lines later, when she makes a distinction between Greece and Ionia (27). The Syrian's clothing marks him as a cultural, and perhaps ethnic, outsider, highlighting that becoming properly Greek (i.e., not barbarian) would entail the performative adoption of a new style. That he was “still barbarous in speech” before

²¹ The descriptor “Assyrian” may be employed here in an archaizing gesture, that is, to claim the Syrian character's descent from ancient Assyrian ancestors. In this way, the Syrian is linked with people who existed before the Roman Empire's re-organization of the Syrian region in the first century CE, as well as with Assyrian peoples who, as a result of this reorganization, were not included in the Roman Empire's Syrian province and resided outside of its bounds. On the effects of Greek and Roman imperialism on the changing signification of the terms “Assyrian” and “Syrian,” see Andrade's “Assyrians, Syrians and the Greek Language in the late Hellenistic and Roman Imperial Periods” (2014).

meeting Rhetoric signals the centrality of linguistic training in her instruction. The word employed for “speech” (φωνή) indicates, on the one hand, the sounded qualities of speech and, on the other hand, the language one uses when one speaks. It is therefore uncertain whether the Syrian’s speech is deemed “barbarous” because he spoke a different (non-Greek) language before meeting Rhetoric, or because he spoke Greek with an accent. Andrade notes this ambivalence in the use of the term “barbarous” here: “Often deemed a reference to Aramaic speech, it could just as easily refer to a provincial, ‘un-Attic’ form of Greek” (“Assyrians,” 309 n. 49). This uncertainty demonstrates that anyone, even a Greek speaker, who is not properly educated, could be deemed “barbarous.” In other words, the standard for measuring one’s linguistic competency, as well as one’s degree of barbarousness, is based in the elite cultural model of *paideia*. Insofar as linguistic competency as a marker of cultural status goes back, at least, to the fifth century BCE, Lucian’s text thus demonstrates how emulating “classical” culture—that is, a period of Athenian political and cultural ascendancy—involves emulating exclusionary practices.

Rhetoric’s speech to the Athenian jury demonstrates that her instruction in *paideia* brings about a major change in the Syrian’s social status, and even results in a form of citizenship. This civic inclusion occurs through an analogy between the Syrian’s rhetorical instruction and a marital relationship with the personified, feminized Rhetoric. Because the Syrian was a good and admiring student, Rhetoric explains, she decided to deny her “rich, beautiful, and well-known” suitors and to marry him instead. This marriage changes the Syrian’s social status: she provides him,

who was at that time “poor, obscure, and young,” with a “dowry” of “many marvelous speeches” (προϊκα οὐ μικρὰν ἐπενεγκαμένη πολλοὺς καὶ θαυμασίους λόγους) (27). Moreover, the marriage to Rhetoric changes the Syrian’s political status, as it results in a form of civil citizenship. Rhetoric narrates, “after educating him, I illegally enrolled him among my fellow tribes-people and declared him a civic citizen” (εἶτα ἀγαγοῦσα αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς φυλέτας τοὺς ἑμοὺς παρενέγραψα καὶ ἀστὸν ἀπέφηνα) (27). Rhetoric thus brings about a new identity for the Syrian. Later, in the Syrian’s response to Rhetoric’s speech, he names this new identity as Greekness: “she registered me into the Greek community” (εἰς τοὺς Ἑλληνας ἐνέγραψεν) (30). In her speech, however, Rhetoric clarifies that the Syrian’s new identity is ἀστός, a designation that provides civic rights and marks the Syrian’s distinction from a ξένος, or foreigner. However, he is not called a πολίτης, that is, a citizen who has full political rights (Liddell and Scott, “ἀστός” A1; “πολίτης” A1-2).²² His not-quite-full citizenship is emphasized when Rhetoric notes that her method for gaining this new status for the Syrian was not quite legal (παρενέγραψα); in A. M. Harmon’s translation, her enrollment of the Syrian into civic membership is termed an “irregular” act. Even while Rhetoric flaunts the identity-changing potential of her extraordinary instruction in *paideia*—after all, it can restyle a foreigner’s dress, reshape his speech, and activate his geographical mobility—she insists on the partial nature of the Syrian’s assimilation. Through *paideia*, the foreignized Syrian undergoes major transformation: his style, way of speaking, social class, and political status all change,

²² On the many forms of citizenship (πλείους εἰσὶν αἱ πολιτεῖαι, καὶ εἶδη πολίτου ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι πλείω), see especially Aristotle’s *Politics* (1278a).

suggesting both the performative aspects of *paideia* and the very material effects of this education on his body and socio-economic position. At the same time, the Syrian cannot fully erase his foreignness.

It is this unshakable foreignness that undergirds the complaint that Dialogue brings against the Syrian. From his accusation, we learn that the Syrian has moved on from Rhetoric and has begun to cohabitate with Dialogue, the style of speech and writing associated with philosophy, here personified as an older man (28, 32). The Syrian's movement away from a debased, feminized Rhetoric—in his speech, the Syrian accuses her of being too available to other men—to a more sober, masculine Dialogue concretizes a hierarchy of genres that the Platonic philosophical tradition especially espouses. As Dialogue's quotations of Plato's *Phaedrus* demonstrate, one of the arguments that undergirds this generic hierarchy is that the style of philosophical inquiry is better able to achieve access to higher truths than that of rhetorical speech. In this context, the Syrian's internalization of a long-standing Greek generic hierarchy appears to put him on the right path toward inclusion in a philosophical, and Greek, community. However, Dialogue's indictment of the Syrian asserts his imperfect fit within this Greek philosophical tradition. Whereas Rhetoric complains that the Syrian has misused her generosity by leaving her for another, Dialogue complains that the Syrian has overstepped his bounds (i.e., committed *hubris*) by mixing genres and thus muddling the philosophical tradition. As will become clear, Dialogue's indictment of *hubris* is based in an assumption about the

Syrian's foreignness, that is, on his inability to properly employ a philosophical tradition coded as "Greek."²³

Dialogue demonstrates the Syrian's imperfect fit with a Greek philosophical tradition through his allusions to Plato's *Phaedrus*. In this dialogue, Socrates positions philosophy as the best avenue—over rhetoric—toward truth. In the famous extended metaphor that revises a rhetorical speech attributed to the Attic orator Lysias, the soul of an older man, figured as a winged charioteer with two horses, re-grows its wings in the presence of a beloved (a younger man). The two souls of the chaste lovers, over time and through many cycles of embodiment, get nearer and nearer to the Forms, distinguishing themselves from and rising above the circling mass of soul-chariots moving about in the heavens. In his indictment, Dialogue complains that being in the Syrian's company has resulted in his own descent from, rather than his further ascent to, the heavens. Citing Plato, Dialogue begins to explain the Syrian's unjust treatment of him as follows:

[...] I used to be revered, and thought about the gods and nature and the cycle of everything, treading the air somewhere high up about the clouds, where 'great Zeus in heaven driving a winged chariot' leads on, but this guy pulled me down when I was flying around the uppermost tier and going up over 'heaven's back,' and by breaking my wings he put me on equal footing with everyone else [...] (33)

[...] ὅτι με σεμνόν τέως ὄντα καὶ θεῶν τε πέρι καὶ φύσεως καὶ τῆς τῶν ὅλων περιόδου σκοπούμενον, ὑψηλὸν ἄνω που τῶν νεφῶν ἀεροβατοῦντα, ἔνθα ὁ μέγας ἐν οὐρανῷ Ζεὺς πτηνὸν ἄρμα ἐλαύνων φέρεται, κατασπάσας αὐτὸς ἤδη κατὰ τὴν ἀψίδα πετόμενον καὶ ἀναβαίνοντα ὑπὲρ τὰ νῶτα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τὰ πτερὰ συντρίψας ἰσοδίατον τοῖς πολλοῖς ἐποίησεν [...]

²³ On the special place of Platonic philosophy in Second-Sophistic notions of Greekness, in part because Platonic texts exemplified a model for "pure" Attic speech, see Swain's *Hellenism and Empire* (45).

The reason that he has descended from his “reverend” place, Dialogue continues, rests in the ways in which the Syrian has modified philosophical writing. The Syrian has mixed the serious genre of philosophy with comedic plots and satirical tones, Dialogue explains, and has thus diluted his potency into “some unexpected mix” (κρᾶσίν τινα παράδοξον κέκραμαι) (33). As a result, the Syrian has made Dialogue unrecognizable to himself and to his audiences. To his hearers, Dialogue complains, he now appears to be “some composite and strange apparition in the manner of a centaur” (ἵπποκενταύρου δίκην σύνθετόν τι καὶ ξένον φάσμα τοῖς ἀκούουσι δοκῶ) (33). The Syrian, in other words, has made philosophy foreign (ξένος). Though he has surpassed Rhetoric’s superficial focus on display—demonstrating his internalization of the Platonic critique of rhetorical speech and writing—the Syrian remains too foreign for a proper engagement with the more sober style of Greek philosophy. Moreover, Dialogue’s reference to the hybrid centaur (part human, part horse) to explain these foreignizing effects indicates his concern for the Syrian’s adaptations of an otherwise, to his mind, “pure” genre. In other words, even if the Syrian demonstrates his willingness to adopt the style and argumentation of a high Greek philosophical tradition, there are no guarantees that the Syrian will not bring his “foreign” perspectives to bear on—and thus modify—this Greek mode of thought.

Within the Syrian’s response to Dialogue lies a different understanding of his engagement with Greek philosophy, one that both embraces generic transformation and complicates Dialogue’s claim that the Syrian has foreignized a “Greek” mode of

thought.²⁴ In the defense offered by this foreignized character, we can see what Nasrallah calls a “negotiation of authoritative culture under conditions of empire” (288). That is to say, Lucian’s text engages here with questions about “whose sources of knowledge are trammled and whose are falsely elevated” (Nasrallah 314). Whereas Dialogue claims that his previously revered position—and thus, his cultural authority—has been diminished because of the Syrian’s influence, the Syrian argues that his influence has transformed Dialogue for the better. In an account that resembles Rhetoric’s portrayal of her own generosity toward the directionless foreigner, the Syrian recounts how he bolstered Dialogue’s reputation by changing his presentation and style. Dialogue was “sullen” and “meager” when the Syrian found him, “in no way pleasant or agreeable to the public” (οὐ πάντη δὲ ἡδὺν οὐδὲ τοῖς πλήθεσι κεχαρισμένον) (34). The Syrian “washes away” Dialogue’s “dry style,” “forces him to smile,” and shows him how to “walk on the ground like a human”—all with the aim of making Dialogue “more pleasant to those who see him” (ἡδίω τοῖς ὀρῶσι παρεσκεύασα) (34). Moreover, the Syrian emphasizes that he “coupled comedy to Dialogue” (ἐπὶ πᾶσι δὲ τὴν κωμωδίαν αὐτῷ παρέζευξα) in order to make Dialogue more palpable to his hearers, who up until this point have avoided his

²⁴ For scholarship that focuses on Lucian’s generic transformations and adaptations, see Graham Anderson, *Lucian: Theme and Variation in the Second Sophistic* (1976) and Robert Branham, *Unruly Eloquence: Lucian and the Comedy of Traditions* (1989). Branham locates Lucian’s style in a widening “gap” between ancient traditions, which still had relevance and Lucian’s present but were seen as “malleable” in light of centuries of distance (81, 215). For Lucian’s productive disappointment of generic expectations, see Kate Gilhuly, “Bronze for Gold: Subjectivity in Lucian’s ‘Dialogues of the Courtesans’” (2007). On the particularly “modern” elements of Lucian’s “hybrid” adaptations of ancient literature, especially their obvious “fictive, synthetic” qualities, see Karen ní Mheallaigh, *Reading Fiction with Lucian: Fakes, Freaks and Hyperreality* (2014: 17, 23).

“prickly thorns” (τέως τὰς ἀκάνθας τὰς ἐν αὐτῷ δεδιότες) (34). In other words, the Syrian has renovated Dialogue on the level of form and style, allowing for greater access to, and interest and pleasure in, a philosophical genre that has traditionally been unappealing, “dry,” and dour. He has made Dialogue more readable. Dialogue’s complaint, therefore, expresses a fear that a genre and mode of thinking that has traditionally held cultural authority, and has been reserved for the elite, is now much more accessible to a wider public. What other foreigners, in addition to the Syrian on trial, might now gain access to—and worse, imitate—this authoritative Greek genre?

It is not just the philosophical form that the Syrian has renovated. He critiques the very content of traditional philosophical questioning as well. In an account that proves his own mastery and internalization of Platonic philosophy through citations of the dialogues *Timaeus* and *Gorgias*, the Syrian discovers why Dialogue is really distressed. The Syrian is not willing to sit around and nitpick the detailed, difficult, and subtle topics that concern Dialogue—such as the immortality of the soul; the amount of *ousia*, or changeless substance, in the cosmos; and the falseness of rhetoric (34). As the Syrian explains, this refusal displeases Dialogue because he feels most “high-minded” when “not everyone is able to understand his sharp speculations about the ‘forms’” (μέγα φρονεῖ ἢν λέγεται ὡς οὐ παντὸς ἀνδρός ἐστι συνιδεῖν ἅ περὶ τῶν ἰδεῶν ὀξυδορκεῖ). It is precisely this form of ignorance that Dialogue demands of the Syrian (ταῦτα δηλαδὴ καὶ παρ’ ἐμοῦ ἀπαιτεῖ)—an ignorance that permits Dialogue to, in the manner of the philosopher in Socrates’ metaphor from Plato’s *Phaedrus*, gain his wings and look upward toward the heavens (τὰ πτερὰ ἐκεῖνα ζητεῖ καὶ ἄνω

βλέπει) (34). Again, the Syrian's renovation of philosophical dialogue is founded in a critique of its elite status. Here, Lucian's text clarifies that philosophy's traditional authority depends upon not only the assumption of mass ignorance but also the production of that same ignorance through mechanisms of exclusion. By quoting Plato, the Syrian makes clear that he has mastered the necessary educational training and cultural know-how to gain entry into an elite club; at the same time, he critiques a traditionally Greek form of knowledge from within, changing it to make it more accessible. His simultaneous mastery and critique of a tradition demonstrate a "simultaneous resistance and assimilation to [...] *paideia*" (Nasrallah 288).

The Syrian ends his defense by addressing his own foreign status, as he complicates the very category "barbarian" that has been used explicitly in Rhetoric's speech and implicitly in Dialogue's. Referring to Dialogue's accusation that the Syrian has made philosophical dialogue "foreign" or "strange" (ξένος) through methods of genre mixing, the Syrian concludes:

As for the rest [of the accusation], I do not think that he should find fault with me, that I stripped him of his Greek garment, and made him change into a barbarian one, even as I am considered "barbarous" with respect to these things. For I would be doing wrong by transgressing against him in such a way and robbing him of his native dress. (34)

ἐπεὶ τῶν γε ἄλλων ἔνεκα οὐκ ἂν οἶμαι μέμψαιτό μοι, ὡς θοιμάτιον τοῦτο τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν περισπάσας αὐτοῦ βαρβαρικόν τι μετενέδυσσα, καὶ ταῦτα βάρβαρος αὐτὸς εἶναι δοκῶν: ἠδίκουν γὰρ ἂν τὰ τοιαῦτα εἰς αὐτὸν παρανομῶν καὶ τὴν πατριὸν ἐσθῆτα λωποδυτῶν.

In this concluding remark, the Syrian makes two important points. First, he claims that blending philosophical dialogues with other genres is not a "barbarian," that is, "non-Greek," act. Whereas Dialogue defines philosophical dialogue in its "pure"

form as a “Greek” genre—as implied in his remark that he has become strange or “foreign” through the Syrian’s genre-blending—the Syrian disputes not only Dialogue’s argument but also his conception of Greekness. In other words, the Syrian redefines what counts as a Greek genre and Greek writing, and therefore also redefines what counts as Greekness, so that he and his writing style are included.²⁵ His centaur-like versions of philosophical dialogue both remix and redefine Greek literary tradition. Second, while the Syrian includes himself in a Greek tradition, he also critiques the assumption that he must become Greek through his cultural training in *paideia*. When he claims that forcing someone to exchange their “native garb” for a new style should constitute a legal and moral transgression, the Syrian employs a metaphor that recalls Rhetoric’s transformation of the Syrian. That the Syrian dressed in “Assyrian garments” before receiving Rhetoric’s instruction in *paideia*, implies that he has by the time of the trial exchanged his native style for a Greek one. The Syrian’s concluding remark about native and barbarian garments accuses Rhetoric of a more originary “transgression”: forcing the Syrian to leave behind his own “native clothing” (τὴν πάτριον ἐσθῆτα). This transgression involves more than forcing the Syrian to adopt a clothing style that displays, to those who view him, his newfound Greek identity. After all, clothing style is implicitly linked with one’s linguistic and generic style when the Syrian analogizes his philosophical genre-mixing with

²⁵ The different views of Greekness adopted by the Syrian and by Dialogue may point to what Ilaria Romeo calls the “contested conceptions of Greekness” that were circulating during the Second Sophistic. Although cultured education was often taken as the basis for Greek identity, some sophists and political leaders sought to define Greekness through birth and consanguinity (Romeo 32).

clothing in his concluding speech. Likewise, from Rhetoric's perspective, the Syrian's previous "Assyrian garb" and "barbarous" speech were interconnected, and thus both were key sites for his transformation through *paideia* (27). Thus, Rhetoric's originary transgression also involves her linguistic instruction in an elite register of Greek. The Syrian therefore critiques the assimilatory function of *paideia*, as it pertains to the adoption of certain embodied practices over others.

The interconnected relationship between one's clothes, language, and identity points to the performative nature of Greekness. In Lucian's *Twice Accused*, Rhetoric, Dialogue and the Syrian all offer conflicting views of what it means, and what it requires, to adopt such an identity. These conflicting accounts indicate a concern for the relationship between one's cultural or ethnic identity and one's embodied behaviors, practices, and stylistic expression. Discussing the role of mimetic performance in the ancient Greek theatrical tradition—to which Lucian's text alludes, especially in its reference to changing one's clothing as a means to change one's identity²⁶—Karen Bassi explores a deep-seated concern for the relationship between one's internal dispositions and external actions. When both Plato and Aristotle address the function of dramatic performance, for example, they both attempt to preserve an "idealized and normative" Greek masculine identity in light of the

²⁶ Fourth-century BCE Aristophanic comedy especially plays with the relationship between one's clothing and one's identity. See, for example, *Ecclesiazousae* (392 BCE), in which a group of women disguise themselves as men in order to gain entry into the masculine space of the political assembly, and *Thesmophoriazousae* (410 BCE), which features a male character who disguises himself as a woman to gain entry into a female festival space. Noting the actors' need to cross-dress on a male-only Athenian stage, Bassi discusses the ambiguity of sexual identity and constant threat of exposure as driving forces of Attic comedy (*Acting Like Men* 136-143).

potentially destabilizing acts of performance (Bassi, *Acting Like Men* 12). In other words, they both realize and deny “the threat that internal dispositions may only be the effect of visually apprehended bodily acts” (Bassi, *Acting Like Men* 29).

Dialogue’s complaint exemplifies this double realization and denial: the Syrian does not fit with the Greek philosophical tradition because he is still, at his core, foreign; his outer actions, while they appear to be Greek, do not align with, nor can they fully conceal, what he really is. The Syrian, however, argues that a “foreigner’s” adoption of Greek clothing, language, and generic traditions—and thus performance of Greekness—will necessarily redefine the very parameters of that identity category. While the Syrian’s views acknowledge that there is no stable “Greek,” or other, identity, they also indicate that the performed, embodied acts that constitute any identity have material effects and result in significant social and political consequences for any individual. It was, after all, a “transgression” for Rhetoric to have taken the outward signifiers of his Syrian identity away from him, and to have trained him to reconfigure his embodied practices.

Despite this moral and legal transgression against his sense of self and cultural heritage, the Syrian seeks recognition for his successful performance of Greekness. He has successfully mastered the privileged Greek rhetorical and philosophical traditions and, what is more, he claims that his genre-mixing adaptations are just as Greek as—if not more Greek than—the established Greek philosophical tradition. When the Athenian jury votes in favor of the Syrian at the very end of Lucian’s text, the Syrian proves that he knows how to make himself legible as Greek to a Greek

audience. At the same time, his remark about foreign and native garb suggests that non-Greek traditions have value, too; after all, what is “native” and what is “foreign” always depends on the position of the one employing these terms. The Syrian’s remixing of Greek philosophy causes this tradition to be read in new ways by new audiences—thus changing the perspective from which one might view “Greekness.” By showing that cultural transformation and adaptation cut both ways—that is, they do not only affect a non-dominant subject or group in imperial contexts—the Syrian’s “barbaric” acts resist full assimilation, and in turn destabilize dominant Greek knowledge traditions.

Barbarous Reading Practices

In *Twice Accused*, a Syrian character defends himself against allegations that his foreignness makes doubtful his proper engagement with Greek oratorical and philosophical forms. In other texts attributed to Lucian, an educated, self-identified Syrian character similarly employs what I am terming a “discourse of barbarity,” in order to discount others’ performances of *paideia*. This discourse includes a matrix of terms that links “barbarousness” not only with foreignness but also with an uneducated, or imperfectly educated, status. That Greek-educated Syrian figures utilize such terms demonstrates that, when one adopts dominant Greek cultural and linguistic norms, one also inherits a rhetoric of exclusion. Although they are susceptible to these exclusionary practices themselves, Lucian’s Syrian characters adopt discourses of barbarity to prove their own compatibility with demonstrably

“Greek” perspectives, and thus to maintain the status they have gained on the dominant side of a social hierarchy defined by level of education. At the same time, their employment of discourses of barbarity often reveals their own, often acute, awareness of the material consequences of deeming someone “uneducated” or “barbarous.”

In Lucian’s *The Uneducated Book-Collector* (Πρὸς τὸν ἀπαιδευτον καὶ πολλὰ βιβλία ὠνούμενον), a Syrian speaker employs a rhetoric of exclusion to undermine a wealthy book-collector’s claims to *paideia*. Here, the notion of barbarism applies specifically to methods of reading. Agitated by the collector’s display of a fancy book collection, the Syrian speaker undermines the collector’s reputation by claiming that he cannot read his own books properly. The text thus grapples with the performative nature of *paideia*, and with the ways in which this performativity makes an elite category more widely available. If many of the outward signs of *paideia* can be adopted by those who do not undergo the full and appropriate cultural training, then the very identity of “being educated” (πεπαιδευμένος) risks losing its distinction. Thus, in order to restrict access to the elite class that *paideia* signifies, the Syrian attempts to stabilize and delimit what it means to be educated; for the Syrian, one’s level of education can be determined not by the number or veneer of one’s books but by how one reads them. In a method reminiscent of the deipnosophists’ categorization of uneducated readers as ἀγράμματοι (illiterate) in Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophistae* (Chapter One), the Syrian calls the collector ἀπαιδευτος—an adjective meaning “uneducated” that, in its morphology (ἀ + παιδευτος), negates *paideia*. This

categorization, which references the collector's "uneducated" methods of reading, unfurls outward in the course of the text to link up with the exclusionary discourse of barbarity, foreignness, and other gendered and proto-racialized forms of marginalization.

Many of the Syrian's claims rest on the presumption that he is a better "reader" of the book-collector than others—that is, he can see through the book-collector's false performance of *paideia*. He is alarmed over how others perceive the book collector, as they have taken his fancy book collection to be a sign of his erudition and have thus contributed to the collector's reputation for being educated (1). The collector, he explains, has been "enthusiastically buying up the best and most beautiful of books" (σπουδῆ συνωνούμενος τὰ κάλλιστα τῶν βιβλίων), and specifically seeking out the ones that are "ancient and very valuable" (παλαιὰ καὶ πολλοῦ ἄξια), in order to put them on display (1). While the collector's practice indicates that he understands the high valuation of "ancient" texts within *paideia*, the Syrian shows that there is more to cultured education than having access to those valuable books. By focusing on the quality of the collector's reading practices, the Syrian defines one's level of education according to one's ability to properly read the revered ancient writers—that is, according to certain standards of pronunciation and discrimination. In the process, the Syrian proves that he is a better reader than both

the book-collector and the non-discriminating people who have been duped by the collector's performance of erudition.²⁷

The Syrian makes his case for the collector's lack of education by distinguishing, first, between books that appear to have value and those that actually do, and second, by discerning educated reading practices from uneducated ones. First, the Syrian shows that one must have the proper training and discernment (διάγνωσις) to buy texts that actually are valuable, rather than those that either appear to be or that booksellers claim as such (1). At issue here is whether the book-collector has deep knowledge of and experience with an ancient literary tradition: how is one to know which texts are "correct" and properly prepared by decent scribes if one has never had the training to read them properly, and thus to notice textual correctness (1-2)? The Syrian's logic quickly takes on a circular dimension. Even if the book-collector has managed to select the best-prepared ancient texts, Lucian's speaker claims, he would still not know how to read. The speaker addresses the book-collector:

You look at books with open eyes, and indeed you do so immoderately, and you read some out loud by perfectly skimming their surfaces, keeping your eyes ahead of your mouth; but I do not think this is enough, if you do not know what is good and bad of each part of the writings and if you do not understand the overall meaning, and the arrangement of words, and which have been wrought well by the writer according to the correct standard of measure, and which are dishonest, illegitimate, and counterfeit. (2)

σὺ δὲ ἀνεωγμένοις μὲν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ὀρᾷς τὰ βιβλία, καὶ νῆ Δία κατακόρως, καὶ ἀναγιγνώσκεις ἕνια πάνυ ἐπιτρέχων, φθάνοντος τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ τὸ στόμα:

²⁷ Hopkinson compares the Syrian speaker's critique of the book collector to an act of reading; his analogy is based on a distinction between style and content, as suggested by the difference between appreciating the exteriors of fancy books and knowing how to read their contents (119). As I will argue, the question of reading practices is not necessarily a question of content, but is rather a question of "style" or form in Lucian's context.

οὐδέπω δὲ τοῦτό μοι ἰκανόν, ἦν μὴ εἰδῆς τὴν ἀρετὴν καὶ κακίαν ἐκάστου τῶν ἐγγεγραμμένων καὶ συνίης ὅστις μὲν ὁ νοῦς σύμπασιν, τίς δὲ ἡ τάξις τῶν ὀνομάτων, ὅσα τε πρὸς τὸν ὀρθὸν κανόνα τῶ συγγραφῆ ἀπικρίβωται καὶ ὅσα κίβδηλα καὶ νόθα καὶ παρακεκομμένα.

Here, the speaker distinguishes between two different reading practices. First, in what we might describe as “merely reading,”²⁸ the reader knows how to direct his eyes across the surfaces of texts, and might even gain pleasure from this activity without needing to understand “the overall meaning.” While merely reading, he moves his eyes across the text more quickly than his pace of reading aloud, so that he can prepare to pronounce the upcoming letters and determine word division. This practice points to the material production of the book roll, the most popular texts used in the high Roman empire, which were written in *scriptio continua* and thus lacked punctuation and word division. These elements caused the book roll to be “a radically unencumbered stream of letters” that required “thorough training” if one wanted to read “readily and comfortably” (Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture* 20). Citing Quintilian’s *De Institutione Oratoria* (first century CE) on the training of students in the practice of oration, Guglielmo Cavallo notes that reading aloud while keeping one’s eyes on the words that follow “required divided attention,” that is, a complex movement between visual and vocal forms of reading (“Between *Volumen* and *Codex*”

²⁸ Following Kinohi Nishikawa, I am here referring to reading practices that are “free of educative or edifying expectations” (702). In an essay about readers in a different context, Nishikawa defines “merely reading” as the “informal literate behaviors that take place beyond the orbit of schooling” and, more generally, that occur during “a break, or time off”; that is, they are performed to the side of “institutionally recognized work” (Nishikawa 697, 701).

73). Thus, a reader's ability to even "move across the surface" signals a form of fluency that was not available to all subjects in the empire.

For the speaker of Lucian's text, though, this level of fluency does not make one "educated." He contends that it is "not enough" (οὐδέπω [...] ἱκανόν) to simply know how to read a text out loud; rather, if a reader is properly educated, he must also know how to exercise judgment about a given passage (2). In a description that recalls Plutarch's first-century CE discussion of reading in *How the Young Man Should Attend to Poetry*, Lucian's speaker explains that an educated reader knows how to categorize textual elements based on the moral qualities of "good" (ἀρετή, or excellence) and "bad" (κακία). This judgment requires that the reader understand the proper "standard" (πρὸς τὸν ὀρθὸν κανόνα) by which to decide these categories as well as to evaluate the quality of the writing (2). The assumption that there are different levels of reading practices, in which highly trained modes of evaluation are most valued, speaks to what Teresa Morgan terms the "differentiating" function of *paideia*. Within the Hellenistic and Roman empires, Morgan identifies a "core and periphery" model of education, in which the "core" constituted "what most people learned," including instruction in how to read and write, often by using "gnomic sayings" from popular Greek literary texts like Homer. The "periphery" of this model included a wider range of texts and practices that those who could afford to continue into higher levels of education learned (71).²⁹ The acculturating function of this

²⁹ Raffaella Cribiore calls this system of learning a "two-track system." Within this system, a student's level of education depended on his or her "place in the social and economic pyramid" and "future role in the community" (*Gymnastics of the Mind* 44). Women had

model of education, by which many non-Greeks or non-Romans gained “admission” into these cultural groups through their experience with the educational “core,” actually helped to “maximize” the differentiating function of this same education (Morgan 74). As Morgan explains, this structure of education “produc[ed] a pool of people who shared a common sense and common criteria of Greekness [...] but who were placed in a hierarchy according to their cultural achievements” (74). In other words, the integrative and assimilative forces of *paideia* were at the same time “another device for reinforcing hierarchy” (Morgan 78). Lucian’s speaker in *The Uneducated Book-Collector* has gained entry into the higher levels of education—the “periphery” to the more accessible “core”—and uses that achievement to perpetuate social hierarchies based on levels of education and thus methods of reading.

In his description of the book-collector’s “uneducated” reading practices, the Syrian demonstrates how the standards used to regulate texts are also used to regulate social space. When he discusses a more educated form of reading, he notes that a reader must know how to decide whether a passage is authentically attributable to the named author—likely through a comprehensive familiarity with the author’s corpus—or to a later editor or commentator, such as a scholiast (2). Here, the term used for a “spurious” passage or text, *vóθα*, bears a socio-political valence, as it is

access to education, but because “the principal aim of a liberal education was to reinforce the position of privilege for those men who could afford it,” they often did not go beyond the primary level of education (*Gymnastics of the Mind* 75). On the social stratification of late antique schooling, including the difference between schools for utilitarian literacy, on the one hand, and elite schools for higher level grammar and then rhetoric instruction, on the other, see Robert Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (1988).

employed in texts by Homer, Herodotus, and Plutarch to categorize people as “illegitimate,” based on their birth to a non-citizen, such as a slave, concubine, or, in the context of classical Athens, a “foreign” mother (Liddell and Scott, “νόθα” A1, A2, AII; *Iliad* 2.737; *Histories* 8.103; *Themistocles* 1). Educated reading, according to this framework, involves more than merely deciphering a text—a skill that already necessitates special training. It requires standards of judgment that regulate the quality of texts so as to keep out possible contaminants: the false and the foreign.

It follows, then, that the speaker expends much effort to keep the ἀπαίδευτος out of his own protected educated class. In order to regulate the social boundaries that position him as part of an elite, educated class, Lucian’s speaker foreignizes the book-collector by bringing attention to his ostentation and calling his reading practices “barbarous.” In ancient Greek literary history, these two qualities—an excessive display of wealth and barbarousness, or non-Greekness—go hand-in-hand, so that ostentation itself becomes a marker of one’s foreignness.³⁰ The book-collector uses his books as a display of wealth: the bookroll he carries in his hand is “very beautiful” (πάγκαλος) and highly decorative, with “purple leather” (πορφυρᾶν μὲν ἔχον τὴν διφθέραν) and “golden knobs” used for unrolling the scroll (χρυσοῦν δὲ τὸν ὀμφαλόν)

³⁰ Fifth-century BCE texts especially connect excessive displays of wealth with barbarousness, primarily through the construction of Persians as cultural and political “others” around the time of the Greco-Persian Wars. Aeschylus’ *Persians* (472 BCE), produced after Athens especially among the Greek city-states emerged victorious at the battle at Marathon, engages with tropes that transform Persians into ostentatious, monarchical, arrow-shooting, feminized “others” when compared with the reserved, democratic, spear-wielding, masculine Athenians. Herodotus’ descriptions of the relations between Greeks and Persians in *Histories* also engage with these tropes. For the “rhetoric of otherness” in Herodotus, see François Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History* (1988); for a discussion of Athenian “self-definition” through tragic performance, see Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition Through Tragedy* (1989).

(7). However remarkable the ostentation, the speaker insists, it cannot cover up or fully distract from the lack of skill the collector brings to his reading. Like Dialogue's assumption in *Twice Accused* that the Syrian remains "foreign" despite his adoption of Greek garments and speech, here the Syrian speaker assumes that there is a distinction between what one outwardly performs and what one actually is. The collector's improper reading practices reveal, according to the Syrian, his true non-Greekness: Lucian's speaker accuses the collector of "committing barbarisms" (βαρβαρίζων), "dishonoring" (καταισχύνων), and "distorting" (διαστρέφων) the text when he reads it (7).

The notion that one's reading practice could be "barbarous" draws upon a grammatical and rhetorical tradition in which to speak and write in Greek (ἑλληνίζειν) meant employing clarity, whereas the opposite, to be "incomprehensible" and "incorrect" was to be non-Greek, or "barbarian" (Vassilaki 1120). As mentioned earlier, Aristotle makes these distinctions in his *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* (fourth century BCE). An association between excessive linguistic ostentation and "barbarism" appears in his discussion of *lexis*, or written style, in the *Poetics*. If one overuses "foreign" or unusual words, one risks producing a "barbarism" (βαρβαρισμός) (1458a). In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle provides five guidelines for writing Greek properly (τὸ ἑλληνίζειν), and summarizes them with the following statement about clarity: "in general, it is necessary that what is written is easy to read and easy to make intelligible" (ὅλως δὲ δεῖ εὐανάγνωστον εἶναι τὸ γεγραμμένον καὶ εὐφραστον) (3.5; 1407a). Near the end of the first century BCE, the rhetorician and critic Dionysius of

Halicarnassus echoed Aristotle's sentiments when praising certain Attic orators (such as Lysias) for providing a model of Attic language (τῆς Ἀττικῆς γλώττης ἄριστος κανών) (*Lys.* 2). For Dionysius—whose interest in “pure” (καθαρός) language was one source for second-century CE Atticism—clear, Greek language contrasted with that which was deemed pretentious and bulky (ὄγκος), unprincipled (ἀνηθοποίητος), and therefore, “foreign” (τὸ ξένον) (Swain, *Hellenism* 22-27; Dionysius *Lys.* 8).

Lucian's speaker translates these long-held concerns about proper Greek writing into a scene of reading: when one does not read clearly and in a way that brings about the proper meaning of a text, then one does not read in a Greek manner.

While the Syrian speaker attempts to make a distinction between the book-collector's display of wealth through his book collection, on the one hand, and the “reality” of his lack of education on the other hand, the distinction between performance and reality does not hold up. By focusing on the book-collector's reading practices in order to prove his lack of education, the Syrian brings attention to the performative, stylistic elements of reading. As the Syrian's description of the book-collector's insufficient reading practices shows, one's style of reading depends upon both embodied gestures—how one moves one's eyes and mouth in relation to the text—and the ability to perform one's training by making judgments about the text. Likewise, the scrutiny of another's practices relies on perception, on how one “reads” and assesses that performance of reading. Thus, the Syrian's argument about the difference between display, or performance, and reality undermines itself. How

one practices reading may not, in the end, reveal the truth of that person's background, level of education, or moral character.

However performative one's reading practices are shown to be, and however unable they are to reveal a core truth about a reader's identity, the Syrian's perceptions of the book-collector do result in his social marginalization—as the designation of the book-collector's practices as “barbarous” already implies. First, Lucian's speaker excludes the collector from an elite community by associating him with those of a lower status. His distinction between owning books, on the one hand, and knowing how to use them, on the other hand, may appear to be a critique of wealth as a marker of class status. However, this critique upholds class distinctions. Lucian's speaker redefines elite social status around one's education level and linguistic competency instead of property and wealth, resulting in the collector's exclusion. If book acquisition were equated with education, the speaker explains, then the book peddlers would be much more educated than many. “But,” he adds, “They are barbarous in speech just as you are, and as void of understanding in their knowledge” (ἀλλὰ βαρβάρους μὲν τὴν φωνὴν ὥσπερ σύ, ἀξυνέτους δὲ τῆ γνώσει) (4). Here, laborers (book peddlers) are likened to a member of a wealthier class, seeming to level the social field. However, their new alignment is based on their shared lack of sufficient linguistic competency and, more generally, their lack of *paideia*. At the same time, the speaker's insistence that the book-collector's ostentation excludes him from proper *paideia* erases the wealth and leisure time still required to gain access to higher forms of cultural education.

As the text progresses, the speaker offers a series of analogies that liken the book-collector to socially marginalized figures, ranging from people with disabilities, to women, to feminized men, to non-citizens. The following list of analogies exemplifies this point. A man who possesses books, but not a high level of education, is likened to a list of people who own objects for which they ostensibly have no use: a man who is bald with a comb, a man who is blind with a mirror, a man who is deaf with a flute-player (αὐλητήης), and a eunuch (εὐνοῦχος) with a concubine (παλλακή) (19). The identities of these figures are constructed through lack, based on their perceived inability to participate in normative behavior and their varying levels of social marginality. The negative association between the book-collector and a series of men with differently abled bodies implies that *paideia* operates as one of the senses; the proper ‘sense’ one must employ when reading books is an idealized cultural education. The list further signals social exclusion through its objectification of the flute-player and the concubine.³¹ These two “types” of women represent exotic, sexualized, and often disruptive behavior in literature of antiquity; their historical counterparts were incorporated into ancient societies but excluded from forms of political participation. As Laura K. McClure explains, concubines (παλλακαί) were commonly referenced in fourth-century BCE Attic oratory, where they were often distinguished from ἑταῖραι, or sex workers, because they resided in Greek households, filling the absence of a legitimate wife. They were not legally recognized as

³¹ In other places, Lucian depicts objectified women with subjective agency. In his *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, Kate Gilhuly argues, Lucian explores “what happens when objects become subjects” and even aligns himself with the marginalized figure of the courtesan (Gilhuly 61, 91).

legitimate wives due to their common origins as slaves or foreigners (non-Greek or non-Athenian). Although their “incorporation into the social fabric of classical Athens is well attested,” concubines were nevertheless associated with “exotic and polygamous practices of foreigners” (McClure 19-20).³² Their position exemplifies how what was non-normative was quickly associated with and defined as foreign, so as to maintain the very boundaries of normativity and thus of socio-political inclusion.

In Lucian’s list of analogies, the concubine is placed in the object position and yet is deemed “useless” in relation to a eunuch—demonstrating an assumption about a eunuch’s inability to participate in normative, heterosexual sex acts. In both the classical and later antique Greek cultural imaginary, eunuchs were ambivalent figures whose perceived effeminacy (that is, their non-adherence to norms of masculine behavior) helped others to categorize them, paradoxically, both as chaste androgynous figures (e.g., when associated with sacred rituals) and as promiscuous sexual deviants (Andrade, *Syrian Identity* 305; Stevenson 499-501). As Maud Gleason clarifies, eunuchs were marginalized because they threatened to “undermin[e] the symbolic language in which male privilege was written” (70). The threat of a eunuch’s non-normativity to a masculine social order is legible in Lucian’s

³² Flute-girls often appear in literary texts that depict symposia (such as in Book 13 of Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophistae*), where they were expected to provide not only musical entertainment but also sexual favors to the men in attendance. As such, they became associated with immoral desires and “youthful degeneracy,” especially when depicted as disruptors of serious philosophic discourse in Platonic dialogues (McClure 21-22). In Plato’s *Symposium*, for example, Socrates makes a “reversal of normal sympotic protocol” and prohibits the flute-girl from entry; as a result of such depictions, flute-girls were considered a disruption of serious philosophical conversation (McClure 22). For a stirring reading of the flute-girl as a figure for the exclusion of women from philosophical conversation, and on the effects of her interruption of Plato’s *Symposium*, see Page duBois’ *Sappho is Burning* (1995: 94-5).

dialogue *The Eunuch*, which reports on a competitive argument that Gleason summarizes in the following question: “Should a eunuch be approved to teach philosophy to the young?” (133). The eunuch described in Lucian’s text is Bagoas, a fictionalized version of Favorinus of Arles, a “star performer of the Second Sophistic” who was known to be a eunuch (Gleason 70). When the character Lykinos reports one of Bagoas’ arguments from the competition, we learn that Bagoas’ gender non-conformity results in his exclusion from philosophical pursuits. A eunuch ought to be excluded, the argument went, because a eunuch is “neither man nor woman,” but “something composite, mixed up, and monstrous, outside of human nature” (οὔτε ἄνδρα οὔτε γυναῖκα εἶναι τὸν εὐνοῦχον λέγοντος, ἀλλά τι σύνθετον καὶ μικτὸν καὶ τερατῶδες, ἔξω τῆς ἀνθρωπείας φύσεως) (6).³³ Such conceptions about eunuchs’ gender and sexual non-conformity resulted in their uncertain legibility within Roman patrilineal law: generally seen as an “impossible *pater*,” a eunuch’s sexual ambiguity threatened the political power of the Roman figure of male authority, and only certain types of eunuchs could pass on inheritance (Stevenson 497-498).

The ambivalence of a eunuch’s Roman legal status echoes the uncertain legal status of the concubine who, in Greek antiquity, resided in a household but was not counted as a legitimate wife. In Lucian’s analogy, then, a eunuch has no appropriate use for a concubine not only because he cannot use her for a normative sex act;

³³ At the end of the fictionalized competition reported in *The Eunuch*, Bagoas reveals that he is not a eunuch after all: he has pretended to be one in order to escape an adultery charge (10). This revelation further demonstrates the power of the ancient Greek cultural imaginary regarding gender deviation, and the social and material consequences of these assumptions. Gleason writes that, in *The Eunuch*, “Lucian spoofs, but does not seriously challenge, his culture’s assumptions about virility and philosophy” (134).

together, they cannot easily construct a state-recognized, legitimate, and reproductive household.³⁴ Lucian's list of analogies brings attention to the mechanisms of political and social exclusion that marginalize those who are deemed non-normative and foreign—especially as these categories are marked on their bodies or pertain to the embodied acts they are expected to perform. Further, Lucian's text demonstrates the relevance of these mechanisms to the Syrian speaker's insistence on a distinction between those who have proper education and those who do not.

As *The Uneducated Book-Collector* reaches its conclusion, the speaker further excludes the book-collector by bringing special attention to the shared embodied attributes of an uneducated reader and a non-citizen. More specifically, the speaker worries about the effects of the book-collector's uneducated body upon the ancient writings that come to stand for cultural wisdom and elite education. He concedes the ἀπαίδευτος the luxury of buying books and keeping them locked up in his house, but admonishes him to “never touch, read, or subject the writings and poetry of ancient men to your tongue” (προσάψη δὲ μηδέποτε μηδὲ ἀναγνῶς μηδὲ ὑπαγάγῃς τῆ γλώττι παλαιῶν ἀνδρῶν λόγους καὶ ποιήματα) (28). In addition to his lack of knowledge about these texts, the book-collector's tongue and touch pose the greatest threat to his books. This admonishment suggests that one carries one's cultural training (or lack

³⁴ On the new importance assigned to harmonious marriage during the Second Sophistic, as attested in such works as Plutarch's *Advice on Marriage* (first century CE), see Swain's discussion in *Hellenism and Empire* (121-129). Adding to Michel Foucault's focus on the ethical “care of the self” that developed in this period, *Swain* argues that marriage provided an important institution for male Greek elites to maintain their social identities under Roman rule: “The elite in the Greek city was formed through intermarriage, that is, it depended upon the deployment of alliance” (*Hellenism* 129).

thereof) in one's body, and that one's reading practice can have material effects upon a text—and on a textual tradition.

Moreover, the speaker connects the book-collector's untrained reading practices with the embodied attributes of a political and cultural outsider. Lamenting that he is not getting through to the book-collector, the speaker compares him to an Ethiopian, a figure constructed as a cultural and, here, an ethnic other: "I know that these things are spoken foolishly and in vain, and that, according to the proverb, I am trying to wash an Ethiopian clean" (οἶδα ὡς μάτην ταῦτά μοι λελήρηται καὶ κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν Αἰθίοπα σμήχειν ἐπιχειρῶ) (28). In a discussion of discrimination and "proto-racism" in classical antiquity, Benjamin Isaac points to the "environmental theory" that shaped how Greeks and Romans explained physical differences between themselves and other groups. In this understanding of the world, which is attested in the Hippocratic corpus and in the texts of Herodotus and Aristotle, climate and geographical location contributed to the "darkness" of Ethiopians, a perceived physical attribute that Greeks used to construct both the bodies and the mentalities of Ethiopians as distinct from their own.³⁵ The proverb employed in Lucian's text

³⁵ The association of geographical location and climate with cultural customs is present in Herodotus' fifth-century BCE *Histories*. Here, Greeks are positioned as the implicit norm and located in the geographical center, while eastern and southern locations produce strange (i.e. non-Greek) behaviors and political structures. For example, Egypt's distinct climate is linked with customs that are the "opposite" of the "rest of mankind" (*Histories* 2.35; Isaac 58). In the late-fifth century BCE Hippocratic text *Airs, Waters, Places*, the darkness or lightness of a people's skin also depends upon their geographic location (*Airs* 24; Isaac 60-69). In Aristotle's fourth-century BCE *Politics*, Greeks are positioned "in the middle" of a geographical and climate spectrum, and thus have been able to remain "free," attain the best form of political organization, and have the potential to rule over everyone else (*Politics* 1327b; Isaac 70-1). The early Greek novel *Aethiopica* by Heliodorus (third century CE), muddles this relationship between geography and skin color, but continues to associate skin

engages with these assumptions about physical difference, especially as it implies the “lightness” (figured as “cleanliness”) of Greeks as the norm. In associating the book-collector’s untrained reading body with the physical attributes of the Ethiopian figure, the speaker implies that one’s reading habits depend upon one’s physical body. He also implies that one’s reading practices are predetermined just like one’s physical attributes. In this way, the Syrian speaker wishes to negate the “acculturating” function of *paideia* and to maintain its “differentiating” function: according to this logic, the collector will never join the elite educated class.

However, the speaker’s own self-identified outsider status complicates the methods of social and political marginalization he employs when criticizing the book-collector for his lack of *paideia*. In a brief moment of personal identification with the ἀπαίδευτος, the speaker interrupts his attack on the book-collector’s displays of wealth to say, “—and surely I know about these things, as I myself am a Syrian” (καὶ μὴν ὅσα γε καὶ ἐμὲ Σύρον ὄντα εἰδέναι) (19). The self-identified Syrian continues to say that he knows the collector would be starving and without access to books at all, had he not written himself into an old man’s will (19). With this comment, the Syrian indicates that he and the collector have something in common: they both know what it is like to be socially marginalized, on the basis of poverty or cultural heritage, and

color with one’s ability to adopt a cultural education. In it, the central character is born with white skin in Ethiopia; she then travels to Greece and adopts Greek cultural values through her education there. For a discussion of Heliodorus’ literary techniques for navigating linguistic and cultural difference in *Aethiopica*, see Donna Shalev, “Heliodorus’ Speakers: Multiculturalism and Literary Innovation in Conventions for Framing Speech” (2006). See also Tim Whitmarsh, “The Birth of a Prodigy: Heliodorus and the Genealogy of Hellenism” (1998), on the *Aethiopica*’s engagements with the margins of the Hellenistic world and its refusal to adhere to clear distinctions between Greek and barbarian.

they have each figured out a way to gain social power, albeit through different means. Their shared experiences with both social marginalization and social mobility point back to the performative nature of Greek *paideia*. As a Syrian who associates himself with an elite class defined by access to Greek cultural education, the speaker must know something about, and even value, the ability to adopt and repeatedly perform educated practices. If the Syrian, once a cultural outsider, could be trained to read “properly” through *paideia*, then these practices are available to a wider circle than the already elite Greek classes.³⁶ When the Syrian undermines the collector’s status by revealing that his ostentation has no real cultural value underneath it, Lucian’s text emphasizes the tenuousness of *paideia*’s capacity to bring about social transformation. Once the Syrian has gained entrance to the elite educated class, he must expend much effort to prove the legitimacy of his position. This effort involves constructing the same dichotomy between performance and reality (a rich man pretending to be “really” educated) that could potentially undermine the Syrian’s own acquired status (a Syrian pretending to be “really” Greek).

When the Syrian employs his tactics of political and social marginalization, Lucian’s text stresses the material effects of policing the social boundaries of an elite, educated class. This policing aims at the body, where the signs of one’s education and cultural training are both enacted and potentially destabilized. When the Syrian

³⁶ *Paideia*’s power of social transformation is the topic of Lucian’s *The Dream, or Lucian’s Career*, an allegorical story about the decision to undergo training in a Greek cultural education. Here, a personified and feminized *Paideia* promises to replace a student’s poverty and lowly birth with great reputation and admiration from wealthy and well-born men (Lucian, *Dream* 11).

speaker of *The Uneducated Book-Collector* calls the book-collector's reading practices "barbarous," he transforms the collector's comportment, physical features, and very tongue into something foreign. His discursive attacks thus illustrate how *paideia*'s mechanisms of acculturation and social inclusion also actively produce the outsiders that elite circles must exclude in order to maintain their status. Foreignness, then, is just as much a production of *paideia* as Greekness. And as Lucian's text shows, the production of foreignness can be generated from one's embodied habits—even when those habits imitate Greek erudition—as well as in the interpretive faculties of those who read those embodied habits as signs of a particular identity, social position, and cultural affiliation. Lucian affirms that the shifting category of "foreignness," defined in contrast with an equally shifting notion of "Greekness," can be produced and observed within one's reading practices. According to this logic, one's methods of reading directly impact the formation of a subject in relation to others. That is, reading in this context generates social hierarchies that are both produced through and enacted upon the body.

The Gendered Bodies of *Paideia*

The Syrian speaker's disparagement of marginalized figures like the eunuch and the concubine in *The Uneducated Book-Collector* may seem surprising when in Lucian's other texts these figures are described in terms that emphasize their similarity with Lucian's Syrian characters. In Lucian's *The Eunuch*, as previously mentioned, Bagoas' gender non-conformity is called "composite, mixed-up, and

monstrous” (σύνθετον καὶ μικτὸν καὶ τερατῶδες, 6), and is thus perceived to be an impediment to his ability to teach philosophy. This description of gender non-conformity resonates with the Syrian’s genre non-conformity in *Twice Accused*. Dialogue, we will remember, worries that the Syrian has caused the Greek philosophical genre to become something “composite” (σύνθετον) and “strange” (ξένον), like a “centaur” (ἵπποκενταύρου δίκην) (33). Together, these texts suggest an association between the foreignized Syrian figure and the figure of the eunuch. They are well matched for the shared discursive practices that marginalize them, and for the ways they mix traditional categories to the point that they are no longer legible to others. The link between them also has much to do with gender. The Syrian of *Twice Accused* mixes genres that are specifically coded according to gendered norms. Discussing another Lucianic text, *You are a Prometheus in Words*, Kate Gilhuly contends that Lucian “conceives of genres as gendered” (62). In *Prometheus*, a speaker defends his invention of the comic dialogue—the form that Lucian often writes in. Like the Dialogue of *Twice Accused*, the Dialogue of *Prometheus* is a masculine character, and Comedy appears as a feminized persona. The Syrian figure of *Twice Accused* admits to “coupling” or “marrying” a masculine, dour Dialogue with Comedy (τὴν κωμῳδίαν αὐτῷ παρέξευξα), implying a mixing not only of genres but also of genders in his writing. Here, the Syrian figure may be just as much a gender non-conformist as the eunuch.

In *The Uneducated Book-Collector*, the Syrian speaker employs the eunuch figure in an analogy that marginalizes the book-collector; without wholly conflating

the Syrian characters that appear across Lucian's texts, we might notice the irony of this act. Although the Syrian of *Twice Accused* endures forms of verbal abuse and marginalization, his composite adaptations of the Greek philosophical tradition arguably transform that tradition for the better. His outsider position gives him a new perspective on a long-standing tradition—a perspective that he claims is just as Greek as the original. The positive association of this Syrian's acts of monstrous hybridity thus recasts the eunuch figure (and those compared with eunuchs) in new light. Is there something generative about inhabiting a position of non-normativity, even in the face of very real, material acts of marginalization and exclusion? For both the foreignized Syrian and the eunuch, their marginalized status depends upon their relative distance from the standard of elite Greek masculinity. Gender expression thus plays an important role in the operations of *paideia*, as they are depicted in the Lucianic corpus, and in the possibility for adapting the traditions of *paideia* to new uses.

The question of gender expression in *paideia* points to the ways that cultural education, and especially training in rhetoric, was a means for developing and practicing self-presentation in the Second Sophistic. Maud Gleason has importantly argued that rhetoric was a training in gender identity, and more specifically, in “manhood,” which was “always under construction and constantly open to scrutiny,” and thus in need of constant practice (Gleason xxii). If rhetoric was “part of the process of male socialization” in which a student “learn[ed] how to move like a gendered human body,” as Gleason demonstrates, then it is significant that Lucian's

texts often resist or complicate this masculine ideal (xxvi). The Syrian's association with the eunuch figure is one example of this refusal of normative gender identity. Likewise, the figures that might represent authorities in rhetorical education are often the most feminized, and perhaps morally debased, characters in Lucian's texts. A personified Rhetoric, who appears in several of Lucian's texts, is one such character. If the figures who are supposed to serve as objects of imitation in the performance of gender identity are themselves unable to perfectly perform or contribute to a masculine ideal, then what are the effects on such an ideal? If this ideal is shown to be unattainable or even false, then what are the resulting, embodied effects on students of *paideia*? Lucian's texts suggest that this ideal of masculine comportment, as produced through rhetorical training, depends upon—and may even be contaminated by—the bodies of gender “deviants,” that is, those who do not conform to normative gender or sexual expression.

Rhetoric appears in at least two of Lucian's texts as a female figure, who, through marriage, is able to bring about a change in economic and political status for a younger male student. In *Twice Accused*, Rhetoric's initial appeal is her ability to transform the Syrian into a Greek civic citizen; she changes his style, way of speaking, and political status when she brings him into a Greek community through *paideia*. In Rhetoric's complaint against the Syrian, she calls herself his “lawful wife” (νόμῳ γαμετήν) and thus chastises him for abandoning her (29). Figured as a legitimate spouse, Rhetoric contributes to the Syrian's embodiment of a Greek masculine ideal, defined in part through a lawful and heterosexual, and thus appropriate and normative,

partnership. However, the Syrian's response to Rhetoric categorizes her not as a lawful wife, but as a courtesan (ἑταίρα)—and thus no longer a suitable companion in his pursuit of Greekness. The Syrian explains that Rhetoric began to lose her modesty and no longer “maintained a respectable appearance” (οὐκέτι σωφρονοῦσαν οὐδὲ μένουσαν ἐπὶ τοῦ κοσμίου σχήματος); rather, she began to “adorn” herself with make-up and “arrange her hair like a courtesan” (κοσμουμένην δὲ καὶ τὰς τρίχας εὐθετίζουσαν εἰς τὸ ἑταιρικὸν καὶ φυκίον ἐντριβομένην καὶ τῶφθαλμῶ ὑπογραφομένην) (31).³⁷ In the Syrian's story, Rhetoric at first appears to be a chaste woman but then adopts behavior that incites the interest of other men, who begin to appear outside of their household to woo her (31). This sexually charged behavior, the Syrian claims, spurred him to move in with Dialogue. The Syrian's distaste for Rhetoric's sexual availability constructs a narrative of decline; Rhetoric's feminized sexual degeneracy can be read as a fall from former prestige (Gilhuly 86). If Rhetoric cannot behave like an upstanding, chaste woman, she can no longer be the counterpart to an appropriately masculine, elite, Greek student. Moreover, the Syrian's perception of Rhetoric's decline is an expression of the concern that rhetorical success has become more widely available to those without the proper training. As a result of this new accessibility, the prestige of Rhetoric's students, including the Syrian, might now be in question.

³⁷ The use of certain stylistic elements in one's rhetorical speeches was conceived in terms of “adornment” or “ornamentation.” When Aristotle discusses style in his fourth-century BCE *Rhetoric*, for example, he notes that some types of words can “adorn” and elevate one's speech (*Rhetoric* 3.2.2, 1404b). The verb he uses here, κοσμέω, is the same as the one used to describe the arrangement of one's (especially a woman's) dress or general presentation, as seen in Lucian's description of Rhetoric in *Twice Accused*.

Rhetoric appears again as a marriageable woman in Lucian's *The Teacher of Public Speaking* (Ρητόρων διδάσκαλος). Here, she awaits her suitors from the top of a mountain, surrounded by a dowry of wealth, fame, and praise—the trappings of successful rhetorical display. This dowry will become “the property of her husband,” that is, the student who successfully reaches the top (6-7). The way to Rhetoric is through educational training, figured as different paths up the mountain. The text's speaker, who himself has already successfully made the trek up to Rhetoric, addresses a young male student who desires to marry Rhetoric. Explaining that the path he took long ago—which is rough, steep, and difficult—at one time saw fewer travelers, the speaker implies that recently many more students have attempted to climb up to Rhetoric by that route (7-8). The mere difficulty of this path, and the fact that many others have by now begun the ascent, motivate the speaker to suggest that his youthful addressee take another road—one that is easier to travel and thus will allow him to arrive at Rhetoric's feet more quickly than others (7).

Together, the descriptions of these two roads to Rhetoric shape an allegory about *paideia*; each represents a different set of methods by which one might obtain the fame, economic stability, and social advancement that *paideia*, and more specifically, rhetorical training, promises to endow.³⁸ This allegory pivots around the feminized body of Rhetoric, who not only stands on a mountaintop as an objectified prize to be won, but who has also become more widely available to her male students.

³⁸ Criatore takes the short road of rhetoric in Lucian's text to represent an actual abbreviated course of instruction that developed in Lucian's time, suggesting general changes in the educational paradigms of his present. See “Lucian, Libanius, and the Short Road to Rhetoric” (2007).

Whereas in the past, fewer students were able to reach the top, now many more are able to do so—and the ease of the second path, as I will explore further, presents the opportunity for those who are not highly trained to easily gain the reputation and fame of those who are. Like the Rhetoric of *Twice Accused*, the Rhetoric of *The Teacher of Public Speaking* is figured as a sexually available woman, complicating the gendered ideals that *paideia* is imagined to produce.

The objectified body of a feminized Rhetoric is not the only body that *The Teacher of Public Speaking* emphasizes in its depiction of *paideia*'s challenges and rewards. The allegory of the two paths to Rhetoric also highlights the significance of the body of the student who climbs the mountain, as well as the bodies of his potential teachers, presented as trail guides. Each path signifies a particular form of embodied comportment that a student of rhetoric must adopt: the terrain of each trial dictates how the student will use his body to reach the top of the mountain, and each teacher provides further training in bodily display and demeanor. As part of their respective educational programs, the teachers employ their own bodies as models for imitation; their embodied practices and gender expressions exemplify how their students' bodies and gender performances will be shaped by the journey. As I will show, neither of these paths nor their guides provides a desirable model for the potential student of rhetoric: each guide either overdoes or underperforms an ideal version of masculinity. Lucian's text thus indicates that the pursuit of rhetoric, and training in *paideia*, might produce a wholly different construction of gender than the masculine ideal maintains.

The first path to Rhetoric that is presented in *The Teacher of Public Speaking* is the one its speaker followed years ago. This “customary” (συνήθης) route features rough, steep terrain and requires sweaty labor, both from the student and the teacher (2). The guiding instructor who accompanies students on this route displays the embodied traits that one might develop as a result of traveling it. The speaker describes this guide as a “strong man, hard, with a manly stride, showing a heavy tan on his body, with a masculine eye, and alert” (καρτερός τις ἀνὴρ, ὑπόσκληρος, ἀνδρώδης τὸ βάδισμα, πολὺν τὸν ἥλιον ἐπὶ τῷ σώματι δεικνύων, ἀρρενωπὸς τὸ βλέμμα, ἐγρηγορώς) (9). This “manly” teacher bids his students to follow the footsteps of the fourth-century BCE greats, like Demosthenes and Plato—footsteps that can still be seen, though hardly, in the dirt of the road. These footsteps constitute the “straight path” (τῆς ὀρθῆς ὁδοῦ) to a “lawful marriage” (νόμῳ γαμήσειν) with Rhetoric, and a student must learn how to precisely and accurately position his own feet and bear his weight in order to follow these footprints without swaying (9). In practice, this straight path requires that a student imitate the ancient writers; the teacher “will command [the student] to emulate those ancient ones by setting up their speeches as stale models, not easy to imitate” (εἰτά σε κελεύσει ζηλοῦν ἐκείνους τοὺς ἀρχαίους ἄνδρας ἕωλα παραδείγματα παρατιθεὶς τῶν λόγων οὐ ῥάδια μιμεῖσθαι) (9). These classical models, moreover, are likened to sculptures of chiseled male bodies, described as “small-waisted, sinewy, and hard, with precisely-drawn contours” (9). Imitating these texts, which are explicitly linked to physical “paradigms of manhood,” helps the student to sculpt his own masculine body, as defined by classical models

(Gleason 127). This practice of imitation, the speaker further explains, demands a student's excessive constraint and moderation, such as "hard labor, sleepless nights, and drinking lots of water," that is, not drinking alcohol (πόνον δὲ καὶ ἀγρυπνίαν καὶ ὕδατοποσίαν) (9). Thus the description of the rough road, its manly guide, and its requirements, identify classical education as a kind of moral or ethical program of personal restraint that has effects on one's physical body. On this road, one not only imitates the ideals of Greek masculinity, but also shapes one's body and one's bodily control in response to these models.

Although the manly guide of the rough road seems to provide access to an ideal version of classical Greek masculinity, his own display of hyper-masculinity makes him an imperfect fit with this model. His muscular, hard stature and sun-tanned skin mark him as a laborer, a toiler—and, as we later learn, he requires a large fee for his work (9). These attributes imply that imitating his practice will not result in gaining entry to an elite circle of learned leisure. Similarly, this guide has achieved neither the eloquence nor the erudition one might expect a rigorous imitator of ancient wisdom to have; rather, he is a "foolish" man (ὁ μάταιος) who speaks nonsense (9). More specifically, he is described as obsessively detailing "futile things" (λήρους τινὰς [...] διεξιὼν πρὸς σέ), which share a connotation with showy ornamentation that has no real use or depth (Liddell and Scott, "λήρος" A1). Ultimately, then, Lucian's speaker "bids us [...] to dismiss" his hyper-masculinity and excessive rigor (Gleason 127). This guide's rigorous attention to the masculine models of the past makes him an outdated and ancient quack (ἀλαζῶν καὶ ἀρχαῖος ὡς

ἀληθῶς καὶ Κρονικὸς ἄνθρωπος) whose methods require work that is too hard and a commitment that is too long to yield successful results; what is more, his program does not guarantee that his students will acquire a reputation for being cultured or eloquent (9-10). Lucian's speaker warns against following this guide, who, either in spite or because of his insistence on imitating ancient models, has become a sweaty swindler who deceives whomever he can (ἄλλους ὅποσους ἂν ἐξαπατᾶν δύνηται ἀνάγειν) (10). When the speaker dismisses the rigorous, hyper-masculine guide, he re-evaluates the associations between cultured education and masculinity, between one's knowledge of the ancient past and one's social status. He thus also shows a certain level of distaste for the ancient models, which may, he suggests, have little of relevance to contribute to his present moment.

As an alternative to this rough road and its hyper-masculine guide, the speaker suggests the young student take the easier path, which has recently been opened up (10). In contrast with the guide of the rough road, the teacher of the easy path has actually achieved success as an orator and promises it to his students. Positioned as the opposite of the hyper-masculine teacher, he is a "most clever" and "wholly beautiful" man with an "easy, swaying gait, a thin, effeminate neck, a womanish glance, and a honey-sweet voice" (πάνσοφόν τινα καὶ πάγκαλον ἄνδρα, διασεσαλευμένον τὸ βᾶδισμα, ἐπικεκλασμένον τὸν αὐχένα, γυναικεῖον τὸ βλέμμα, μελιχρὸν τὸ φῶνημα) (11). Similar to the description of Rhetoric-turned-courtesan in *Twice Accused*, this teacher gives much care to his appearance and his appeal; he "exudes perfume" (μύρων ἀποπνέοντα) and "carefully arranges his curly, hyacinthine

hair” (οὔλας δὲ καὶ ὑακινθίνας τὰς τρίχας εὐθετίζοντα) (11). It is this body and its practices that the student will be asked to imitate, should he decide to follow this path and reach Rhetoric nearly instantly and with ease (14). Embracing ignorance (ἀμαθία), rashness (θράσος), recklessness (τόλμα), and shamelessness (ἀναισχυντία), the student will learn to adopt a “loud, shouting voice,” a “shameless tone,” and a gait to match that of his teacher (15). The student will also adopt a new style, with clothing that is “gaily-colored or white” and made out of a fabric that will allow his body to show through; he might also wish to consider wearing the type of shoes that Attic women wear (15).

These forms of vocal and bodily display match the type of training the student will be expected to perform. The first practice he must develop is giving special care to his outward appearance, and the second is reciting a few Attic words—fifteen to twenty will do. He must then have these words ready “at the tip of the tongue” so that he can “sprinkle” them into his speech (16). When developing this latter practice, the student need not worry whether these old Attic words are too “dissimilar” from or “discordant” with the rest of his speech; in fact, if he is able to employ “uncommon and strange [foreign] words” (ἀπόρρητα καὶ ξένα ῥήματα)—even and especially those that were rarely even used by the ancients (σπανιάκις ὑπὸ τῶν πάλαι εἰρημένα)—his audiences will consider him to be marvelous, and he will appear to exceed them in their level of education (*paideia*) (θαυμαστὸν ὑπολήφονται καὶ τὴν παιδείαν ὑπὲρ αὐτούς) (17). Moreover, to achieve this reputation of learnedness, the student does not even need to read the prized ancient authors like Isocrates, Plato, or

Demosthenes; he can just “make up new and strange words” (ποίηι καινὰ καὶ ἀλλόκοτα ὀνόματα) and claim that ancient authors used them (17). With this program of easy learning comes a moral regimen, also described in opposition to the program of modesty the masculine teacher espouses. On the easy road, the student can and should do whatever he wants: he can gamble, drink excessively, have sexual intercourse, and commit adultery (κυβεύειν μεθύσκεσθαι λαγνεύειν μοιχεύειν) (23). All of these actions, the teacher claims, will benefit the student’s rhetorical skill (τὴν ῥητορικὴν χρήσιμα παραγίγνεται)—which is here taken to mean the ability to compete with and excel over other orators, and thus to gain the reputation for being a successful orator (23).

The merits of the rhetorical training and moral program espoused by “womanish” teacher are to be read with a dose of irony. This teacher’s notion that one does not need to read ancient texts but can instead sprinkle a few ancient Attic words into one’s speech is the same notion critiqued by erudite, often Syrian, characters in many of Lucian’s other texts. The complaints of the Syrian speaker in *The Uneducated Book-Collector* and of Sigma in *Consonants at Law* exemplify such critiques, which target those who share the effeminate teacher’s perspectives on language and learning. In these texts, we will recall, the Syrian speaker takes issue with the uneducated book-collector’s inability to properly read ancient texts of value, and Sigma laments a “foreigner’s” use and misuse of Attic elements in his speech. At the end of *Teacher of Public Speaking*, Lucian’s speaker sarcastically announces the success of the effeminate teacher’s educational program. In light of this success, the

speaker proclaims his own defeat, declaring that he will get out of the way and cease his own engagements with Rhetoric—but he follows up with a final rebuke to the student, “You have beat us not through your swiftness, though you appear to be swift, but because you took the easiest and downhill road” (ὅτι μὴ τῷ τάχει ἡμῶν κεκρατήκατε ὠκύτεροι φανέντες, ἀλλὰ τῷ ῥάστην καὶ πρανῆ τραπέσθαι τὴν ὁδόν) (26). The shift to the first person plural here suggests that the speaker aligns himself with others who were more traditionally trained by thoroughly reading and precisely imitating the classical authors. While the speed of the effeminate orator’s educational program does lead to some success, the speaker here suggests that the ease of this route diminishes one’s engagement with rhetoric. Further, this ease diminishes the personal and physical development of the student; he only appears to have the resilience to move quickly up the mountain to reach Rhetoric, and by going downhill on the easy path he will never train himself in this attribute.

The excessive attention to this teacher’s effeminate gender performance also signals a form of degradation, most visible in the association of this gender expression with morally questionable behavior. The assumption that effeminacy signals moral degradation does not only degrade women and traits associated with them in the ancient world; it also expresses an anxiety over the alignment between sex and gender. Highlighting how Greek rhetoricians and audiences made “moral judgments” about oratorical speakers according to not only their “technical excellence” but also the “gender-appropriateness” of their performance, Gleason demonstrates that “popular consciousness of stylistic differences” in the Second

Sophistic “was conditioned by polarized paradigms that we might term ‘effeminate’ and ‘hyper-masculine’ rhetoric” (121-122). These polarized paradigms are, of course, visible in the oppositional descriptions of two teachers featured in Lucian’s *Teacher of Public Speaking*. That the effeminate teacher advocates a rupture from the classical, masculine traditions of the past also associates effeminacy with decline. We have seen a concern for the perceived decline of rhetoric in Lucian’s *Twice Accused*, when the Syrian associates Rhetoric with the morally degraded position of a courtesan.

Similar concerns about rhetoric’s decline are expressed in other texts of the Second Sophistic period. Discussing Quintilian’s *De Institutione Oratoria* (late first century CE), which prescribes an educational program for the ideal orator, Jody Enders observes an anxiety over the “numerous deviations and corruptions” in traditional forms of rhetoric (253-4). Enders notes that these perceived corruptions were attributed to the influence of theater upon rhetoric. This “theatricalization of rhetoric” involved increased attention to how one’s delivery and embodied performance might work upon an audience (Enders 254, 256). Further, discourses about the perceived degradation of rhetoric were gendered; the “theatricalization of rhetoric” was associated with an “emasculatation of eloquence” (Enders 256). As Enders explains, “the persistent association between theatrics, bad rhetoric, and effeminacy” during this period did not just demean the practices and performances of many orators; it also “marginalized women, homosexuals, bad oratory, and theater” and produced a discourse for expressing a given “threat to the social order” through

the “demoniz[ation]” of femininity or effeminacy (257). Thus, rhetorical delivery became a site in which to scrutinize and police gender performance and sexuality.

The teacher of the easy road to Rhetoric trains his students to adopt a gender expression that reads as effeminate and thus as morally debased within its context. The negative assessment of this gender performance does not only assume stereotypical views of ancient women in general; this assessment associates the teacher’s gender performance with the practices of ancient courtesans in particular. Noting how Lucian’s speaker describes the feminized teacher as adopting a “gentle” voice that “imitates” a series of famous courtesans (Thaïs, Malthake, and Glykera),³⁹ Gilhuly demonstrates a productive interplay between the concerns of the Second-Sophistic orator and those of the courtesan, as they are depicted in literary texts from this period (Lucian, *Teacher* 12; Gilhuly 85, 87). Comparing this depiction of a successful, effeminate orator in *Teacher of Public Speaking* with Lucian’s depictions of courtesans in *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, Gilhuly points to a shared interest in the relationship between gender expression and power. Both the effeminate teacher and Lucian’s courtesans, Gilhuly demonstrates, value “immediate gratification in wealth and notoriety” and a well-dressed, effeminate self-presentation; they also adopt an interest in the “wealth of the present” that rejects the past (Gilhuly 89). Whereas the manly guide to the rough road promises to achieve for his students a “legitimate marriage” to Rhetoric, the effeminate guide cannot do so; his marginal

³⁹ Thaïs was known for accompanying Alexander the Great and appears as a character in Terence’s second-century BCE play *Eunuchus* as well as in Athenaeus’ second- or third-century CE *Deipnosophists*. Glykera and Malthake are courtesans who appear in Menander’s comedies (fourth century BCE).

position “trades in the hope of a legitimate marriage for transient liaisons” and thus further associates him with courtesan figures (Gilhuly 89). Just as Rhetoric’s association with courtesans in *Twice Accused* and Rhetoric’s wider availability in *Teacher of Public Speaking* signal her degradation, here, too, the effeminate teacher-as-courtesan signifies rhetoric’s “degraded relation” to a “classical precursor” (Gilhuly 89). The effeminate teacher, Gilhuly demonstrates, is thus “aligned with the worst trends in oratory during the Second Sophistic,” as his over-investment in the present “unmoor[s]” him from the classical tradition and transforms him into a “social climber” (83, 87)

But being “unmoored” from the traditions of the past can be a positive position to inhabit. The effeminate, courtesan-like teacher of *Teacher of Rhetoric* exhibits attributes similar to those of the Syrian in Lucian’s *Twice Accused*. In that text, the Syrian achieves a higher social status and new political identity through *paideia* and rhetorical training. A vexed transformation for the Syrian, his “social climbing” does not imply that he adheres completely to the revered Greek textual traditions and generic conventions that he is taught; rather, he adapts the Greek literary tradition and puts it to new uses, developing new genres that bring new perspectives to old texts.

I have already noted how this Syrian character’s interest in “hybrid” generic mixing associates him with the marginalized figure of the “monstrous” eunuch. This interest also associates him with the figure of the courtesan—and thus with the courtesan-like qualities of the effeminate teacher in *Teacher of Public Speaking*.

Gilhuly argues that the courtesan becomes a “figure for generic contamination” in Lucian’s texts (86). In her primary example, she demonstrates that Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Courtesans* epitomizes generic crossing; it fuses the philosophical genre of dialogue with characters that seem to have been taken directly out of Menander’s New Comedies (Gilhuly 62). In fusing these genres, Lucian disrupts the expected conventions of both. The courtesan characters of his dialogues are “disembedded” from their original generic locations and “recontextualized” within a new form; as a result, they are able to do and say what could not be done or said in their original contexts (Gilhuly 67). Thus, Gilhuly argues, the courtesans of Lucian’s corpus come to stand for “the discordant juncture between philosophy and comedy,” that is, “generic contamination” (68). Enders’ formulation provides a way of understanding the relevance of the courtesans’ genre-crossing to the easy rhetoric teacher in *Teacher of Public Speaking*. In addition to being likened to a courtesan, this teacher’s effeminacy can be associated with the “theatricalization of rhetoric” of the first centuries CE. This “theatricalization,” Enders clarifies, is a form of genre-crossing, in which the conventions of theater were seen to have infiltrated the traditions of rhetoric. This genre-crossing is linked up with a form of “gender-crossing,” whereby theatrical performance became increasingly associated with effeminacy rather than masculinity (Enders 256). The effeminate teacher’s association with genre-crossing makes difficult the wholesale rejection of his perspectives on the classical tradition. These attributes align him with the Syrian

figure of *Twice Accused*, who wins the hearts of the Athenian court. They also align him with Lucian, the writer of genre-defying texts.

In the end, however, the speaker of Lucian's *Teaching of Public Speaking* admires neither of the options for reaching rhetoric. He shows that he himself has adopted and mastered the rigor and masculine comportment required of the rough road, but now rejects that option as too rigid, too toilsome, and too outdated. He thus signals his distance from one version of an idealized notion of Greek masculinity as it relates to the embodied training of *paideia*. The effeminate teacher may provide points of identification for an outsider who wishes to gain the social and political recognition that Greek *paideia* promises. Emphasized, in part, to marginalize and critique this teacher, this teacher's gender expression nevertheless offers one alternative to the masculine ideal. Although still defined in relation to that ideal, his "gender-crossing" offers the possibility for different types of bodies and cultural outsiders to gain access to *paideia*. He also offers a different way of thinking about the classical tradition—a little too irreverent, perhaps, but also less obsessed with reproducing the models of the past.

This more accessible and less regulated relationship to antiquity holds special significance when considering the discourses of exclusion and marginalization that are bound up with those prized traditions. Lucian's texts, as I have shown, are especially attentive to the exclusionary discourses—especially as they pertain to constructions of foreignness—that individuals and communities inherit when idealizing ancient sources. However, we cannot ignore the speaker's sarcasm and

distaste for the superficial rhetorical training that the effeminate teacher offers. *The Teacher of Public Speaking* thus seems to question the standards set up by both teachers. At the end of this text, a reader is left with a sense of uncertainty about which path to follow. In the context of the Lucianic corpus, these two educational paths present a high-stakes choice; Lucian's texts keenly demonstrate the material, and sometimes violent, effects that one's literary and linguistic training have on one's body. These embodied effects show, in turn, how one's educational training and literacy practices actively shape one's identity as defined through one's sociopolitical relations.

These questions raised by Lucian's texts—about the adequacy of available educational standards, their effects on the bodies of students, and their ethical and political impact—guide the next chapter. In the late twentieth century, a U.S. Latina text provides a response to such questions by addressing the discourses of exclusion and marginalization that inflect monolingual and monocultural educational standards in the United States. The next chapter focuses on a geographical and sociopolitical terrain that, both like and unlike Lucian's, is marked by imperialist histories and yet cannot maintain clear distinctions between who belongs and who is foreignized as an outsider.

CHAPTER FOUR

Divergent Letters: Reading Linguistic Difference in Latina/o Literatures

“Learning to read is not synonymous with academic learning. [...] One always writes and reads from the place one’s feet are planted, the ground one stands on, one’s particular position, point of view.”

—Gloria Anzaldúa, “To(o) Queer the Writer” (172)

“Might a proliferation of strategies of reading, that note the limitations of the desires of the reader [...] be a negotiation appropriate to the task of reading the text of the socially non-dominant?”

—Helena María Viramontes, “Marks of the Chicana Corpus” (13)

Introduction: Reading in the Borderlands

Nena, a young Chicana woman, stands before her eighth grade English class to recite a poem that her teacher has asked the class to memorize. The instructor, censuring her gestural presentation and her “forceful” voice, interrupts: “This is a reading, not a dramatic performance.” Nena shifts her recitation practice, abandoning the one she learned when declaiming Spanish poems in her childhood. Now, she “attempt[s] to imitate the bland [...] reading that Louise had just done” but is no longer able to recall the poem correctly. “The words are gone without the ademanes,” she narrates, “the words without the hand, eye, head movements keep getting tripped in my mind.” Taking her seat, she reflects that the situation “cost me 10 points [...] but the humiliation was worse than getting a 90 instead of a 100” (Cantú, *Canícula* 62).

Although Nena performs an oral recitation of a memorized text, the opposition the teacher constructs between a “dramatic performance” and “a reading” indicates that a definition of reading is at stake. By opposing these terms, the instructor implies not that Nena is practicing an improper form of reading, but that she is not practicing reading at all. Nena’s teacher implies that “a reading” requires an efficient, unmediated repetition of a stable text. This idea about reading assumes that readers remain distant from texts, detached from their particular cultural and linguistic heritages, and indifferent to their embodied responses. However, this normative model is shown here to consist of more than an abstract system of standards, that is, an objective measure of points a reader can achieve. This scene associates Nena’s gestural, “dramatic” recitation practice with her Spanish-language heritage, most notably in the linguistic switch to “ademanos” for gestures. When Nena looks to her classmate Louise for a more legible reading practice to imitate, she affirms that her instructor’s normative model is based upon the bodies of other readers—readers whose linguistic and cultural heritages are valued in the classroom. The interruption of Nena’s practice thus demonstrates the extent to which institutionalized inequality is entangled with a normative model of textual engagement.

The instructor’s notion that a reader should assume disembodied detachment and distance when performing an act of literary engagement is not unfamiliar to western literary criticism. For example, Karin Littau argues that the majority of twentieth-century theories of reading focus on reading as a rational process of “sense-making” while ignoring how reading both requires and moves bodies (10). This

notion of reading as a primarily “mental activity” ignores a much longer history of conceptualizing reading as an embodied practice that affects readers’ sensations (Littau 10-11, 134). Following a major contribution of twentieth-century feminist thought, Littau argues that this neglect of readerly embodiment and sensation can be attributed, in part, to the “systematic hierarchies that have worked to privilege reason over passion in the history of Western philosophical thought” (Littau 11). Michael Warner likewise identifies within literary disciplines an inherited value system that prizes “critical distance” within literary engagement. This stance of distance promotes a reader’s intellectual, rational faculties and non-attachment to texts (Warner, “Uncritical” 17, 20-21, 31). This style of reading, Warner demonstrates, has been naturalized to such an extent that it takes on universalizing force, becoming an almost invisible norm. Further, this naturalized norm “blocks from view” the value of other forms of textual engagement that, in turn, produce different stances of engagement (“Uncritical” 16). To demonstrate that any given reading norm is, in fact, structured around the bodies, languages, and heritages of certain readers, as Nena’s classroom interactions do, is to disrupt the assumption that such norms are a universal given. It calls into question the very notion that one can adopt a detached, disembodied position when encountering a text.

Recent educational policies and reforms in the United States similarly presume that reading is an abstracted process. Extending from educational reforms begun in the 1990s, a current definition of reading often includes a set of discrete skills, which have an effect on readers’ bodies but are imagined to be disassociated

from them. These skills, such as reading automaticity and prosody, are abstracted so that they can be measured through standards-based assessment. As such, these skills are constructed as unmoored from any particular reader, understood as “givens” of the process of reading. However, they are most often modeled on the practices and embodied performances of monolingual, English-dominant readers (Gutiérrez et al., “Backlash”). As a result, high-stakes assessment often equates literacy with English proficiency, and therefore elides linguistic heterogeneity and student diversity in the construction of a normative reader.

The method of reading prized in Nena’s classroom is rooted in such standards, which compel her to assimilate herself—by regulating her body and modulating her voice—to a dominant paradigm. In order to achieve legibility—and a high grade—she must control the embodied and vocalized markers of her particularity, associated in this scene with her Spanish-language heritage. Because Nena’s recitation utilizes gestures and voice modulation, her performance especially emphasizes her body’s role in engaging with a text; however, the issues raised in this scene pertain to silent reading as much as they do to reading aloud. This scene raises important questions about how reading instruction, a method of bodily habituation, affects the formation of subjects and shapes paradigms of social recognition and belonging. These questions provoke this chapter’s interest in alternative notions of reading that value the culturally diverse, embodied perspectives that readers bring to texts—alternatives that can reconfigure institutionalized language inequality, which so often translates to social inequity.

This classroom vignette appears in Norma Elia Cantú's *Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera* (1995), a text that Cantú has called a "fictional autobioethnography" for its genre-blurring approach to meshing stories about her own childhood with stories about her community in the borderlands between Texas and Mexico (*Canícula* xi).¹ *Canícula* consists of a series of short vignettes narrated from the perspective of Azucena, nicknamed Nena, a fictionalized autobiographical character. Throughout its non-linear narrative, the text shifts between school and home spaces, between one side of the geopolitical border and the other, to explore how different language practices and literacies hold different value depending on where one's body is located. As Nena and her family frequently travel back and forth between Mexico and the U.S., *Canícula* emphasizes the continuity between communities, and their languages, on both sides of the geopolitical border. At the same time, the text attends to the linguistic differences and social hierarchies produced in this borderlands space, especially as constantly Nena moves—not always easily or unpainfully—between languages and forms of literacy. Spanish plays a significant role in Nena's life at home, especially in her early years in both her Texas

¹ Cantú describes the necessity of "breaking the restraints placed on traditional narrative structures" in writing *Canícula*; at the same time, she sees her work participating in the generic practices of the 1990s that "merge fiction and autobiography" ("The Writing of *Canícula*" 103, 97). Norma Klahn contextualizes autobiographical fictions by Chicana writers in relation to the "proliferation of autobiographies" that emerge after the start of the Chicano rights movement in the 1960s; the "women's self-writing" that appears in the 1980s and 1990s add the complexities of gender and cultural location to the autobiographical paradigm ("Literary (Re)Mappings" 116-117). Autobiographical fiction combines fact and fiction to allow for the writer to speak from her cultural and gendered location while also speaking to experiences shared by others in her community (Klahn, "Literary (Re)Mappings" 119-120).

and Mexico communities, where she is taught to read in Spanish and where her translation practices are valued. Outside of these spaces, and especially within her formal U.S. education, English assumes a dominant and privileged position. As Nena navigates her relationship to these languages, and experiences the shifting valuations of her cultural and linguistic heritage, *Canícula* shows how literacy practices become contested sites of identity- and social-formation—especially when two or more languages meet.

Canícula brings attention to the ways in which education, and especially linguistic training, is performed upon and through the body. Likewise, Cantú's text links this embodied understanding of educational training with social and political recognition: how one reads, pronounces, and embodies texts affects whether and how one is included in a community. The echo of Lucian's second-century CE texts should be clear. Just as Lucian engages ambivalently with the educational paradigms that shape social status—by simultaneously satirizing and displaying his mastery of the privileged language, genres, and embodied enactments of Second-Sophistic *paideia*—Cantú critiques modern U.S. paradigms that establish a dispassionate, monolingual, disciplined reading body as the norm. In *Canícula* these paradigms are shown not only to render certain linguistic and reading practices deficient, but also to map non-conforming bodies onto inferior positions in a social hierarchy. Presenting reading as a material (embodied) practice that has social consequences, Cantú demonstrates how social hierarchies are perpetuated through normative educational practices based on monolingual and monocultural models.

Canícula thus responds to a long history of educational inequity in the U.S., which is, in turn, a legacy of imperial expansion, racial segregation, and colonialism in the Americas. Like Julia Alvarez's *In the Name of Salomé* (Chapter Two), Cantú's *Canícula* explores these legacies and their continuing effects on educational paradigms, but does so in the spatial terrain of the contested U.S.-Mexican border. Described in the prologue as a space "between two countries" (2), the primary location of *Canícula*'s stories is the two Laredos—Laredo, Texas and Nuevo Laredo, Mexico—two cities situated on opposite sides of the Rio Grande. Founded in 1755 under Spanish colonial rule, Laredo became two cities when the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo imposed a new geopolitical border at the end of the U.S.-Mexican War, and inhabitants who elected to remain Mexican citizens founded Nuevo Laredo south of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo. From this borderlands location, *Canícula* explores what Norma Klahn calls "displacement in situ," that is, the experience of dislocation caused by the movement of the U.S.-Mexican border through pre-existing communities. This displacement involves not only new political and legal distinctions between U.S. and Mexican citizens, but also the imposition of a new dominant language and cultural literacy upon Mexican-heritage and indigenous communities with pre-existing language practices and histories (Klahn, "Literary (Re)Mappings" 127). Frances R. Aparicio explains that these cultural and linguistic impositions, especially mandated English instruction, constitute a process of "Americanization" that "reflects both the imperial expansionist and the nationalist uses of the language" ("Of Spanish" 250). That is, after the U.S. annexation of approximately half of

Mexico's lands,² official state policies and educational practices have generally facilitated the displacement of Spanish and other cultural practices in order to homogenize and assimilate inhabitants of the U.S. American Southwest region.³ Such programs, while seeming to promise an avenue to U.S. social and political inclusion, construct distinctions between "U.S. citizen" and "foreigner," between those who belong to the national body, and those who are excluded from it.⁴

The contrast between citizen and foreigner that has shaped the U.S. Southwest region cannot, however, hold itself still in the experiences of the people who live there. Residents of Mexican heritage, often Spanish-speaking, hold a longer claim to

² The annexed territory includes Texas (annexed in 1845, as a result of increased Anglo-American migration that caused a revolt against Mexico in 1836) and what are now Arizona, New Mexico, California, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming.

³ Of course, official state policies have not fully determined educational practices in this region. As Cantú's text demonstrates through its attention to the *escuelita*, a non-state-sponsored form of schooling that prizes bilingual education in both Spanish and English, many communities in this region continued to educate Spanish-speakers in Spanish. I primarily focus on state-mandated policies because they continue to shape our imaginations about what schooling is and what kinds of literacy and language practices should be included in U.S. classrooms. For examples of teachers who are actively "making schools and literacy instruction more responsible to bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate readers," see Maria E. Fránquiz, "Traveling on the Biliteracy Highway: Educators Paving a Road toward *Conocimiento*" (2010: 93). On "assimilating" to U.S. American culture by adopting English and "say[ing] yes to an American education" as a creative technique for survival, see Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (1999: 81).

⁴ Other effects of this imperialist expansion, and the consequences of such distinctions between "citizen" and "foreigner," include socio-economic disparity. Although the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo protected the land titles of former Mexican residents on the U.S. side of the border, and promised to incorporate these residents as U.S. citizens, disputes over property and voting rights ensued after 1848. Many individuals of Mexican heritage—especially those who did not pass as white—were dispossessed of land and disenfranchised in the new U.S. states. See Richard Griswold del Castillo's *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo*, on the systematic exclusion of indigenous communities from U.S. citizenship and land protection (69).

lands on both sides of the current geopolitical border.⁵ This contested border—and the historical circumstances that make it difficult to say with certainty who is “foreign” and who is not—has become a centerpiece of recent U.S. nativist politics. Such nativist discourses often equate Latinas/os, especially people of Mexican heritage, with foreignness. This equation actively forgets the history of the Southwest, Texas, and California regions at the same time that it perpetuates the colonial legacies of U.S. imperialist expansion. Such nativist discourses, which claim to be based on natural distinctions between “citizen” and “foreigner,” thus reveal the social construction of these categories.

Around the time of *Canícula*'s publication in the mid-1990s, the political and social construction of “foreignness” was undergoing a major shift, in which illegality and non-citizenship became increasingly identified with Latinas/os, and especially Mexicans and Mexican Americans.⁶ This form of nativism produced, among other

⁵ The history of this region was especially significant to the Chicano rights movement, begun in the 1960s, that demanded civil rights and political recognition for people of Mexican heritage. Chicano activists cited the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in their call for political recognition and bilingual education, and the poet Alurista helped to design “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán,” a document that advocated reclaiming annexed land and imagined a national homeland for Chicanos. On the potential of Aztlán to imagine global communities, in spite of queer and feminist critiques of its limited notion of “communal homogeneity,” see Marissa López, “The Language of Resistance: Alurista’s Global Poetics” (2008).

⁶ Scholars who define this political period as a “new nativism” demonstrate that debates about immigration, affirmative action, and educational practice in the 1980s and ’90s were concerned with the distinction between who is “native,” or a legitimate citizen, who is “foreign,” figured as the “illegal” immigrant. Such discourses around “nativism” clearly elide indigenous groups and their histories. Scholars also contextualize this “new” nativism within a longer history of U.S. immigration policy and racial formation. Robin Dale Jacobson, for example, argues that the anti-immigrant fervor of the 1990s “emerged from a racial terrain shaped fundamentally in the 1960s,” that is, it was shaped by a “new color-blind conservatism” that seeks to limit the political and social gains of civil rights movements (xxiii). James Crawford locates the nativist sentiments of 1980s-’90s English-only campaigns

acts of discrimination, a number of state propositions and legislative bills promoting a homogeneous notion of national belonging through the active exclusion of these perceived foreigners. Among them, California's Proposition 187, approved by voters in 1994 but overturned in federal court, sought to deny undocumented people and their children, called "illegal aliens" in the language of the proposition, access to public services, including public education ("Proposition 187 Ballot," in Ono and Sloop 169-176).⁷ During the campaign, both proponents and opponents of Proposition 187 constructed undocumented people as the "invading other" and made these immigrants-as-other synonymous with people of Mexican descent—including Chicanas/os with United States citizenship or legal residency status (Ono and Sloop

within a long tradition of language suppression in the U.S., beginning with opposition to German in colonial Pennsylvania and including the forced English education of indigenous North Americans and Hawaiians in the late nineteenth century (11-22). While Kent Ono and John Sloop highlight the history of restrictionist land laws, repatriation movements, and internment that predominantly affected Asian Americans and Mexican Americans in the twentieth century, they especially compare the nativism of the 1990s with that of the 1920s, when the Immigration Act of 1924 restricted immigration based on national origin (and established a preference for Western European migrants) and the Border Patrol was created in 1925 (3-4; 44). While numerous scholars point to the economic recession of the 1980s and '90s as a major instigating factor for these nativist politics, it is especially important to consider how global capital has shaped the construction of the U.S.-Mexico border. As Néstor P. Rodríguez points out, the final decades of the twentieth century saw the adoption of trade policies, across North America and Europe, that made "international boundaries less rigid for economic integration"—such as NAFTA, adopted in 1993, which facilitates trade and the movement of capital across Mexico, the U.S., and Canada (224-25). At the same time that capital flows make international borders less rigid, the U.S.-Mexican border is constructed as "out of control" and in need of containment, a paradox that Rodríguez identifies as a "reaction to the changing significance of the nation-state, and state borders, in the larger global order" (225, 238).

⁷ On "illegality" as both a legal category and a "racialized social condition" that defines "Mexican"-ness as "foreign" to "the hegemonic 'national' identity of 'American'-ness," see Nicholas De Genova's "The Legal Production of Migrant/Mexican 'Illegality'" (2004: 161-162). See also Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (2007), on the production of "new categories of racial difference" through restrictive immigration laws (7).

40). Although Proposition 187 was, ultimately, overturned, the campaign discourse highlights the common conceptions of race and “foreignness” circulating during the 1990s—and that continue to affect public discourse about U.S. American citizenship and ideas about “invading” foreigners today (Jacobson xv).⁸

Language use and language instruction are particularly central to recent nativist discourses and the shifting definitions of citizenship and foreignness. A heightened concern for the status of English, as seen in campaigns seeking to install English as the official language of the United States, took hold in the 1980s and continued to shape the political landscape of the '90s. As a result of these campaigns, fueled in part by anti-Latino racism,⁹ fourteen states—including Arizona, California,¹⁰ Colorado, and many southern states—declared English as the “official language” of their governments in the 1980s alone (Crawford 31; Daniels 5).

⁸ More specifically, Robin Dale Jacobson demonstrates that the discourse surrounding nativist movements in the 1990s, as seen in the campaign for Proposition 187, helped to shape present conceptions of the foreigner as a threat to national security (135). This particular construction of foreignness helps to explain why post-9/11 anti-Muslim and anti-Arab racism and discourses about terrorism coincide with increased militarization of the Mexican-U.S. border (Jacobson 139). As Randy J. Ontiveros points out, efforts to criminalize undocumented people and immigrants certainly did not end in the 1990s; in 2005, the House of Representatives attempted to make entry into the U.S. “without inspection” a felony offense, while in 2010 the Arizona Senate passed a bill that required legal immigrants to carry their identity papers at all times, and in 2012 Alabama required schools to “verify the immigration status of children” (131-32).

⁹ As James Crawford notes, a series of revelations in the late-1980s—including a leaked memorandum with discriminatory language from a leader of the “U.S. English” lobby group, as well as its organizational ties and funding sources—“revealed an agenda of anti-Latino prejudice” within official English campaigns (31).

¹⁰ This instance was not the first time California claimed English as a state language. In 1878, California delegates disregarded the state’s initial recognition of Spanish language rights and rewrote the constitution to claim English as the official language of the state government. In 1986, California voters passed Proposition 63 to “preserve” English as the state’s “common language,” exhibiting anxiety over the language’s privileged status (“California Proposition 63” Section 1A; Crawford 14).

“Official English” efforts reemerged in the mid-’90s, when the U.S. House of Representatives approved House Resolution 123, the “English Language Empowerment Act,” which sought to establish English as the official language of the federal government (the Senate, for various reasons, never voted on the resolution) (Crawford 39-40). In 1998, an English-only campaign revisited California in the form of Proposition 227, which specifically targeted bilingual education; its passage mandated that all “Limited English Proficient” students undergo English immersion instruction without the assistance of their home language, and threatened to punish teachers for “willfully and repeatedly” teaching in languages other than English (“California Proposition 227” Article 2.305, 5.320).¹¹ This English-only campaign avoided rhetoric about immigration, but Proposition 227’s passage so soon after Proposition 187 associates English-only with xenophobic discourses that have targeted both recent immigrants and long-time U.S. residents and citizens (Crawford 114, 23).

While efforts to enforce English as an official language in the U.S. are not new—one example among many is the exclusion of the German language (including German books) from classrooms during World War I—these recent “official English” efforts are a reaction to what Frances R. Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman have termed the “latinization” of the United States (13). That is, English-only discourses are a reaction to the demographic growth and “visible empowerment” of Latinas/os,

¹¹ Voters passed a similar initiative in Arizona in 2000 and in Massachusetts in 2002. Colorado’s ballot also included an English-only initiative in 2002, which did not win a majority of votes.

an identity category that is often defined linguistically, that is, by Spanish-language heritage (Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman 13).¹² Therefore, in recent U.S. nativist discourses, “foreignness” designates not only a (perceived) non-U.S. origin, but also particular language practices—including non-standard, accented English in addition to languages other than English.¹³ The current construction of “foreignness” is thus directly tied up with ideas about what constitutes literacy; as Aparicio puts it, declarations that English is or should be the official language of the United States are “contingent on the subordination of other languages within and outside the domestic borders [...] and the correlative domestic displacement of the Chicano as illiterate” (“Whose Spanish” 9).

As a result of these nativist discourses and campaigns, U.S. classrooms have become contestatory spaces in a struggle over defining social and political belonging. Coinciding with the English-only and anti-immigrant initiatives in the 1990s, there was a “boom in educational reform,” primarily emphasizing accountability and standards-based assessment, designed to “fix” the problem of underperforming

¹² On the equation of U.S. Latinas/os with Spanish-language heritage, and the mapping of race onto language in the United States, see Ana Celia Zentella, “Dime con quién hablas, y te diré quién eres”: Linguistic (In)security and Latina/o Unity” (2007). On the national obsession with the demographic growth of Latinos/Hispanics throughout the 1980s and into the 2000s, and the resulting translation of Latina/o communities into consumers for mass media markets and into votes during political campaigns, see Randy J. Ontiveros, *In the Spirit of a New People: The Cultural Politics of the Chicano Movement* (2014: 3-7). In addition to instrumentalizing Latinas/os, the result of this focus on demographics is the “misconception that sometime in the not-too-distant past, Latinas/os either weren’t in the United States, or they were invisible”—a narrative that Ontiveros confirms is “as politically damaging as it is historically inaccurate” (7).

¹³ See Kris D. Gutiérrez et al., “Sounding American,” for a discussion of how English-only reading programs help to promote linguistic homogeneity during times of perceived threatened national security, by targeting language use and accented speech (336-37).

students—but without offering appropriate instructional training or support (Gutiérrez et al., “Backlash” 340-41). Within these recent educational reforms, Kris D. Gutiérrez and others identify an adoption of “backlash pedagogies,” that is, an “institutionalized and structured response to diversity and difference” (“Backlash” 337, 342). Similar kinds of educational reform in United States history have tended to focus on the “Americanization of the immigrant” and the transformation of “deviants into model citizens,” while ultimately producing “new forms of exclusion” (Popkewitz, qtd. in Gutiérrez et al., “Backlash” 341). In many states, the backlash pedagogies of the 1990s have targeted the linguistic resources and cultural heritages of Latina/o students. Further, backlash reforms have created educational standards based on monolingual models, including English immersion instruction without the support of students’ primary languages, reading programs that are “developed for English dominant students” but mandated for students who are not, and high-stakes assessment tests that equate literacy with English proficiency (Gutiérrez et al., “Backlash” 342; “Sounding” 331). These monolingual models demonstrate how differences among students are translated into divergences or deficiencies, as measured against the norm of standard academic English.¹⁴ The struggle over educational practices in the face of backlash or nativist politics thus raises epistemological questions: What kinds of knowledges are valued and produced, and

¹⁴ On the historical uses of “difference” in U.S. classrooms and in education theory, see especially Kris D. Gutiérrez et al., “Remediating Literacy: Culture, Difference, and Learning for Students from Nondominant Communities” (2009).

which ones are suppressed, in monolingual, English-centered educational spaces?¹⁵

This struggle also raises ethical questions. What kinds of social relations are produced through official, state-sponsored schooling? How are students being trained to relate to their own linguistic and cultural heritages, and to those of others?

Cantú's *Canícula* responds to and reshapes long-standing U.S. political and educational paradigms that transform social difference into social inequity. More specifically, *Canícula* highlights the ethical implications of such paradigms, by focusing on the social configurations that are both created and maintained by pedagogical practices and educational standards. The text does so by showing how education, and especially linguistic training, affects the ethical formation of students—by producing embodied habits that affect how students move and act in the world, and in turn, how they interact with and are perceived by others. For Cantú, this ethical formation is especially pertinent to reading instruction and reading practices, apparent in the scene with which I opened this chapter. *Canícula* offers an alternative to an institutionalized, normative method of reading that values a dispassionate, detached reader and is produced and evaluated by monolingual standards.

¹⁵ The passage of Arizona House Bill 2281 in 2010 provides a one answer to this question. This bill, which sought to restrict the teaching of any materials “designed primarily for pupils of a specific ethnic group” or that “advocate ethnic solidarity instead of treating pupils as individuals,” resulted in the following events: the Mexican-American Studies program in Tucson schools was suspended, and Chicana/o Studies books—including Roldolfo Acuña's *Occupied America* (1972), which discusses U.S. expansion into Mexican territory as a history of “conquest and colonization”—were banned from classroom use (Arizona House of Representatives 15-112 A.3-4; Santa Cruz; Tobar). For a discussion of activist efforts to contest this ban, including acts of book smuggling by “librotraficantes” from Texas, see J. Weston Phippen, “How One Law Banning Ethnic Studies Led to Its Rise” (2015).

Cantú's text both depicts an alternative reading methodology and invites readers to perform it. As this chapter will show, Nena's "dramatic" performance provides an alternative model for reading, as does the text's engagement with multiple codes. This code-switching invites readers to develop a flexible reading practice that is attentive to difference. In *Canícula*, Cantú crafts a literary language that, while mostly employing English, refuses to assimilate all elements of Spanish to this dominant (from a U.S. perspective) language. The presence of Spanish (sometimes implicitly translated, sometimes not at all) in a text produced in the U.S. for what Debra Castillo and María Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba's call "dominant culture readers," invites readers to move across multiple codes and "strains at the tolerance of a resolutely monolingual culture" (116). Likewise, *Canícula* asks readers to move between visual and textual codes, as many of the vignettes are descriptions of or responses to photographs that are often reproduced next to the stories. With textual details that do not correspond exactly with a given photographic image, and with stories that refer to photographs withheld from a reader's eyes, *Canícula* asks readers to develop a practice that moves flexibly between codes while giving special attention to difference, discrepancy, and non-correspondence. Through these methods, Cantú invites readers to undo the hierarchies that privilege one language over another (English over Spanish) or the truth-value of one representative form over another (images, perhaps, over textual language).¹⁶

¹⁶ In the Prologue to *Canícula*, the death of Roland Barthes and the publication of his *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* in 1980 catalyze the narrator's interest in revisiting her family's photographs (1). In the Introduction and in other writings about *Canícula*, Cantú

At the same time, *Canícula* refuses to collapse the distinctions between these codes, suggesting a relationship between them that is non-hierarchical but that preserves difference. Such a relationship is useful for rethinking educational paradigms that tend to translate student differences into social, political, and linguistic hierarchies. This chapter thus extends an insight provided by Second Sophistic texts, especially Lucian's, about the inadequacy of educational models that reproduce social marginalization and political exclusion. The previous chapter left us standing at Lucian's educational crossroads, uncertain about which road to take, thinking, perhaps, that neither set of available educational standards offered an adequate option. In its own context, *Canícula* offers a response to this impasse. This text invites readers to willfully unlearn the practices that dominate normative educational paradigms in the United States. By developing a method of reading that diverges from the reading practices espoused by these paradigms, *Canícula* offers a method for reshaping the discursive and political terrain on which social hierarchies are constructed. That is, this text locates the possibility for unsettling inequitable social paradigms in the way we read.

cites Barthes as a primary interlocutor in her use of photographic material in the text (*Canícula* xii). For example, in "The Writing of *Canícula*," Cantú notes that Barthes helped her to think about "how visual literacy and visual images shape our memories and indeed communicate stories," while acknowledging "how photography is truth, yet it is unreliable" (100-101). Castillo and Tabuenca Córdoba clarify that *Camera Lucida* provides Cantú with key ideas about a photograph's unreliability, which results from its physical affect on a viewer. For Barthes, photographs may seem to allow a viewer to recall a particular memory, but actually create a "counter-memory"; this happens, in part, through what Barthes termed the *punctum*, that is, the physical "piercing" that photographic details can produce in the body of the viewer—and that can cause a viewer to misread the details in a photograph (Castillo and Tabuenca Córdoba 101).

Model Students and Unassimilated Bodies

Before Nena arrives in the eighth grade to recite poetry in front of her class, she has already practiced her “declamación” skills for many years. At the beginning of Cantú’s vignette, entitled “Declamación,” Nena recalls being three years old in Laredo, standing on a stage in her church in front of her family members and community reciting “Mother’s Day poems I learn at Sra. Piña’s *escuelita*” (62). The names of the poems she lists, just like the title of her teacher and the diminutive form of “school,” are in Spanish, associating her first educational experiences and early reading practices with this language. Scattered throughout *Canícula* are references to the tradition of the *escuelita*, a kind of informal, community-based schooling for younger students that prizes literacy skills in both Spanish and English. For example, in the vignette “Panchita,” Nena describes a woman who ran an *escuelita* in her community. Sitting “amid a group of preschoolers” in a photo that is referenced but not shown in the text, Panchita “taught the alphabets—English and Spanish—numbers, colors, and rhymes. The same things she had learned as a child attending one of the earliest *escuelitas* in the twenties” (58). Nena clarifies that this long tradition of community-based schooling “all but disappeared when Head Start came” (58). That is, the arrival of the federal program, begun in 1965 and developed to serve as a bridge between preschool and elementary school for underprivileged children, replaced the already-established learning community in this region. The *escuelita*, positioned adjacent to formal schooling—Nena can see Panchita’s students “from [her] second-grade classroom” (58)—offers a bilingual educational model in which

English and Spanish language practices are equally valued. However, this bilingual model is viewed by outsiders as competing with the educational models of more formal, institutionalized, and state-sponsored spaces. Thus, when Nena recites poetry in the eighth grade, her reading practices, which emerge from specific cultural and linguistic traditions, are deemed incompatible with monolingual classroom protocol. Upon entering an English-dominant classroom in Laredo, Nena must censor the cultural and linguistic practices that define her early education and community relationships.

This censorship does not simply dichotomize Spanish and English practices according to norms of public and private space, requiring Nena to speak and read in English at school and to leave her Spanish at home. The teacher's complaint about Nena's "dramatic" performance also refers to how Nena's body carries this cultural and linguistic history, even as she recites an English poem. When Nena narrates her declamación of the poem her teacher has asked the class to memorize—"Invictus," written in the nineteenth century by British poet William Ernest Henley—she explains how she moves her body and modulates her voice to correspond with the words. As she recites the line, "Dark as the pit from pole to pole," she "gestur[es] to the depths and with a voice forceful and ominous" (62). By matching her gestures and voice to the action of the poem, Nena integrates her embodied responses to the text with an intellectual awareness of its meaning. In contrast, the instructor's interruption demonstrates an assumption that Nena's body should not "get in the way" of reading the poem.

Moreover, this interruption suggests that the instructor may not understand the themes of the poem that she asked the class to memorize. Henley's "Invictus" thematizes acts of resilience and persistence in the face of struggle, legible in the speaker's insistence of his own "unconquerable soul" (Henley l. 4). In the closing stanza, the speaker proclaims that "punishment" will not make him any less able to control his "fate":

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul. (Henley ll. 12-16)

Here, when the speaker proclaims autonomy no matter "how strait the gate," it can be the "straightness" of both the road upon which one walks and one's manner or habit of walking that is referenced (OED "gate, n.2"). The poem thus brings attention to the speaker's embodied habits—the length of his stride, his behaviors or mannerisms—and links the unconventionality of these habits with the "punishments" that appear in the preceding line. It is often remarked that Henley was motivated to write the poem after the partial amputation of his leg (Cohen, "Two Anticipations"); while the poem does not need to be read biographically, this information highlights how the speaker's "gate" can refer to the non-normativity of a differently abled body. Despite the poem's attention to how this embodied experience affects the speaker's outlook, and despite the speaker's assertion that he will remain "unconquered" when facing external standards (i.e., the "punishments" on the "scroll"), the teacher of Nena's eighth-grade classroom upholds a standard that measures and ranks students

according to their embodied habits. Nena better comprehends the poem's emphasis on resilience even when one's body does not do what it is expected to do by others.

Nena's narration of this classroom scene demonstrates that the constructed norm for reading, the "neutral" reading that her teacher desires, depends upon the bodies of readers. This norm is based on bodies that do not look, sound, or act like Nena's. Nena shifts her recitation practice by making her body conform to the practices employed by another student in the class: she corrects her reading by "imitat[ing] the bland [...] reading that Louise had just done" (62). There is no detached or abstract standard that Nena can follow. Rather, there are only readings performed by bodies, and in this scene it is the body of Louise—a presumably white student who does not share Nena's Chicana heritage—that serves as the model student.

In the vignette that appears just before "Declamación," Nena encounters similar demands for bodily assimilation in order to gain inclusion in her school community. "Body Hair" recalls another scene from the eighth grade, when Nena overhears a conversation in the cafeteria that causes her to feel shame about her body. Her classmate Sarah, Nena explains, "is talking to Susan and Janice in a voice loud and clear so I can hear, 'All I know is unplucked brows and hairy legs and underarms make a girl look like a boy'" (60). This statement is not only gendered—Sarah critiques Nena's body because it does not conform to standards of femininity—but also racialized, as Nena considers how her mother and other Chicana women in her community do not abide by such standards. "Mami doesn't shave or pluck her

eyebrows either, and neither did her comadres until much later,” Nena reflects after she runs to hide in the bathroom, “Many Chicana classmates behave like gringas, but my friends, most of us who ride the Saunders bus [as opposed to owning cars like Sarah and Janice do], we don’t yet shave, much less pluck our eyebrows, or wear makeup” (61). The standards that oppose Nena’s particularity—and her embodied ties to her community—create cultural, racialized, and socio-economic hierarchies. These beauty regimens, practiced by “gringas,” are associated with U.S. American influence in the borderlands region, and thus constitute part of a larger demand that inhabitants of Mexican heritage living on the U.S. side of the border assimilate to dominant cultural models. Other Chicana students help Nena come to this realization; a student named Rita, one of the “chucas”¹⁷ who is smoking in the bathroom, tells Nena, “No les hagas caso a esas pendejas,” and Nena “believe[s]” her (61).¹⁸ This advice to ignore and dismiss the other students, offered in Spanish, further indicates how the demands to assimilate, which permeate Nena’s experiences at school, link bodily comportment with language practice.

¹⁷ Shorthand for “pachuca,” recalling the Mexican American zoot suit subculture that took hold in the 1940s; during the Chicano rights movement of the 1960s-80s, pachucas/os became key figures for defining Chicana/o identity. For a discussion of how pachucas have challenged dominant gender norms in Chicana communities, see Catherine Ramírez’s *The Woman in the Zoot Suit* (2009).

¹⁸ For some of the Spanish passages of *Canícula*, I have opted to perform implicit translations, as Cantú often does in her text. In this method, a partial translation is offered but is not explicitly marked off as a translation. For a discussion of Cantú’s translation strategies, including how an implicit translation of Spanish into English provides an English-speaking reader with enough information to make sense of a text, see Castillo and Tabuenca Córdoba, *Border Women: Writing from La Frontera* (2002: 117). On the political significance of code-switching texts’ defiance of translation, see Debra Castillo, *Redreaming America: Toward a Bilingual American Culture* (2005).

While “Body Hair” presents the possibility for Chicana alliances in the face of assimilationist demands, the vignette ultimately comments on the inadequacies of educational standards that perpetuate social hierarchies among students. Nena’s cultural ties and embodied particularity might be affirmed in the bathroom hideout—a temporary refuge for non-conformists—but this particularity continues to be suppressed in the classroom. Directly after Nena talks with Rita, she returns to her English class, defiant. She enlists Rosario, “the only other Chicana in the accelerated class,” in her plan to out-perform the students from the cafeteria on a weekly quiz. Even though she and Rosario do “beat them” on the quiz, Nena reports, “it is Susan’s paper that Mrs. McDonnell reads from on Monday morning as an example of good work” (61). That Nena and Rosario are the only two Chicana students in this class implies the larger, systemic forms of discrimination that create hierarchies among the students in the school: the majority of Chicana students, this vignette implies, are not recognized as having “accelerated” or advanced reading and writing skills. These hierarchies are not only perpetuated by the standards that measure student work in the classroom; they also are proven to be more powerful than these seemingly objective measures. Even though Nena and Rosario achieve higher quiz grades on one day, this measure of student work is ignored the next, when the instructor enforces a different standard and defines “good” work as that which is produced by a white student. In this vignette, racialized and gendered social norms, as specifically marked on the body and tied to assimilatory demands, dictate the standards that distinguish “good” work in the English classroom. Within such an educational structure, Nena’s “boyish,”

unshaven, “dramatic” Chicana body is unable to fulfill the role of model English student.

In these classroom scenes, Cantú’s text suggests that educational standards, which rank students according to abstract measurement systems, work upon the bodies of students to create racially and culturally inflected hierarchies. In turn, these hierarchies inform how educational standards are implemented in the classroom—which reveals the standards to be unstable and shifting in spite of their purported objectivity. Through embodied practices and performances, students are trained to adopt and internalize particular behaviors, habits, and identity traits. Nena’s recitation of poetry suggests that this socialization occurs—but can also be resisted—in acts of reading.

Cantú’s text develops the theoretical insights of Gloria Anzaldúa, whose work is especially attuned to the social and ethical implications of how we teach and practice reading. By linking how one reads with how one treats what is different from oneself, Anzaldúa emphasizes that reading helps to construct relations with others. In the essay “To(o) Queer the Writer” (1991), Anzaldúa makes a distinction between a “conventional training in reading” and the reading practices that individuals with intersectional identities learn to develop. This distinction resonates with the one that develops between Nena’s practice of reading and the standards that she is asked to follow in her English classroom. For Anzaldúa, reading is “one way of constructing identity,” and the reading practices that dominate formal “academic learning” can limit readers’ abilities to embrace multiple forms of social difference (“To(o) Queer”

170). More specifically, a “conventional training in reading” guides readers to adopt “pre-constructed” perspectives and identities, that is, to maintain dominant identity categories that often reify gendered and racialized binaries and ignore intersections of difference (“To(o) Queer” 171, 173). For instance, Anzaldúa shows how reading can act as a form of gender socialization: a reader can be trained to read “as” a man or “as” a woman, by being trained to identify with certain characters, and to prefer certain genres of writing, that are culturally associated with either femininity or masculinity (“To(o) Queer” 170). This form of gender socialization develops in readers a habitual practice of identification that favors culturally dominant identity categories. Anzaldúa contends that women are more likely to be trained to adopt masculine perspectives when they read, by identifying with male characters (in addition to female characters), than male readers would be trained to identify with a non-masculine perspective (“To(o) Queer” 170, 172). While in this example women can make cross-gender identifications, men are less likely to be trained to do so. This difference in training thus perpetuates the universalization of what is actually a particular aspect of subject formation, that is, maleness or masculinity.

In Anzaldúa’s example, the practices of reading that affirm existing gender ideologies make difficult the acceptance of non-normative gender identities and sexualities—or intersectional positions in which gender expression is entangled with cultural heritage, racialization, and socio-economic class. Conventional reading practices, in other words, socialize readers into habits of normality by encouraging them to “attach to [...] familiarity” (“To(o) Queer” 171). When readers attach to

familiarity, Anzaldúa explains, they often ignore or cannot even perceive what they do not already know; or, if readers can notice what is “different from oneself,” they often use that difference “to form identity by negation” (“To(o) Queer” 171). In other words, a “conventional training in reading” helps readers to construct their sense of self by suppressing what does not fit into that pre-conceived identity, or by utilizing difference to simply affirm that identity. Here, Anzaldúa illuminates the ethical implications of reading. When readers are trained to inhabit dominant identity categories, readers suppress unfamiliarity and difference both in texts and in social space.

When Cantú juxtaposes two styles of reading—Nena’s gestural, “dramatic” performance and the “bland” practice preferred by the eighth grade instructor—she demonstrates how a “conventional,” or institutionally recognized, practice of reading helps to affirm dominant identity categories. When the instructor claims that Nena’s performance is not, in fact, a “reading,” she universalizes what is actually a particular, embodied practice. That is, the kind of a “reading” she has in mind is not an abstract, neutral practice, but one that is racially and culturally coded, namely, by Anglo American cultural traditions and by whiteness.¹⁹ Nena, in other words, is asked to habituate her body not to the norms that she has inherited from her cultural and

¹⁹ Nena’s recitation of poetry, and her teacher’s memorization assignment, recalls the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century pedagogical uses of poetry in United States classrooms. On this tradition of schoolroom poetry, see Angela Sorby, *Schoolroom Poets: Childhood, Performance, and the Place of American Poetry, 1865-1917* (2005). In addition to emphasizing the somatic experience of performing poetry in classroom settings, Sorby shows how both the content of schoolroom poetry and the conventions for recitation constituted a training in whiteness (35-67).

linguistic background, but to dominant norms that are associated with the embodied practices of her white classmates. These dominant norms, moreover, assume that Nena's practice is inferior. The classroom standards are consistently shown to translate into social hierarchies, as the model students in the classroom are those who suppress differences in the cafeteria.

In *Canícula*, educational standards also help to organize social space along linguistic lines. Institutionalized language inequality in the United States, in which English language practices are privileged over others, relegates Nena's linguistic and cultural resources to certain spaces, such as her home. Throughout the text, we learn that Nena uses both Spanish and English with her family; for example, she serves as a simultaneous translator during English news programs (Cantú, *Canícula* 120).

Frances R. Aparicio's work particularly illuminates the mechanisms and effects of this "domestication" of Spanish in the United States. In "Of Spanish Dispossessed" (2000), Aparicio explains that the "displace[ment]" of Spanish "into the boundaries of family life" participates a more generalized displacement of the "public role of Spanish"—that is, in the act of "delegitimizing [Spanish] as a public language fit for professional and intellectual development" (254, 257-58). In Nena's world, not only is Spanish displaced and devalued, but public acts of Spanish are also punished: Nena describes having to pay fines or "write lines" for speaking Spanish, an act understood as a "transgression" that has punitive (often economic) consequences (Cantú, *Canícula* 88-89). Borrowing Anzaldúa's term, Aparicio describes such instances of linguistic-based acts of humiliation and punishment as "linguistic terrorism," the

active and often physical repression of Spanish in educational and public spaces, especially common in the U.S. Southwest, Texas, and California regions (“Of Spanish” 257).²⁰

The humiliation that Nena endures in the classroom shifts her perspectives about the value of her cultural and linguistic resources. Directly after explaining that she loses points for her “dramatic” reading in “Declamación,” Nena describes how she and her brother Tino slowly stop using their declamación skills at home and in their communities. At first, they continue “declamando [...] for parties [...] testing our memorization skills, competing to see who could declamar the longest poems and remember the most lyrics from songs—in English and in Spanish” (62). Their bilingual declamación practices shift, however, as they move into high school: they “start listening to mostly English” songs and “forget our declamación and our contests—too childish, too cursi, too Spanish” (62-3). Here, the list of adjectives creates an equivalence between “Spanish” and the descriptors “childish” and “cursi” (tacky, or in bad taste), signaling the devaluation of Spanish. The practices associated with the language are dismissed as immature, skills Nena ought to grow out of. The idea of outgrowing her Spanish illustrates the entanglement of language with Nena’s

²⁰ In *Borderlands/ La Frontera*, Anzaldúa uses the term “linguistic terrorism” to describe not only acts that suppress the use of Spanish or Spanglish in an English-dominant culture, but also the internalization of this linguistic suppression that causes Chicanas to feel ashamed when speaking Chicano Spanish—a “non-standard” language—to other Spanish-speaking Latinas/os (80-81). In *Canícula*, Nena faces a similar form of displacement, when she describes visiting her family in Monterrey, Mexico. There, her cousins call her *pocha* (22), a word that refers to an “anglicized Mexican or American of Mexican origin who speaks Spanish with an accent characteristic of North Americans and who distorts and reconstructs the language according to the influence of English” (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 78). Though born in Mexico, Nena feels out of place, excluded from her cousins’ Spanish jokes and games (*Canícula* 23).

social formation; Spanish and bilingualism are identified not only with more domestic spaces, but also with earlier stages in developmental growth—where the not-so-implicit teleology is English.

Despite this devaluation of Spanish and its displacement from public arenas in the United States, in *Canícula* bilingual practices are shown again and again to be valuable resources. On the one hand, the fines that Nena pays for her Spanish “transgressions” at school concretize how, as Aparicio argues in “Whose Spanish, Whose Language, Whose Power?” (1998), the devaluation of Spanish and of certain forms of bilingualism maintains socio-economic inequality. More specifically, Aparicio’s discussion of bilingualism as a “social construction” demonstrates that Nena’s linguistic knowledge is undervalued because of her “subject location,” that is, her “class position, racial, ethnic and gender identity,” in a context where language use is inflected by asymmetries of power (“Whose Spanish” 7-8).²¹ On the other hand, these same skills are economically lucrative outside of the classroom. For example, in order to buy her family “real gifts” for Christmas—“store bought and not handmade”—Nena and her brother sell their “translation services” by translating comic books (from which language, it is unclear) for a nickel each (Cantú, *Canícula* 88). Nena also recounts opening her own *escuelita* during one summer, where she

²¹ To make this point, Aparicio borrows Kenji Hakuta’s notions of “additive” and “subtractive” bilingualism, which Aparicio describes as “the ways in which different, socially-located speaking subjects either ‘add’ another language to their expressive repertoire or, as in the case of most ethnic minorities, silence their native tongue in order to assimilate, to function in the dominant, public sphere” (“Whose Spanish” 6). In other words, learning Spanish as a second language gives some subjects cultural capital, while the bilingualism of others whose first language is Spanish is viewed as a hindrance to social and political acceptance.

“charge[s] twenty-five cents per child” and teaches “nursery rhymes, alphabets, numbers, and games” in both English and Spanish (93). Her *escuelita* saves her from another form of labor; the teaching fee allows her to avoid a pre-dawn wake-up call to pick cotton (93), pointing to the economic logic that undergirds the appraisal, both negative and positive, of her Spanish and bilingual practices. Further, this logic points to the economic structures that require the underpaid labor of migrants while ensuring their economic, social, and political marginalization.²² Whereas in the classroom Nena’s Spanish is assessed as an economic disadvantage, its economic profitability elsewhere refuses the common logic that Spanish itself is a “cause” of the socioeconomic marginality of Latinas/os in the United States. As Aparicio explains, such logic diverts our attention away from “the structural economic factors” that both maintain social hierarchies and undergird the valuation of languages (“Whose Spanish” 8). The differing valuations of Nena’s bilingualism in the world of *Canícula* make evident that such structural economic factors help to dictate the values afforded to one’s language expression.

Further, Nena’s bilingual skills become the unseen force in two situations that involve the obtainment of political and social recognition. Nena’s language skills allow her to teach a woman in her community “her citizenship questions,” a reference

²² See Alejandro Portes, “The New Latin Nation: Immigration and the Hispanic Population in the United States” (2007), which identifies “the labor needs of the American economy” as “the most potent factor accounting for the surge in Latin American immigration” and discusses how Mexico became “the principal reservoir of low-wage labor for the American economy” (15-16). Similarly, in “Latinos in the United States: Invitation and Exile” (1997) Gilbert Paul Carrasco articulates long histories of alternating periods of guest worker programs, massive deportation projects, and immigration restriction, as an ongoing cycle of “labor surplus” and “economic stress” (190).

to the English language literacy requirements for gaining U.S. citizenship through naturalization (93). Nena confirms that, with her help, this woman passes the exam—and thus achieves official political recognition. In another instance, Nena is able to gain recognition in the classroom by means of her bilingual knowledge. She “impress[es]” her teacher with the correct answer to a question, by “[r]epeating in English what I’ve heard in Spanish at home,” and thus affirming that Spanish is a language of thought and intellection (30). While Spanish/bilingual literacy skills are ultimately elided in these two situations—that is, the U.S. citizenship test does not measure bilingual facility and Nena does not speak Spanish in her classroom—these skills are what allow Nena to gain recognition, political and social, for herself and for others.²³

In these instances, both Spanish literacy and bilingual dexterity are shown to be significant factors in Nena’s performance as a student and in the very construction of an “official” U.S. political identity. Such truths are disregarded, for instance, in claims that one’s home language interferes with learning English or in the conceptualization of English as the official language of the U.S. American nation. Moreover, Nena’s ability to move flexibly between different social spaces, selectively employing her literacy skills depending on how Spanish, English, and bilingualism are differently valued in each space, emphasize “how the meaning, roles, and power

²³ That Nena’s bilingualism and Spanish language skills are not officially credited in these two scenarios also speaks to the position of Nena as translator. As Kirsten Silva Gruesz points out in “Translation: A Key(word) into the Language of America(nists)” (2004), translation is commonly (and incorrectly) perceived to be “non-conflictual” and to operate by means of accommodation, “smoothness,” and invisibility (89-90).

of a given language are [...] relational, shifting, and negotiated” (Aparicio, “Whose Spanish” 20). Nena’s linguistic flexibility, along with her awareness of the power dynamics of language use, importantly extends beyond her official academic learning, that is, beyond her “conventional training” in reading and literacy. This flexibility not only is *not* taught to her in school, but also actively works against the standards and hierarchies enforced in English-dominant educational spaces. As the next section will explore, this readerly flexibility offers an alternative to educational models that are based on monolingual and monocultural standards.

Radical Dehabituation: A Reader’s *Facultad*

Canícula was published in the 1990s in the United States during an era that education scholars have characterized by a heightened and “renewed interest in education reform” (Gutiérrez et al., “Backlash” 340). These calls for reform spurred the implementation of new reading programs and generated national reports on the status of reading, which were aimed to “fix” student underperformance and declining schools (Gutiérrez et al., “Backlash” 340-41). As Kris Gutiérrez and others have pointed out, the reports on reading and literacy that emerged out of the political climate of the 1990s tended to disregard linguistic heterogeneity. These reports helped to perpetuate a “subtractive” model of linguistic diversity; that is, literacy skills in languages other than English have been identified as a hindrance to learners’ development (Gutiérrez et al., “Sounding” 329, 334). Likewise, because the educational reforms of the 1990s emphasized testing in standard academic English,

other forms of linguistic knowledge were (and continue to be) devalued in this monolingual and monocultural model of learning.²⁴

Critics of the reading model that emerged from these reforms oppose its reductive emphasis on the rapid decoding of text, which involves training readers to accurately and quickly perform a set of discrete reading skills that are easily measurable. One of the reading reports generated during this period of educational reform demonstrates this emphasis on habituated decoding. The report, released by the National Reading Panel in 2000, became the basis for the Reading First Initiative, a federal program enacted under the No Child Left Behind Act. Although the initiative was defunded in 2009, it established a dominant model of reading that was shaped by a nativist political climate and that still affects how reading is taught. Reading First stipulated funding for literacy programs if they were “founded on scientifically based reading research” that relies on standards-based assessment—that is, on “measuring” how well students read based on a set of discrete reading skills (U.S. Department of Education). Among the central skills identified by the 2000 National Reading Panel are “phonics,” that is, learning to make correspondences between letters and sounds, and “fluency,” defined in the report as the ability “to read orally with speed, accuracy, and proper expression” (National Reading Panel 8, 11). As a result of this report, these two skills, especially fluency, have become central to

²⁴ See Ramona Fernandez, *Imagining Literacy: Rhizomes of Knowledge in American Culture and Literature* (2001), on the implicit equation of literacy and proper interpretation with a student’s “knowledge of the Western cultural tradition”; in this monocultural definition of literacy, “misreading” becomes the “misapplication of other cultural knowledge” (35-36).

literacy curricula, primarily because they are “easy to measure” in a testing-focused environment (Kuhn et al. 230, 241).

The focus on phonics-based instruction and proper expression is not unaffected by U.S. language politics. Reading programs that focus on these skills are deemed successful, for example, when they make diverse students “sound more like normative English speakers,” and thus re-shape the tongues and mouths of readers (Gutiérrez et al., “Sounding” 336). Moreover, the equation of “fluent” reading—defined by accurate word identification and a speedy, unencumbered rate of reading—with “skilled” reading ignores how background knowledge and readers’ personal and cultural histories help them to create meaning (Kuhn et al. 239). A notion of reading that prizes rapid decoding and proper pronunciation, as measured against a common norm, not only perpetuates a monolingual educational model; it also transforms any readerly divergence into a deficiency that needs to be corrected. When reading is separated into a set of discrete skills, students’ abilities can be “drilled” and repeatedly measured—a process of habituation that, as many education scholars and English teachers point out, can be a hindrance to meaning-making (“NCTE Position Statement”; Kuhn et al. 243-244; Gutiérrez et al., “Backlash” 334).

In Cantú’s classroom scene, an alternative to such a definition of reading—as a uniform, habitual, automatic practice—emerges. The centrality of Nena’s body to her reading practice—her gestures and her linguistic resources—demonstrates that reading cannot be separated into a set of replicable skills pertinent to any and every reader. Her embodied practice allows her to recognize the significance of each word

in the poem, affirmed by the analogical connection between her gestures and the orthographic positions of written letters. Reading without gestures, she explains, is like remembering how to spell the name John: “I could never get the *h* in the right place: if it was *ghost* then why not *Jhon* I asked?” (62). Nena’s performance shows that when it comes to reading, a habitual, unchanging reading practice may not be able to fully respond to the variability and specificity of a text in any language.

Cantú’s text invites readers to practice this alternative method of reading when Nena’s code-switching resists the assimilatory demands of her teacher. The introduction of an unmarked Spanish word (*ademanas*) into an account primarily written in English shifts a reader’s practice at the very moment that Nena recalls being interrupted. In this moment, code-switching causes a shift in readerly attention: an English-dominant reader is asked to shift out of her usual reading habits, while the practices of a reader who is more comfortably bilingual are honored. For either a monolingual (in English) reader or a bilingual (English and Spanish) reader, the movement between English and Spanish within a single sentence resists the segregation of these languages—such as by an ideologically defined separation between domestic and public languages, by monocultural and monolingual classroom standards, or even by dual immersion language instruction that still keeps Spanish and English separate. Cantú thus invites both sets of readers to notice how linguistic variation shapes their own reading practices. Moreover, by asking a reader to attend to language difference, Cantú’s text critiques institutionalized language inequality while refusing to close the gap between Spanish and English.

Nena's gestural practice, and the kind of interlingual reading that Cantú's text invites of her readers, has much in common with Anzaldúa's notion of *la facultad*. In *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), Anzaldúa describes this faculty as a cultivated sensitivity, a form of awareness that is deeply felt in the body and developed by marginalized subjects who must adeptly move between cultures and languages in order to survive (61, 102). Anzaldúa defines this mode of "sensing" others and the world as a form of dehabitation: it is "whatever breaks into one's everyday mode of perception," "anything that takes one from one's habitual grounding," and something that "causes a shift in perception" (*Borderlands* 61). By interrupting normalized ways of seeing and feeling, *la facultad* importantly develops one's capacity to embrace contradiction, to "tolerate ambiguity"—a capacity that is especially cultivated when one "straddl[es] two or more cultures" or moves between multiple identity formations and languages (*Borderlands* 101-102). In *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000), Chela Sandoval explains that *facultad* is a "hermeneutic," that is, a set of interpretive practices that allows one to "read" dominant structures of power in order to break from them (140, 145).

Understanding *la facultad* as a hermeneutic, I see its resonance with Anzaldúa's discussion of reading in "To(o) Queer the Writer." Here, Anzaldúa develops a "flexible" reading methodology, in contradistinction to the "conventional training in reading" that promotes an "attachment to familiarity" (171). While acknowledging the impossibility of escaping one's embodied "point of view" when reading, Anzaldúa explains how a flexible reader adopts a stance of "patience in

deciphering a strange, that is, different text” (“To(o) Queer” 171-172). A flexible stance makes better readers: by acknowledging their own social positions and being open to difference and unfamiliarity, readers access “more entradas,” more points of entry, into a text (“To(o)” Queer” 171). Like Cantú’s description of Nena’s ademanes, Anzaldúa’s switch to Spanish in this discussion of reading links linguistic variation with a flexible reading practice. This code-switching suggests that flexible reading is a methodology that can attend to difference—especially linguistic difference—without devaluing it or assimilating it into a dominant framework. As Cantú’s text demonstrates, a reading practice that values linguistic heterogeneity resists a model of academic learning that privileges standard English and elides culturally specific and embodied perspectives. Like Anzaldúa’s notions of *la facultad* and flexible reading, Nena’s gestural reading practice acknowledges that “one always reads from the place one’s feet are planted, the ground one stands on, one’s particular position, point of view” (Anzaldúa, “To(o) Queer” 172-3). Her navigation of an English text is necessarily informed by her cultural and linguistic practices, as performed through her body.

For Anzaldúa, interpretive flexibility translates to how readers experience and encounter social difference: how one treats unfamiliarity and difference in texts translates to how one treats others who are different from oneself. In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa explains that developing the hermeneutic of *la facultad* can lead one to adopt a perspective that “includes rather than excludes” because it does not adhere to “entrenched habits and patterns of behavior” (61, 101). This flexible and

inclusive perspective does not seek to unify contradictory differences—a unity that might fuse or homogenize different cultural identities or language practices—but allows for their coexistence. This inclusive perspective, Anzaldúa explains, is a form of “divergent thinking” that can handle plurality without suppressing difference (101-102). Sandoval calls this inclusive perspective a “differential” mode, because it involves adopting multiple identity formations in order to navigate power dynamics in social and political space. This differential perspective, moreover, can facilitate social transformation: by allowing a practitioner to both read dominant ideologies and break from them, *la facultad* is a method for generating more egalitarian social forms (Sandoval 62, 184). Both Anzaldúa’s and Cantú’s works demonstrate that cultivating this ethical faculty, this “differential perspective,” involves navigating linguistic difference: for Anzaldúa, a reader who moves between languages and cultures is especially equipped to develop a flexible, inclusive perspective, and Cantú’s text invites diverse audiences of bilingual and monolingual readers to cultivate this flexibility. If, as their works suggest, social differences are structured by language ideologies, then a flexible stance toward linguistic difference can facilitate social relations defined by an interdependence that is not compatible with hierarchy.²⁵

²⁵ A notion of social space borrowed from Derrida’s deconstruction of democracy in *Politics of Friendship* (1997 [1994]). Identifying an essential “dissymmetry” in the history of democracy, Derrida calls for a thinking of democracy that does not reproduce social hierarchies: this form of democracy has “no relation to [...] inequality or superiority” and is “incompatible with all sociopolitical hierarchy *as such*” (PF 232). In spite of “the stubborn apartheid of theoretical domains” that have kept them separate, Sandoval demonstrates the compatibility of Derrida’s and Anzaldúa’s theories; she links their shared “de-colonial” efforts and develops a “cross-disciplinary” approach that can think more cohesively about “social movements under globalizing postmodern cultural conditions” (11, 69).

To further illustrate how a text might act as the site for a “flexible” training in reading, I turn to the work of Juan Felipe Herrera, whose interlingual poetry participates in the same tradition as Cantú’s work. Herrera’s poetry features dynamic movements between multiple languages—especially his earlier poems from the 1970s when Chicana/o and Latina/o poets were experimenting with a literary language marked by code-switching, Spanglish, and other forms of non-standard language practices that define everyday interactions for many communities. As Juan Flores and George Yúdice explain, this form of linguistic experimentation, or “interfacing of multiple codes,” is guided by “play, freedom, and even empowerment” because it calls into question dominant linguistic rules and standardization, and is based in the ways that many Latinas/os “deploy their language in everyday life” (“Living Borders” 60-61; 75-76).²⁶ Herrera’s poetry is characterized by this sense of playfulness, and particularly highlights the complex oral/aural dynamics of speech as a speaker moves between languages. Associated with “the Floricanto generation of ’71,” Herrera’s interlingual, performance-based poetry emerged around the Festival Floricanto, a celebration of Chicana/o literary expression that is associated, in part, with Alurista, a Chicano poet who published *Floricanto en Aztlán* in 1971 (Herrera, *187 Reasons* 21).²⁷ With its linguistic experimentation and inclusion of English, Spanish, and

²⁶ Because the aesthetic of interlingual texts is not “separate from everyday practices,” Flores and Yúdice argue that Latina/o literary texts constitute a “practice” rather than a “representation” of Latina/o identity (60-61).

²⁷ Floricanto, or flor y canto, means “flower and song,” and derives from the Nahuatl words that signify a type of ancient Aztec poetry; the term thus invokes a pre-Columbian indigenous cultural heritage (Barteles). The Chicano movement’s recuperation (and invention) of indigenous myths and worldviews helped to define a new collective identity, one that importantly opposed official U.S. history (Aparicio, “U.S. Latino” 363). The effects of this

Nahuatl, this book of poetry “challenged the monolingual assumptions of U.S. editorial practices” (Aparicio, “U.S. Latino” 362; Barteles 497). Alurista’s work, like Herrera’s poetry and the work of others who participated in language experimentalism at the height of the Chicano Movement, give a dominant structural feature to literary production of Chicanas/os and Latinas/os in the U.S.²⁸

In addition to reshaping dominant literary paradigms, Latina/o interlingual texts have imagined a new kind of readership with their multilingual modes of address. As Manuel Martín-Rodríguez explains, texts that imagine a “diverse multicultural audience” utilize “not one but several sets of norms” to address heterogeneous readers (123). For many Chicana/o interlingual texts, these norms relate to language and translation strategies; by moving across two or more languages, such texts operate by navigating (and often rupturing) the linguistic norms for each of those languages. Likewise, while these texts primarily address an audience familiar with the experience of moving between languages and navigating multiple cultures, their readership is heterogeneous, and includes readers with different levels of

“de-colonizing cultural politics,” however, included the perpetuation of “cultural essentialism” and a masculinist form of nationalism that excluded many from the movement, especially women and queer communities—as Chicana feminists have since critiqued (Aparicio, “U.S. Latino” 363-64, 370-71).

²⁸ As Aparicio notes, works before the Chicano movement were “characterized by a stance of cultural ambivalence,” in which authors wrote in English to gain acceptance by dominant U.S. Anglophone readership. The poets and literary writers at the height of the Chicano movement, she explains, “contest the silencing of Spanish by previous Latina/o writers and by the American social and educational machinery” (“Sub-Versive” 202-203). For a longer history of Latina/o writing in the U.S. that does not “silence Spanish,” see Kirsten Silva Gruesz’s *Ambassadors of Culture* (2002) and Raúl Coronado’s *A World Not to Come* (2013), which demonstrate a long transamerican literary tradition in the “Spanish borderlands.” Gruesz writes that this history refuses to “render the Latino ghostly and peripheral” in the U.S. literary tradition and asks Anglophone readers to “grappl[e] seriously with Spanish as an essential literary language of the United States” (*Ambassadors* xii, xvi).

familiarity with each language. As a result, such texts often employ different strategies, such as translation, for including more readers—or for making access difficult (Martín-Rodríguez 117-123). Cantú, for example, employs various strategies throughout *Canícula*. Often using intra-sentential code-switching, in which a sentence written primarily in English includes one or more Spanish words, Cantú sometimes offers implicit translations of the Spanish for her non-bilingual readers. At other times, she does not provide either a direct or implicit translation of the Spanish; at these times, the Spanish remains unmarked in the text, without italics or scare quotes, and without an English equivalent.

These variable textual strategies invite linguistically heterogeneous reading practices that can adapt to multiple sets of language norms, thus leading to the construction of new kinds of reading publics. For Aparicio, these new publics are specifically bi- or multi-cultural and -lingual, a new “ideal” readership that displaces the “predominant ideal of the monolingual reader” in the U.S. (“Sub-Versive 201, 206). However, this displacement of the ideal monolingual, English-speaking reader need not be viewed solely as an act of exclusion (i.e., excluding the monolingual reader in order to privilege a bilingual one). As Flores and Yúdice explain, interlingual texts “delight not only in excluding and eluding the dominant and exclusionary” but also in including dominant discourses, by using and adapting them to new purposes in order to expose their “malleability” (“Living Borders” 76). More specifically, interlingual texts may include expressions in a dominant language—such as standard forms of English within the U.S.—while communicating a “disregard for

conventionally bounded usage,” that is, for strict linguistic norms that suppress variation or paradigms of correct usage that do not reflect the actual practices of many communities. In doing so, code-switching, interlingual texts highlight the creative possibilities when two or more languages interact and intermix to produce new forms of expression (Flores and Yúdice, “Living Borders” 76). By including dominant discourses in the production of creative linguistic adaptation, such texts demonstrate the constitutive instability of a dominant language, its susceptibility to change.

Herrera’s 1970s interlingual poetry demonstrates such “acts of inclusion” while privileging readers who can flexibly move between languages. By playing with phonological relations between language systems, these performance-based poems consist of a series of brief lines that invite a reader to consider the sounds each word might elicit when spoken. The poetry’s movement between languages demands close attention at the level of a single word, syllable, or even a single letter, thus inviting a style of reading that does not take for granted the pronunciation of even the most “familiar” units of language. Herrera’s poetry therefore interrupts a habituated reading practice by inviting a reader to be “flexible” and to read according to two or more language systems at once. Many of the poems pair Spanish and English (and sometimes Nahuatl) words that produce similar sounds from slightly different alphabetic configurations, as in the following lines from “Dawning Luz” (1974): “song / of / struggle / song / of tierra / song / of sangre / song / of / fuego” (187 *Reasons* 329, ll. 15-24). Here, the graphemic differences in the first syllable of both *song* and *sangre* may be perceptible to a seeing reader (i.e., the slight difference

between the typed letters *o* and *a*). However, when spoken aloud (or pronounced silently in a reader's mind), these graphemic differences converge to produce the same sound, troubling clear distinctions between Spanish and English phonetic paradigms.

Other poems by Herrera similarly juxtapose Spanish and English words that share graphemes, but instead highlight their divergent phonetic qualities. These phonetic differences can potentially cause mispronunciation when reading; English words risk being pronounced according to Spanish phonetic norms, and vice versa. For example, in "Amerindia One Heart," first read at the Festival Floricanto in 1973, the sequence "raiz ardiente / to / one heart rise / rasa rise" can cause phonological confusion (*187 Reasons* 325, ll. 42-45). In order to correctly pronounce the lines, a reader must adeptly move between the phonetic paradigms of Spanish and English. While the Spanish "raiz" and the English "rise" may produce similar sounds according to the paradigms of their respective language systems, the line "rasa rise" invites a different form of attention. If a reader is unable to make the switch from Spanish to English phonetic paradigms in this line, which juxtaposes the Spanish "rasa"²⁹ with the English "rise," she may read an English word as if it were inflected by Spanish pronunciation: "rise" risks becoming "risé."

²⁹ *Rasa* is an adjective that means "low," "level," or "flat," or an imperative form of the verb *rasar*, "to level" or "to skim." But the spelling here may be a variation of *raza*, for race, an important concept for articulating collective identity during the Chicano movement. By spelling *raza* with an *s*, Herrera demonstrates the similarity with English pronunciation, thus promoting the phonological confusion that I identify in this poetic line.

There is radical potential in this kind of pronunciative “error.” As Aparicio explains, an interlingual text can invite the pronunciation of English “according the graphic and phonetic norms of Spanish,” and can thus “invert the negative values imposed by others on the Hispanic pronunciation of English.” The result is that such a text revalues a “phonetic praxis” that is “vulnerable to discrimination and shame” (Aparicio, “Sub-Versive” 203). By “creating signifiers that are derived from Spanish linguistic practices and norms,” interlingual texts can work to de-privilege the English-dominant or monolingual reader as the assumed ideal or notional reader in the U.S. (Aparicio, “Sub-Versive” 203, 206). Moreover, the invitation to mispronounce English in Herrera’s poetry critiques the language hierarchies and the norming practices that define current U.S. literacy paradigms. Skills by which readers are currently measured and assessed include their accurate intonation and pacing. Herrera’s poetry shows that reading prosody is not universal; it relies on the rhythms and patterns of a particular language (Kuhn et al. 234). This poetry also resists the elimination of the audible markers of a reader’s linguistic heterogeneity, such as accented speech, which often becomes the focus of prescriptive, monolingual reading programs (Gutiérrez et al., “Sounding” 334). These programs’ emphasis on “proper” oral pronunciation constitutes an attempt to stabilize the relationship between letter configurations and the sounds they are meant to produce in the mouth of a reader. Herrera’s poetry troubles this relationship of equivalency and invites “errant” readings.

Cantú's *Canícula* illuminates how the kind of reading produced by Herrera's interlingual poetry—another vocal performance, perhaps—is a particularly embodied experience. First, Cantú's text exposes the embodied nature of linguistic repression that Herrera's poetry disrupts. As Aparicio explains and as Nena's classroom experiences demonstrate, "the tongue, the mouth, accents, and phonetics have been central physical, physiological and metaphoric sites of linguistic repression," as dominant values about language and literacy are "inscribed" onto speech and the body (Aparicio, "Of Spanish" 254). With these insights, we can read Herrera's poetry as adapting to the multilingual tongues of some readers, or as reconfiguring the tongues of others, when it invites a flexible movement between languages. Like Nena's "dramatic" reading practice, which positions her body in relation to the orthographic variations of a text, the reading practice that Herrera's poetry invites is also grounded in the relation between a particular reader (her body, her tongue, her voice) and the phonetic variations of a text. Likewise, as Nena's embodied performance opposes the assimilatory demands of monolingual educational standards, Herrera's poetry resists the embodied forms of linguistic repression directed at non-normative readers and non-dominant speakers in social spaces governed by linguistic hierarchies.

Interlingual texts and acts of code-switching invite readers who have been educated according to English-dominant, monolingual models to re-learn to read—a task that can have social and political effects. The linguistic playfulness of interlingual texts invites readers to adopt what Anzaldúa calls a "flexible stance" in

the face of linguistic variability, unfamiliarity, and difference. This flexibility can allow readers to become “vulnerable to foreign ways of seeing and thinking”; instead of suppressing or homogenizing differences, a flexible reader embraces and is moved by a plurality of perspectives (*Borderlands* 101, 104). Such flexible vulnerability constitutes an approach to social relations that looks a lot different from the hierarchical inequity perpetuated by the ranking, measuring, and norming of differences that characterizes standards-driven educational practices. Moreover, cultivating an “inclusive” perspective that can embrace difference has political stakes: as Anzaldúa puts it, “the future depends on the breaking down of paradigms” (*Borderlands* 101). If a more “inclusive” future is possible, then this future depends on disrupting habitual reading practices that help to organize our political realities. That is, if social hierarchies are produced by the relationships we imagine between languages, then transforming those social relations requires shifting our perception to rethink linguistic differences. Importantly, this rethinking happens in acts of reading—acts that can cultivate an ethical attitude of flexibility toward difference, a stance that depends upon the specificity of bodies and the shifting ground of linguistic play.

Blurring Citizen and Foreigner, Affirming Collectivities

Although nativist politics and backlash pedagogies may attempt to define the boundaries between “citizen” and “foreigner,” *Canícula* repeatedly proves that these identity categories are slippery and uncertain. As Nena’s family history traverses the

border—Nena is born in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico and has family members who are both Texas- and Mexican-born—the vignettes blur distinctions between “foreigner” and “citizen” while demonstrating that these constructions bear legal weight and contribute to material, lived conditions. The process of blurring socially constructed, but materially felt, identity categories involves, in part, disrupting the expectation that one’s visual perceptions can produce full knowledge of or access to other people’s identities. On the one hand, Cantú’s code-switching primarily addresses the aural qualities associated with political recognition and belonging; because of a mispronunciation or accented speech, one can “sound” foreign. On the other hand, Cantú’s use of photographs and printed documents addresses the visual qualities of this form of belonging. As scholars who study the politics and pedagogies of U.S. nativism point out, the assumption that one can tell, by looking or by listening, who is “foreign” and who is not, has resulted in the exclusion of U.S. citizens, legal residents, and long-time inhabitants from the political recognition and sense of inclusion that their legal status and their communities’ histories would otherwise promise. In other words, the idea that one’s sensory faculties can objectively determine the identities of others, while often proven inaccurate, nevertheless shapes the lived experiences of many communities.

In Cantú’s text, the details of photographic images—which are commonly used for official documentation and valued for a perceived production of objective truth—imprecisely correspond with the details provided in the textual narrative. This imprecision or non-correspondence between photographic and narrative detail

disrupts a reader's trust in her visual perception as well as her expectation that a photograph might produce objective knowledge. Similarly, when many of the vignettes refer to photographs that are not reproduced in *Canícula*, these acts of withholding refuse the logic that one must "produce one's papers" or legal documents to prove one's political or legal status. More abstractly, these acts of withholding also refuse full access to the past, to personal memory, and to an individual or a community (i.e., the subjects of an autobiography or ethnography). Instead of truth or objectivity, the photographs in *Canícula* produce a desire for unmediated access (to a person and her identity, to a history, and to a community)—and a recognition of the impossibility of its fulfillment.

Scattered throughout *Canícula* are references to Nena's family history, which traverses both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border and refuses stable cultural identities and political statuses. In the vignette "Crossings," we learn of Nena and her family's complex relationship to the border, as a long history of border crossings complicates their understanding of place and home, their personal and legal sense of belonging. In 1948, one year after Nena's birth in Nuevo Laredo, Nena, her parents, and her maternal grandmother Bueli move to the U.S. from Mexico, "cross[ing] the bridge on foot from one Laredo to the other" (5). This event causes Bueli to remember a previous crossing she made, in 1935 during a period of mass deportation of Mexicans and Mexican Americans from the United States. Then, Bueli and her husband, Nena's "Texas-born grandfather," along with their children (including Nena's mother), were forced to move to Mexico—"lucky" enough to drive their pick-up truck across the

border instead of being “sent in packed trains” like many others, “even those who were U.S. citizens” (5). This history of deportation means that, as Nena explains in a different story, Nena’s mother, “who wasn’t even born in Mexico,” had to move there “as a ten-year-old knowing only to read and write in English because the nuns at Sacred Heart in San Antonio wouldn’t tolerate Spanish” (40). The family’s experience with enforced deportation includes a history of linguistic as well as cultural and geographic displacement. As we learn from the story of Nena’s mother, the sense of linguistic displacement is facilitated, in part, by the language hierarchies perpetuated in official U.S. educational spaces.

In other vignettes, we learn that the family’s 1948 move to Laredo, Texas is made possible by earlier crossings. For example, Nena’s father had already “gone al norte” in 1947, traveling to Indiana to work and save money to move the family to the U.S.—with the understanding that his business in Nuevo Laredo would not be profitable enough for the family to do so (28). Likewise, in another vignette, Nena describes her adolescent mother commuting weekly by train from Rodriguez, Mexico, to work in U.S. factories as a seamstress (42). This fictionalized history of crossings and commutes highlights the way that labor flows have historically determined migration patterns between Mexico and the U.S.—and how these flows work against any conception of rigid national boundaries. At the same time, Bueli’s deportation story emphasizes the material, lived effects of the distinctions between “citizen” and “foreigner,” no matter how socially constructed. For Bueli in 1948, Nena explains, “crossing meant coming home, but not quite”—a reminder that her forced physical

displacement has lasting effects on her sense of identity and belonging (5). In contrast, when Nena's mother makes weekly border crossings for work, the river that marks the border is "never a barrier; after all, she's Texas-born, her land lies beyond all borders" (42). Her constant movements allow her to see the arbitrariness of the geopolitical border and to dismiss the conception of national borders altogether; to do so, however, she must imagine a new sense of self and collective belonging.

This complex family history, which demonstrates a transnational sense of self and community, makes difficult any easy distinction between "citizen" and "foreigner" for any member of Nena's family, on either side of the border. Nena brings attention to her own legal status in the vignette "Mexican Citizen," which includes two reproduced legal documents that feature photographs of Nena as proof of her identity. While the documents purport to objectively identify a legal subject, the unstable relationship between the vignette's narrative and the documentary details invites a different reading. When in this vignette Nena refers to a photograph of herself as "a one-year-old baby" stapled to her "official U.S. immigration papers," the document to which readers are invited to refer is one that was issued by the Mexican government, in Spanish, to declare the bearer's Mexican nationality and her ability to leave and re-enter Mexico at will (21, figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1: “Media Filiación,” in Cantú’s *Canícula*

As it lists a Nuevo Laredo birthplace and declares the bearer’s ability to “leave and return to the country with no more requirement than to show this card” (“estando autorizado(a) para salir y regresar al país sin más requisito que la presentación de esta tarjeta”), the document establishes only the bearer’s relationship to Mexico—and says nothing about her relationship to the United States or her legal status there. Nena’s migration from Nuevo Laredo, Mexico to Laredo, Texas appears in this vignette to maintain her legal relationship to Mexico; in light of her family’s history of crossings, and the contested socio-political history of the U.S.-Mexican borderlands, Nena’s

Mexican citizenship card brings attention to the blurred boundaries between the two countries, and between foreigner and a citizen.

The second document that appears in “Mexican Citizen” also fails to establish a stable identity for Nena. This document also declares, in Spanish, Nena’s Mexican citizenship, for the purposes of allowing her, as she describes it, to “travel with Mamagrande into Mexico without my parents” (21, figure 4.2).



Figure 4.2: “Filiación,” in Cantú’s *Canícula*

While this second document reaffirms her Mexican citizenship by naming her birthplace as Nuevo Laredo, its description of Nena’s ethnicity revises her identity as it is reported by the first document. Whereas in the first document Nena is listed as “Blanco” (“White”) in the category “Color,” in the second one the same category lists her as “moreno” (“brown”) (21-22). Nena’s identity papers shift her physical

characteristics, demonstrating not only the slipperiness of such identity categories but also the acts of racialization associated with different citizenship statuses. As one reader of *Canícula* explains, “In short, she’s considered white for purposes of entering the United States but brown for entering Mexico” (Adams 62).

The ambiguity of Nena’s ethnicity in these documents is not the only discrepancy in this vignette. In the narrative, Nena describes herself as twelve years old in the photograph featured on the second document, but this document lists her “Edad” (“Age”) as “16 años” (“16 years”) (22). This kind of non-correspondence between narrative and document/image is key to understanding how to read *Canícula*. The inclusion of photographic images and legal papers as forms of documentary evidence can provoke the desire for historical truth, or full access to personal memories, or full understanding of one’s identity. It would, perhaps, be misguided to read the narrative’s discrepancies as mistakes, as an indication of the loss of memory over time, or of the ways that memory can obscure the more accurate data offered in documentary evidence. The discrepancy between the listed ethnicities on Nena’s identity cards is one affirmation that such documents cannot produce objective truth, revealing that they instead establish political identities and legal statuses on shaky assumptions and shifting perceptions.

The vignette “Mexican Citizen” is not the only one in *Canícula* to feature discrepancies between an image and the textual narrative. In “Dahlia Two,” for example, the narrative references a birthday cake with “three candles lit,” whereas the photograph above this description features four candles (105). “Lola’s Wedding”

begins with a reference to a photograph from a wedding, “taken as we stand on the front steps of Sagrado Corazón Church in Monterrey,” but the photograph of a man and woman featured at the top of the vignette is more likely to be the one referenced a few lines later in the narrative, capturing a moment when a wedding photographer “catches” Nena’s mother and father as they walk out of the wedding (47-48).

However, the details of this photograph, including the somber facial expressions and the (possible) black armband worn by the male figure, suggest to Castillo and Tabuenca Córdoba that the photograph featured may have been taken at a funeral, not a wedding—after all, we learn in the same vignette that Lola’s husband died thirty years after their wedding, and this photograph could have been taken at his funeral (Castillo and Tabuenca Córdoba 102-104; Cantú 48). This vignette’s reference to multiple photographs, along with the photographic details that do not seem to match up with the narrative description of those photographs, highlights the impossibility of making exact correspondences between image and text, photographic representation and narrative recounting.

The discrepancies between narrative and image/document, especially those that appear in “Mexican Citizen,” suggest a particular form of visual literacy that Cantú’s text invites readers to develop. As a reader moves her eyes between the narrative and image and compares them, she notices that the relationship between text and image is defined by discrepancies and non-correspondence. With these differences in mind, it is difficult to interpret the narrative vignettes as exact translations of the images/documents that are reproduced next to them; if we do

articulate the vignettes as “translations” of the images, then we must understand that translation is a mediated act that produces difference rather than equivalence between one medium and another (or one language and another). Much like the code-switching of Cantú’s text, which invites movement between languages, this movement between the visual codes of photographic and alphabetic literacy asks a reader to adopt a flexible reading strategy. A different reading practice is necessitated by each, and the inclusion of details that do not match up between photograph and narrative remind a reader of this essential divergence. The preservation of difference points to the ethical dimensions of reading across multiple codes: unable to hierarchize either photographic/documentary evidence or textual narrative as a truer source of personal, family, or community history, a reader is also discouraged from collapsing the differences between the two forms of representation.

Further, Cantú’s text suggests the ethical dimensions of reading when it withholds information from the reader/viewer. Often, a photograph is referenced in a vignette but is not reproduced for a reader to see.³⁰ These referential acts may instill in a reader a desire to see the photographic evidence, while at the same time announcing a reader’s necessarily limited access to the moment being recounted. In these instances, a reader may wish to see the photographic proof of the vignette, or to witness the photograph as the narrator describes its details. However, *Canícula* teaches a reader that such a desire to see the image—even when this desire is fulfilled—is unlikely to produce the affirmation of truth or epistemological security

³⁰ See, for example, the vignette “Pepa,” which references a photographic scene but does not include the image: “And there I am, a wisp of a girl, smiling at the camera...” (11).

that she may be seeking. In other words, even if the photograph were to be included when it is otherwise “missing,” it may not fulfill the expectations elicited by the narrative.

The vignette “Mexican Citizen” provides an example of such an act of withholding. Here, Nena “produces her papers” for readers to see how she is constructed as a legal subject, but some documentary information on those legal papers has been redacted. Below each photograph stapled to the aforementioned documents, a strip of white paper is glued over the original signature line. A new signature has been written on these strips of white paper, “Azucena Cantú,” Nena’s full name. On the second document (figure 4.2), a handwritten “N” peeks through from under the pasted strip of paper, a barely legible indicator that another name—one that begins with an “N,” perhaps for Norma Cantú, the author of *Canícula*—originally appeared on the signature line. Further information is withheld on the first document (figure 4.1). In the typed paragraph just to the right of the photo of a one-year-old Nena, another strip of white paper partially covers the name of the document bearer (“Al portador(a) _____”), leaving visible the typed surname “Ramon” on the second line—the maiden name of Norma Cantú’s mother. The layered signatures and the partial redaction of the mother’s name both provoke a reader’s desire to access an autobiographical subject and signal the limits to that access. These documents refuse to affirm the author as the “real” subject of this fictionalized “autobioethnography”; while the traces of the original writing may lead a reader to notice a relationship

between Nena's documents and Cantú's, the text insists on an imperfect correspondence between the text's fictionalized narrator and its author.³¹

Discussing the significance of acts of withholding in writing by marginalized subjects in the Americas, Doris Sommer demonstrates how a text's imposed "limits of intimacy and access" propose an ethical, rather than an epistemological, relationship between a reader and a text (x-xi). More specifically, Sommer explains that such textual blocks are "disruptions in understanding" that suggest readers might gain "something different from knowledge" when they engage with texts (x-xi). Such disruptions in understanding displace traditional notions of readerly competence based on epistemological security; when a reader is discouraged from developing a sense of full understanding or when her desires to gain knowledge are thwarted, she may instead acknowledge her lack of mastery (Sommer 29). This disruption of an "epistemological desire" importantly allows readers to experience reading as an ethical endeavor, one in which a reader might adopt a "vulnerable comportment," rather than a position of objective, masterful distance, when reading texts (Sommer xi). The acts of withholding employed in *Canícula* encourage readers to encounter their lack of full access to knowledge—of a subject, a community, or a history—when reading. Cantú's text, moreover, demonstrates that the development of this kind of ethical comportment involves careful attention to the places where two or more

³¹ For a discussion of Cantú's mediated movement between photograph and text as a form of "transcription" that leaves room for multiple identities, see Timothy Dow Adams, "'Heightened by Life' vs. 'Paralyzed by Fact': Photography and Autobiography in Norma Cantú's *Canícula*" (69-70). Adams engages with the question of ethics in autobiographical writing, but does so in relation to the truth claims of an autobiography (70).

languages, two or more codes, or two or more subjects (i.e. an author and a fictional narrator) meet but do not match up precisely. When a reader is invited to continuously encounter and notice such discrepancies, she can develop a patient, flexible stance toward differences and non-correspondences, while experiencing both the desire and the inability to transform those differences into knowable data or more familiar forms of understanding.

Importantly, *Canícula*'s invitation to readers to enact an ethical, rather than an epistemological, relationship to texts, puts pressure on the traditional autobiographical subject and emphasizes collectivity. To explore this narrative's focus on collectivity, it is important to contextualize *Canícula* within a tradition of Chicana/o autobiographical writing that emerges after the Chicano Movement that began in the 1960s. As Norma Klahn explains, the later part of the twentieth century saw a "proliferation of autobiographies" by Chicana/o writers due to an interest in narrating the "untold stories of silenced peoples," as well as an awareness that the genre "permits the construction of first-person narratives" and thus demands social and political recognition ("Literary (Re)Mappings" 116). This link between an individual and a larger community is thus a constitutive element of Chicana/o autobiography, and it allows this particular form of self-writing to resist a traditional autobiographical focus on the "self-enclosed, individual 'I'" (Velasco 330).³² Further, this challenge to a limited view of subjecthood points to the political function of

³² On the typical notion of selfhood (male, privileged, universalizing) produced in traditional western autobiography—and on the potentially radical acts of bringing "historical contingency" and heterogeneity into the genre—see Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (eds.), *De/colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography* (1992).

Chicana/o autobiography, characterized by Chicana/o writers' efforts to construct counter-narratives to the official histories that erase experiential knowledge and that silence the voices of non-dominant communities. Such efforts require rethinking who counts as a political subject, which Chicana/o autobiographies explore through a "continuous reconceptualization of identity," an exploration of multiple identity formations, and an emphasis on collectivities (Velasco 314-315, 323-324).

Chicana/o autobiography's emphasis on collectivity and plural identities also emerges, in part, through the influence of the Latin American *testimonio*. The *testimonio* especially took hold as a narrative form in the 1960s, as it was tied to liberatory and radical movements of that decade, and is characterized by its urgent first-person narration of events that affect a larger community (Beverley 93, 97). This genre's inherent connection to a collectivity make *testimonio* an "affirmation of the individual self in a collective mode," that is, it affirms an individual as a speaking subject but only in the context of a group that extends beyond his/her personal limits (Beverley 97, 103). Moreover, we may view this genre as necessarily collective because of the conditions of its production: a key attribute of a *testimonio* is its "collectivization of authorship." It features an individual—who may have limited written literacy—narrating events to a listener, who records the conversation and transforms it into a text (Kaplan 123; Beverley 94). As a result, *testimonio* brings attention to the highly mediated processes of its production, and thus also calls attention to the mediated processes that are "more often muted or invisible in autobiographical writing" (Kaplan 125). These characteristics of and influences on

Chicana/o autobiography contextualize how this form of writing can present a subject that is constituted by others.

One way that *Canícula* puts pressure on the traditional autobiographical subject is through the instability of Nena's identity. In the vignette "Mexican Citizen," the relationship between the narrative and the reproduced documents makes it difficult to perceive a coherent, singular subject. The two legal documents bring attention to the mechanisms by which a legal subject is constructed; by presenting a collection of documentary evidence—including a photograph, descriptions of physical details, and a signature, the authorizing mark that the person named was present—*Canícula* creates the reality effect of Nena's existence. However, this subject is not one with herself, as the discrepancies between the two documents, and between the documents and the narrative, show. These discrepancies create not only a subject-in-multiple but also a fractured subject. This fracturing is the result of a (fictionalized) subject grappling with the incongruences between the self she experiences and remembers, and the representations of her self that others make and impose upon her.³³

The text's exploration of multiple subjectivities is also visible in the traces of original writing on the legal documents (i.e., the layered signatures and the partial redaction of information). These traces hint at how the documents have helped to

³³ The notion of a fractured self that I develop here derives from Mary Louise Pratt's definition of an "autoethnographic text"—a genre that Cantú's own term for *Canícula*, "autobioethnography," is in dialogue with—as a text in which "people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them" ("Arts of the Contact Zone" 35).

construct a subject named Norma Cantú, the author of *Canícula*. These layered signatures, and their production of two subjects—Nena and Norma—indicate an imperfect fit between Cantú and Nena in this semi-fictional autobiographical text. As with the changing status of ethnicity on these documents, we might read these layered signatures as an indication of the “shifting identity” of a person who grew up in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, who necessarily had to navigate multiple identity formations in her movement between languages and cultures (Adams 62). These layered signatures affirm a sense of subjectivity that is neither fixed nor fully unified. In other words, Nena is and is not Norma Cantú; together, they may be seen as the multiple expressions of a subject. This exploration of multiple identities, as Juan Velasco articulates, celebrates “‘difference’ as opposed to uniformity” (323). Here, difference is not articulated between two different subjects, but within the construction of a self—that is, the task of an autobiography.

The inclusion of photographic material in *Canícula* is one of the most salient ways the text indicates its focus on a collectivity, that is, on the collective telling of both a community’s and an individual’s history. Describing *Canícula* as a “collage of stories gleaned from images randomly picked,” Cantú constructs a conceit that guides the reading of her work. She explains in the Introduction that her technique for writing the vignettes involved “haphazardly” pulling images “from a box of photos where time is blurred.” The result of this practice, Cantú writes, is a non-chronological narrative about her past that emerges across the photographs (*Canícula* xii). This occasion and methodology of writing emerge again, two pages later, in a

fictionalized scene described in the Prologue. Here, an adult Nena and her mother go through boxes of photographs together in 1985, and for an extended but uncertain period of time—“for days, for weeks, for months”—they and other members of the family “hold the photographs reverently” and “contribute stories” about the past as evoked by the images (2). Sisters provide “brief descriptions” of feelings and events, alternately remembering and “not remembering”; the father, “curious, interrupts” to add his perspectives; the mother “fill[s] in gaps” for Nena (2). While both Nena and her mother may have experienced the same event, they “remember differently” and “argue amiably” about what happened (2). This fictionalized account of the occasion for writing *Canicula* emphasizes the essential multiplicity of voices and memories in the recounting of shared stories, as well as the imperfect fit between two or more individuals’ memories of a singular event. Although these multiple stories about the past may be contested, Nena understands them to create a fuller understanding of her childhood, of her self. She sees this story as necessarily “shared”: “her story and the stories of the people who lived that life with her is one” (2). This emphasis on many voices in the writing of an autobiographical text thus affirms a self that is constituted by others, a self that cannot be disentangled from a collective.

The collective and variable nature of this scene of storytelling offers further insight into the discrepancies between narrative and photograph that emerge in *Canicula*. Within the conceit of the text, this incongruity is the result of a collectivized practice of storytelling: the imagined scenario of a family reading photographs together indicates that the task of narrating the past is necessarily partial,

conflicting, and collective. Perhaps such discrepancies signal the inclusion of multiple versions of the same story within a single telling; the details of the narrative that do not match up with the photographs indicate the necessary plurality in the telling of a collective history. Moreover, the multiplicity of voices that emerges in this scene highlights the significance of divergent interpretations to a collectivized narration. Describing how each member of the family reacts to the photographs—by “briefly describing,” “interrupting,” “filling in gaps,” “remembering differently,” and “arguing amiably”—the Prologue shows that fostering a collective account requires giving space to divergent readings and methods of interpretive practice.

In many ways, these different approaches to reading recall Nena’s scene of declamación. Despite her teacher’s censorship, Nena’s “dramatic performance” highlights the generative possibilities of reading methods that do not conform to a standard practice—especially when that standard both relies on and actively contributes to the suppression of linguistic and cultural heterogeneity, and of an individual’s particular, embodied experience. Seeing *Canícula*’s series of vignettes as a collection of “readings” (of photographs and of past events), I read the narrative as an acknowledgement of the importance of divergent readings. In *Canícula*, such divergent and contradictory readings are necessary to the thinking of collectivity—that is, to the capacity to engage with plural and contradictory thoughts, experiences, and memories without suppressing differences. With this connection in mind, the reading practices that *Canícula* invites its readers to cultivate—practices that allow for a flexible movement between languages and codes and that attend to differences

and divergences—direct us toward a collectivity that boasts a multiplicity of voices, perspectives, and interpretive practices.

Coda: Reading as Response

Before Nena re-enters her family's home in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands in 1985 to collectively remember their history through photographs, the Prologue tells of Nena hearing the news of Roland Barthes' death in 1980 while she is in Madrid, Spain. His death, and the publication of *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, prompts Nena and her lover to "intently go over photographs kept in an old cigar box"—photographs of "her lover's life," including images of parents, his childhood, and a past lover (1). This moment of sharing inspires Nena to reciprocate, but she is unable to do so: "She has no photographs to offer, to share her life through. Her photographs, silent witnesses of her life, her history, lie an ocean away, across the Atlantic, across the United States, across Texas, at the borderland where Mexico meets Texas" (1-2). It is only when Nena is able to return "back in that safe space, between two countries" in 1985, that she is able to access her family's photographs and to share her life by weaving together her memories with those of her family (2).

The vignettes that constitute *Canícula*, then, may be seen as a response to an initial moment of sharing—a response to another that is mediated not only by temporal and spatial distance, but also by a more metaphorical distance. The Prologue speaks to this metaphorical distance, that is, the lovers' inability to fully know one another, when it recounts, "He has offered his life in a sheaf of photos to an intimate

stranger from an unknown land he cannot fathom, a land as far from Spain as the unknown, between two countries—Mexico and the United States [...] A land that's to him as far as the moon that waxes in the bluepurple sky above the treetops" (1).

Though intimate, the lovers are “strangers.” This strangerhood is, in part, defined by the inability of Nena’s lover to comprehend the geographical and cultural location that shapes Nena’s sense of her self and her community’s history. Though they may speak the “same” language—perhaps the Prologue translates their encounter, initially experienced in Spanish, into English—they do not share a cultural heritage. Their strangerhood therefore may point to intralinguistic difference; whereas the code-switching across English and Spanish in the vignettes of *Canícula* presumes that readers may not fully understand due to interlinguistic differences, in the Prologue sharing the same language does not guarantee interpersonal comprehension.

It is uncertain whether Nena or the narrator of the Prologue expects that the lover would be able to comprehend if he were to witness her photographs. Indeed, the Prologue ends with the question, “But who’ll hear it?” suggesting that there is no guarantee that Nena’s story, interwoven with the stories of the people who live en la frontera, will even be heard—much less understood (2). This uncertainty not only suggests that the lovers may remain strangers, unknowable to each other, even after Nena reciprocates by sharing her photographs and stories; it also implies that any reader of *Canícula* may not fully comprehend or even be able to hear the collective stories offered in the text.

The framing of *Canícula* as a response to another exemplifies the ethical stakes of reading a literary text. Before a reader reaches the vignettes of *Canícula*, the Prologue already identifies the act of reading as a heavily mediated encounter—not only may there be spatial and temporal distance between a reader, a writer, and the context for writing, but there may also be other forms of distance, including cultural, linguistic, and experiential, that impede comprehension. It is especially significant that a text like *Canícula*, which offers fictionalized stories about a person’s life, the lives of her family members, and the lived experiences of a people of a particular region, doubts the ability of these stories to instill in a reader a full knowledge of those people, experiences, or region. Reading, this Prologue suggests, must be about something else, something other than gaining full knowledge or access.

This mediation that impedes direct knowledge acquisition—of an other, or an other’s culture—through the act of reading highlights what Spivak calls, by way of Derrida, the “originary” and “irreducible curvature of social space” that defines our relations to others. This notion, that we “cannot access another directly and with a guarantee,” is essential to thinking ethically about how we relate to others and to texts (Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* 28-30). Our inability to directly access others or to gain direct knowledge in our encounters with literary texts, does not need to be an impediment to rethinking how we read and how we train students to read. This way of thinking about ethics can be the very place from which we do so. Likewise, the notion that we are constituted by others, and that reading invites an encounter with our mediated relations to others (as suggested both by Spivak and by Cantú’s text), does

not restrict our ability to consider the material, lived conditions that shape our sense of self, our social relations, and our relations to texts. As the Prologue to *Canícula* suggests, the lack of guarantees that another will hear or comprehend does not reduce the desire or need to tell highly particular, culturally and geographically located stories. Writing about Cantú's Prologue, Castillo and Tabuenca Córdoba suggest that the need, and the very ability, to weave together the particular stories of the borderlands region is bound up with the fact that others may not understand. More specifically, they explain, Nena's initial inability to share her photographs with her lover, and her lover's lack of comprehension, are the impetus for her to tell her collectivized story: "[I]t is only in the imagined presence of that noncomprehending other that [Nena's] self-fashioning can occur fruitfully, so that the impossibility of understanding becomes the challenge and the point of entry into a nuanced tale" (122). *Canícula* thus suggests that even the most nuanced sense of self is inevitably constituted through relations with others—relations that are defined by noncomprehension, or at best, partial understanding. This suggestion offers a way to think about reading and readers that affirms both the inability to fully comprehend another or to fully master a text, and the necessity of attending to particularity and difference.

Such an ethics of relationality—defined by both the inability to fully know another and the importance of maintaining and honoring difference—can shape how we practice and teach reading. Emphasizing the ethical dimensions of reading can help us to rethink dominant educational paradigms, such as those that imagine

reading as a set of discrete, measureable skills defined by monolingual and monocultural standards, and that rank readers according to their mastery of those skills. The significance of how we imagine reading, and thus how we practice and teach it, rests in the ways that reading shapes social relations. As this chapter—and this dissertation—has shown, how one reads affects how one relates to others. Reading, as an embodied act, is informed by the particular experiences and perspectives that readers bring to texts. It also produces embodied habits that, in turn, affect how one moves and acts in the world, and how one interacts with and is perceived by others. Moreover, this chapter (and dissertation) has shown how heterogeneous language practices—especially in contexts where two or more languages meet and are hierarchized—affect one’s reading style and one’s social position. Attending to embodied particularity and linguistic difference when reading and when teaching reading, can cultivate approaches to encountering unfamiliarity, difference, or plurality without suppressing it, transforming it into familiar knowledge, or making it cohere to a standard model.

Such an inclusive perspective—about language difference, reading, and readers—can help to transform limited paradigms for teaching and measuring reading that result in the translation of student difference into a sign of deficiency or illiteracy. Such standards-driven models for reading instruction may seem especially pertinent to educators and students in primary and secondary education; however, these paradigms affect how students perceive reading and how they encounter literary texts when they enter college or university classrooms (Ender and Lynch 542). Those who

are invested in teaching literature both within and outside of the academy can examine the kinds of subjects and socialities that our discipline-specific ways of reading help to produce.

The texts I have discussed in this dissertation invite us to consider how our reading practices are shaped by multiple histories, including the legacies of colonization and imperialism as well as of liberation and de-colonization. How might these history-laden reading practices help to shape social relations in our present? Texts from both ancient Greek and U.S. Latina/o traditions invite us to respond with care and interest to readers whose linguistic knowledge, bodies, and cultural and gendered positions imperfectly conform to dominant models of literacy or of discipline-specific reading. By acknowledging the important forms of knowledge and of ethical relationality that the non-conforming readers depicted in these texts produce, we might be able to better respond to multilingual and non-normative readers in our present.

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