

Delivering Rhetorical Entanglements

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Abstract

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This dissertation—a hybrid artifact that employs both traditional and non-traditional means of academic labor—explores methods for producing, engaging, and delivering rhetorical and composition scholarship and pedagogy that captures and conveys the emergence, movement, dynamism, complexity, non-linearity, and embodied nature of myriad more-than-human processes, experiences, and phenomena around which our fields have developed theory. It also seeks to prepare individuals to respond to difficulty, disorder, ambiguity, and complexity through rhetorical practice: the delivery and experience of theory in material form. To accomplish these aims, my research comprehensively engages a metaphor of entanglement across five core “acts” that collectively perform/argue the theoretical, analytical, methodological, and practical possibilities of rhetorical discourse as an emergent, dynamic, non-linear, and aesthetic

phenomenon, offering theoretical, pedagogical, and artifactual contributions for cultivating ethico-onto-epistemological rhetorical capacities with(in) entanglements. I also advocate for *mattering* and *dwelling* as two general approaches or orientations to observing, capturing, analyzing, working with, and, ultimately, delivering rhetorical entanglements. This dissertation, then, advances conversations on how we practice and conceptualize scholarship and pedagogy, modeling diverse and complex ways of composing, enacting, and delivering rhetorical theory that readies citizens, students, and scholars for ethically handling complexity, ambiguity, uncertainty, and impossibility — all necessary capacities within entangled existence.

A note on materials: I've included high-quality images of the 11 cards (and the card back) for the rhetorical Tarot deck I've prototyped called *Techne Psychagogia*. Feel free to print out the cards and play with the deck to get a full experience of act II.

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Prologue: An Entangled Drama

This dissertation about entanglements is itself an entanglement calling upon scholars to better envision/enact/enliven entanglements. Too general? Ok. Let me try again.

This is a dissertation about theories of rhetorical entanglement; it is also an entanglement of traditional and non-traditional genres calling upon scholars of rhetorical studies and composition studies to better envision/enact/enliven rhetorical entanglements. Still vague, huh. Alright. Well, um...

Maybe I should talk about what I mean by entanglements for a moment and why in the world anyone might care about them. That might be helpful, right? Uh...so, when I say entanglement, I mean to describe the deep interconnectedness of living and non-living beings and things who are caught up in one another as they go about existing. And it's hard to describe what I mean by existing, here, because different beings and things exist differently; that is, they have different wants, needs, desires, uses, experiences, and so on and so forth that influence what they do, how they act, and what they can become. Personally, I think entanglements are helpful because, as a way of framing situations or happenings or cases, they inherently resist binary, dualistic thinking and call for a more complex, nuanced, and textured approach. With me so far? Ok. Good. Let me try that opening sentence again.

So, this dissertation about theories of rhetorical entanglement – figured as an ethico-onto-epistemological extension of rhetorical situation – is an entanglement of traditional scholarly and non-traditional popular genres of production calling upon scholars of rhetorical and composition studies to produce artifacts of scholarship that better envision/enact/enliven the specificity of rhetorical entanglements for myriad possible audiences and contexts. Ok, ok. Better. But, kind of wordy. It's a lot to take in at once.

You know, scratch that. Let me try a different approach.

For my dissertation, I wanted to explore theories of rhetorical entanglement. So I figured, why not *make* it an entanglement, right? Here's my thinking: if I can make my reader *experience* what I'm trying to explore, perhaps I can more acutely or precisely express – or at the very least emphasize – the

entangled threads of the scholarship and pedagogy I'm attempting to deliver. Entanglement theory suggests that we need to be able to envision and enact things differently in order to cultivate more responsive and attentive orientations and dispositions towards all manner of things and beings with which we are entangled; as such, we need scholarship and pedagogy that can help us do those things. So, that, too, is at play here.

Now, what exactly are the entangled threads I'm working with? Good question, my friend! Allow me to try and distill them down to their essences:

THREAD ONE

As the material product of our labor, traditional print scholarship (the article, the monograph, the edited collection) has its affordances, which means it also has its limitations. One of those limitations is that it requires specialized training to understand the insights we produce, which means our wisdom is circulated in pretty narrow places for even narrower audiences. Fine when we're talking amongst ourselves. But when we *only* talk amongst ourselves, we forget how to talk to others. And when we can no longer talk to others, they begin to distrust the expertise and specialized knowledge we, as a community of practitioners, have cultivated. They see our expertise and knowledge as elitist or exclusionary or cabalistic. And it all comes back to the artifacts we produce in order to deliver our scholarship and pedagogy to one another: these print-based objects that are absolutely useful and integral to our own communities can get in the way of our ability to communicate beyond them. I believe that continuing to *overwhelmingly* use and value this *one* available means of communication while we live in an age where *so many other possible means are available to us* is, quite frankly, unethical, or at the very least, it means our insights will continue to have little public purchase or impact. And that is a shame. *We could be doing more* to create scholarship and pedagogy that enacts or performs its theoretical and/or argumentative content in order to better reach audiences and publics not privy to the rules, history, methods, language, or rigor of academic discourse. And so, I wish to provide models of what rhetorical and composition scholarship and pedagogy can look like when we aim to compose for communities and contexts other than our own.

THREAD TWO

Let me not mince words: Earth is dying. Well, actually, Earth is *changing* – via human influence – into a place where human and other life as we know it will soon (on a cosmic timescale) cease to exist. In true tragic form, we are the agents of our own undoing. At least, we will be if we keep treading the destructive paths we've cultivated. But treading more sustainable and life giving paths requires cultivating *new* orientations – to ourselves as human beings, to other beings and things, to the world-at-large – to compliment, supplement, or even replace older ones. Theory in new materialisms, ecological rhetorics, object oriented ontologies, and posthumanisms all capture various elements of one such orientation that must be cultivated: that being, knowing, and acting/doing are complexly entangled phenomenon (an ethico-onto-epistemological orientation). Leaning into a metaphor/lens of entanglement, I want to position the idea of *rhetorical entanglement* as a productive contemporary extension/envisioning of rhetorical situation that can help generate and cultivate such an ethico-onto-epistemological orientation.

THREAD THREE

Rhetorical entanglements are all about specificity, connections, and interrelatedness: the particular ways in which the myriad agents and agencies within entangle. Traditional print methods of scholarship may not always be the best of the available means for capturing, analyzing, and expressing the specificities of *all* entanglements because print's particular set of affordances and limitations may not be the best match for the goals, agents, concepts, environs, and other contributing factors that make each piece of scholarship unique. And the majority of our academic methods or orientations or approaches to doing scholarship are specifically cultivated for print. So, I offer *mattering* and *dwelling* as two general, entangled approaches/orientations to rhetorical and composition scholarship and pedagogy that can be flexibly enacted in a wide array of genres and modalities. Mattering and dwelling can be performed individually or at the same time, allowing for different ontological, epistemological, or ethical questions and concerns within a given rhetorical entanglement to come into the foreground (while still remaining connected to whatever recedes

temporarily into the background). As I move throughout the various acts of my dissertation, I use these orientations to examine and enact ethico-onto-epistemological theory that's responsive to the particularities of the entanglement-in-question.

Not too bad, right? I mean, each thread *seems* easy enough to follow when it is broken down like that. But here's the thing about entanglements (this one included). They are, well, *entangled*. Mixed up. Entanglements are not isolated affairs. Each thread can only be examined in the context of the others, taken as a singular unit, and understanding *how* things entangle means sometimes teasing out and illuminating insights in ways that don't add up to linear arguments or narratives, clearly categorizable or stable sets of knowledge, or even expression in language at all.

It's not easy to talk about or make sense of the three aforementioned threads when viewed at the same time because they don't stay put. They all bleed and fold into one another. Inform one another. Shape one another. When you pull up one thread for a closer look, it obscures from sight the rich and complex web of connections of which that thread is just one part, and so you need many approaches and ways of looking to get a more comprehensive understanding of what's happening. When trying to progress through these threads in a clear, linear fashion, when articulating and explicating every place of contact and interconnection and intra-action...well, at some point, it becomes a futile endeavor. It becomes messy or unusable or overwhelming or ambiguous or simply too complex.

I'm going to try, though. I'm going to try and perform this complex and difficult work, even if doing so is always, to some degree, heuristic. The above threads pop up over and over again throughout this dissertation, weaving in and out of one another in both predictable and surprising ways. It may not always be clear. It certainly won't always be linear. But, our future is only growing more complicated, more ambiguous, more overwhelming, and we need ways of approaching, making sense of, and acting within what is complex if we want to continue to exist at all.

But more on that soon. For now, I leave you with one final attempt to set the stage.

Delivering Rhetorical Entanglements enacts more-than-human, ethico-onto-epistemological rhetorical discourse by comprehensively engaging a metaphor of entanglement and its theoretical, analytical, methodological, pedagogical, and practical possibilities. Drawing on work in new materialisms, non-human ontologies, ecological and networked rhetorics, and even quantum physics, I explore how a metaphor of entanglement helps us get at the fundamental inseparability of being/existence, thought/knowledge, and ethics/action. While I will elaborate on this idea throughout my dissertation, for now suffice it to say that every thing always-already exists in varied states of *rhetorical entanglement*: complex and situationally unique intertwinements of heterogeneous agents (beings, things) and their energies, intentions, actions, and impacts co-constituted in specific, materially realized space/times. Using Ian Bogost's notion of carpentry to envision, approach, and deliver this work, I simultaneously conceive and make sense of entanglements (the theory underlying them) and interrogate how we *work* with them, *make* something with them, *do* something with them, and/or *enact* them by performing the argumentative labor of "the dissertation" in simultaneously conventional and unconventional fashion. In order to comprehensively explore the power and implications of *entanglement*, as well as put into practice multiple approaches for studying/understanding/theorizing/analyzing/acting within them, I created a hybrid artifact *that itself entangles multiple traditional and non-traditional methods, genres, cases, and approaches*. In creating a scholarly artifact that embodies rather than solely explicates its core theoretical positions, I demonstrate how scholars of rhetorical studies and composition alike can utilize *all* of our available means to create scholarship and pedagogy that actively cultivate ethico-onto-epistemological orientations, critical practices, and capacities for ethical (that is, response-able) action.

Ok, now on with the show. Lights. Curtain. Action.

Act I: Entangled Rhetorics
An Introduction

“There are people. There are stories. The people think they shape the stories, but the reverse is often closer to the truth. Stories shape the world. They exist independently of people, and in places quite devoid of man, there may yet be mythologies. The glaciers have their legends. The ocean bed entertains its own romances.” - Alan Moore, *Saga of the Swamp Thing*

The Available Means of Persuasion; or, More-Than-Human Motivations

Seeing Beyond the Human

On a global scale, human beings are fast coming to terms with the tangible ramifications of Western modes of thought, action, and being, which have increasingly fostered divisive, hostile, and ultimately *harmful* public discourse and practices. Colonialism erased cultures, enslaved peoples, and eradicated localized ways of being and living, leaving a legacy of racism and xenophobia in its wake. Capitalism continues to exploit peoples and environments everywhere by extracting cheaper and cheaper labor or natural resources to produce lower-quality goods all while asking laborers to compete amongst themselves to give more of their time, energy, and attention in exchange for, in many places, decreasing pay, benefits, and security. Even the project of the Enlightenment, celebrating Man’s ability to reason through scientific progress (and I do mean Man, for womankind has oft been left out of the conversation), has, in its central figure of the dualism, created black-and-white patterns of thought that pit various groups, and their respective experiences, against one another. In short, the predominant, epistemologies of the West have sought to order, dominate, fix, sort, and categorize not only the world around us but also the various beings (human and non-human) we encounter therein.

The epistemologies and practices of the “enlightened” West, with this inclination toward playing God, toward seeking to dominate each other and the natural order of things, is in no exaggerated terms killing our planet. Or more accurately, is rapidly changing the planet into a place hostile to human and other life. Human beings, en masse, must unlearn the impulses conditioned through Western modes of thought, being, and action — to sort, categorize, dominate, emplace, quantify, solve, fix, and order— that position human existence as a *competition* (with others and among ourselves) for scarce resources, spaces, and opportunities. Instead, I believe humanities scholars must seed anew different, varied, and more purposeful ways of being, knowing, and acting that position *all* existence (human or otherwise) as an *entangled, cooperative* endeavor. Instead of using humanity’s immense agential possibility (that is, our *potential*) to act in competition with diverse others, human existence needs to be conceptualized, taught, and framed as bearing a response-ability to that which we are entangled in order to coordinate as sustainable and least harmful an existence for all beings and things therein. In short, our manners of inhabiting and understanding this world stemming from the Western tradition have become fundamentally harmful, violent, and unsustainable—creating an urgent need to radically transform our ways of knowing, acting, and being with/in this world for human and other life to continue to exist.

Our contemporary moment is defined by an immediate, pressing need to engage theory that centers listening, dwelling, patience, vulnerability, and openness to uncertainty and difference in order to prepare individuals to *sit with* what’s difficult or uncomfortable or complex while we live through this global transition in what it means to be human and to act humanely in entangled existence. Fortunately for both rhetorical and composition studies—fields deeply

concerned with power, agency, and meaning-making—the recent resurgence of work across the humanities seeking to de-center the human (such as new materialisms, ecological orientations, object oriented ontologies, and posthumanisms) draws attention to flora, fauna, and non-living things and to their respective enmeshed ways of being and knowing, expanding the purview of our work to include the various ways in which material objects, animals, and plant-life possess their own agencies, act on/in the world. For example, Jane Bennett calls attention to the ways things and materials have *vitality* and act on human and other beings. Jenny Rice, Thomas Rickert, and Laurie Gries all highlight how rhetoric emerges from environments, from bodies, from materials and things, and dynamically circulates among the myriad, contextually unique human and non-human agents. And Karen Barad uses quantum physics to highlight how matter and meaning (substance and significance) are themselves a complexly entangled phenomena, which echoes Ian Bogost's claim that the significance of a thing or being's existence is a matter of how it relates to other things and beings—relations that, according to Timothy Morton, unfold in the aesthetic (visible/material/experiential) dimension, or what we commonly think of/refer to as reality.

These thinkers have developed robust and complex, ontological, epistemological, and ethical theories across a range of entangled fields (rhetoric, composition, philosophy, and communications, to name a few) grounded in the notion that living and non-living beings of all kinds, including humans, continually negotiate and shape meaning and ways of living together in complex, situationally unique, mutually co-constituted entanglements, or what Barad calls *intra-actions*. Pushing back against much of the human-centered theory of the Western tradition, these scholars and traditions see boundaries as porous spaces, resist fixed and static notions of

knowledge and meaning-making, and highlight the dynamic interconnectedness, multidimensionality, and agential possibilities of the people, animals, plants, things, and all manner else that may exist within a given entanglement. Collectively, these more-than-human theoretical orientations (which I'll detail later in this act) offer expansive insights into and possibilities for preparing human beings to become more attentive and responsive to the needs of myriad others in a given entanglement and the dynamic, emergent, fluid, and *specific* ways in which meaning is continually made and re-made.

A Disconnect in Theory and Practice

If one goal of rhetorical and composition studies is to cultivate a radical transformation in how human beings orient themselves toward and act within a more-than-human world, we must also turn that attention inward, examining how, as a community of practitioners, we orient ourselves toward and act within our artifacts of scholarly practice as we attempt to do this work. Our current orientations toward scholarly practice can be summed up as follows: one traditionally *writes about* the theory/case-in-question in a clear, linear fashion using an established argumentative discourse limited to a small number of acceptable print-based genres for knowledge production and dissemination (mainly the monograph, the edited collection, and the journal article). While scholars have recently been experimenting more with multimodal and alternative forms of scholarship (which I'll turn to next section), the predominance of written discourse in traditional academic genres in both rhetorical and composition studies, nevertheless, suggests that as a collective community, we're still overwhelmingly privileging a certain *type* of knowledge production and circulation—one that's rooted in and continues to propagate human-

centric orientations to the world. Put differently: we tend to overwhelmingly pursue and deliver multi-dimensional, dynamic, emergent, complex more-than-human theory in the (relatively) flat, static, and undeniably human-centered space of written discourse, and, more specifically, academic written discourse, which, *by its very nature*, seeks to order, dominate, fix, sort, and categorize — the very actions these theories are often criticizing and pushing back against.

As I outlined in the previous section, our more-than-human theoretical orientations offer crucially vital conceptualizations/ideas for helping us address the wide-scale political, cultural, and environmental problems of contemporary existence. However, if we wish to *embody* and *act on* these more-than-human orientations, then we must also shift our own orientations towards what scholarly practice should/could be in order to *allow for* the cultivation of full embodied capacities for acting within these orientations. That is, more-than-human orientations sometimes require enactment in more-than-print genres to *fully* explore their potential to transform how human beings orient themselves and act towards others within complex rhetorical entanglements. In what follows, I briefly turn to work done in rhetorical genre studies (RGS) and multimodal composition to offer insight into why print-based genres cultivate human-centric orientations and how embracing additional genres and modes of production can better help us cultivate the more-than-human orientations we both need and desire in order to understand and more ethically approach our contemporary public problems.

Contemporary rhetorical and composition theory explains how both the genre and mode(s) of production of a given object tangibly shape the perceived meaning, uptake, and circulation of that object. Genres, according to Anis Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff, are “forms of cultural knowledge that conceptually frame and mediate how we understand and typically act

within various situations. This view recognizes genres as both organizing *and* generating kinds of texts and social actions, in complex, dynamic relation to one another” (4). This insight is crucial — genres complexly frame, organize, mediate, and generate both knowledge and action; no matter what is theoretically contained within an academic text, *the genre of production also acts* on creators, audiences, and the content, influencing not only the shape of the production but also what could tangibly be produced within that genre in the first place. This is partially due to the fact that genres often engage multiple modalities in particular ways and combinations. David M. Sheridan, Jim Ridolfo, and Anthony J. Michel observe how “a multimodal composition does not achieve its rhetorical effects through simple addition (text + image + sound = message),” but rather produces what they observe as a “holistic effect” (xvi) through what Tracy Bowen and Carl Whithaus identify as the “interaction among various sensory experiences” (7). The modalities that comprise a given genre, then, provide not only a particular set of available semiotic resources, they also define a distinct shape for and utilization of those modes complete with idiosyncratic guidelines for production that are tied to particular communities of knowledge production.

Carolyn R. Miller and Ashley R. Kelly note that genres are “social recognitions that embed histories, ideologies, and contradictions...thus systems of genres can tell us a great deal about social values and cultural power” (v). Similarly, Gunther Kress observes how “modes are the result of a social and historical shaping of materials chosen by a society for representation” (11). While scholars of rhetoric and composition have already embraced a theoretical turn towards the more-than-human, when we look at the values, histories, materialities, ideologies, and socio-cultural power dynamics embedded within academic genres,

our continued privileging of print-based scholarship has created an ever-expanding gap between our more-than-human theoretical insights and the human-centered ways in which we explore, cultivate, and deliver them. Jody Shipka keenly articulates this gap when she argues that “formal schooling practices often suggest that one cannot know, or it follows, *be known*, except through the abstractions of certain varieties of written language” (250), and that “highlighting the various texts, tools, strategies, practices, and participants—*both human and nonhuman*—that play a role in supporting, facilitating, altering, and at times even thwarting or forbidding the production of a focal text, product, or performance allows us to move beyond human-centered or human-centric notions of agency, effect, and collaboration” (253). Further, this widening gap between what more-than-human theory offers and how we’re exploring and cultivating that theory within both rhetorical and composition studies only becomes more urgent to address when we consider that the *types* of scholarship we regularly and repeatedly value, reward, or simply validate within our own knowledge communities (through hiring, tenure, and publication processes, for instance) *are* these very print genres that, again, through the nature of their forms, limit potential insights, perspectives, and experiences (as well as audiences and public impact) that rhetoric, composition, and other humanities scholars can possibly discover and express through the application of these theories.

Whether it’s because they are comfortable and familiar forms of scholarship or because academics experience an immense, relentless pressure for scholarly production, we *default* to producing and re-producing linguistic, print-based genres and methods of analysis, argumentation, and delivery that embody human-centric orientations and, depending on what we’re trying to accomplish, can fail to enliven or, worse, even actively undermine the theories

we are applying or developing. Which is why we need more than just a theoretical shift towards the more-than-human. I suggest that in order to truly tend to the cultivation of new, more-than-human orientations toward being, seeing, and acting in this world, we need to shift the entire ecology of how we produce, deliver, and value scholarship and pedagogy in order to better enact the theory we've already been cultivating. As Shipka puts it:

[we need] to commit fully to altering our pedagogical and research practices—to consider how concretely engaging with different modes, genres, materials, cultural practices, communicative technologies, and language varieties impacts our abilities to make and negotiate meaning, how it impacts both what and how we come to know, and perhaps most importantly, how it might provide us with still other options for knowing and being, and for being known. (251)

Shipka's work helps articulate what's at stake in this growing divide between more-than-human theory and practice: by embracing different methods of composing and approaches to meaning-making within our own work, we might discover new orientations toward being, knowing, and acting—possibilities that might not even be imaginable or iterable through traditional or established practices alone. Such a commitment to altering our practices implicates not only cultivating new scholarly content (theories, case studies, heuristics, and so on), but new genres, objects, dispositions, methodologies—an entire set of complex intra-relations that congeal in the objects we produce with our scholarly labor. Within this dissertation, which you'll hear more about later, I have tried to embrace Shipka's call for a full commitment to alternative pedagogical and research practices by offering two artifacts—a prototype of a rhetorical Tarot deck and corresponding guidebook, and a Choose-Your-Own-Adventure narrative—that produce

knowledge differently, asking audiences to then orient themselves differently towards rhetorical and composition scholarship.

Shifting the Ecology of Academic Production

If the defining condition of more-than-human rhetorical theory is entanglement, then its counterpart in human-centered thought is independence. While a utopian fantasy of human-centered epistemology and practice equates independence with freedom, unobstructed movement, and power, in reality, Western rhetorics of independence, as touched upon above, often manifest in isolation, egoism, and exploitation of others and the environment for personal advancement. In short, the human-centric rhetoric of the West, in championing independence, has left individuals ill prepared for thinking, acting, and being entangled with myriad other beings and things. While it can be incredibly uncomfortable and exhausting to sit with complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty, this is precisely what is required of us given the complex problems and situations we face. To sit with and act within radical complexity is a labor that requires patience, listening, and vulnerability — all of which are necessary capacities for determining ethical action in an entangled existence. However, as I've outlined in the two previous sections, while rhetoric and composition continues to produce rich and complicated more-than-human *theories* for approaching complex, difficult, messy, emergent, and entangled processes and situations, in *practice*, our scholarly methods of production and pedagogy do not always *actively* build the aforementioned capacities needed for ethically navigating more-than-human entanglements.

Aristotle defines rhetoric as *the techné of discovering the available means of persuasion*, proceeding with the best approach for the situation. Over time, by limiting our own *available means* for producing scholarship largely to print discourse, we've de-emphasized the material (active and practical) dimensions of our work in favor of the theoretical (intellectual) dimensions. This leaves scholars of rhetorical and composition studies with a problem: we have relatively few models for *doing* scholarship that performs rather than explicates more-than-human theoretical insights and for *enacting* rhetorical and composition pedagogy that dynamically cultivates students' and citizens' capacities for attuning to diverse others, dwelling within uncertainty, and ethically and effectively negotiating difference, all necessary capacities for a more-than-human thought, ethics, and existence. If one of our goals as scholars of rhetoric and composition is to craft new and different orientations toward being, knowing and acting in the world, we need new and different forms and genres of scholarly production to add to our arsenal that can *actively* prepare individuals to orient themselves thusly. As such, rhetorical and composition scholars need to cultivate *additional* methods, techniques, and genres (that is, available means) for producing, engaging, and delivering intellectual labor, both scholarship and pedagogy, that can: 1) convey the movement, dynamism, complexity, non-linearity, entanglement, and embodiment of the various processes, experiences, and phenomena around which our fields have already developed theory; and 2) prepare our (entangled) persons/bodies/minds for more-than-human ethical orientation and action via rhetorical *practice*.

I want to be clear before I proceed — I am *not* suggesting we abandon print discourses altogether or suggest they hold no use or value to us anymore. For example, our go-to print genres for scholarship (the article, the monograph, the edited collection) create space for

dwelling within the nuances of a particular thread of ideas for a sustained, atemporal duration, extending thoughts and memories into unknown futures — *certainly* useful and much needed affordances. Rather, I argue that we should use our print genres more *intently* — when the needs of the argument being made or work being done are best served by clarity, linearity, or a fixed space to unpack, sort through, and return to complicated ideas in a consistent manner. But when the argumentative or pedagogical goals warrant foregrounding *occlusion* or *ambiguity* instead of clarity or *resist* being neatly unpacked and sorted, or when we are interested in creating different and more performative/collaborative experiences for our audience or experimenting with expanding the means of circulation and impact of academic insights, our traditional academic genres simply may not be the best of the available means for scholarly practice. Rather than dismiss or disregard the important work of print scholarship, I am calling for us to expand our genres and pedagogies in order to reach more audiences, to circulate our insights more broadly, to experiment with more ways our knowledge might matter or make an impact in the world, and to cultivate new or more responsive orientations toward difference, complexity, and ambiguity.

As I mentioned previously, a small-but-growing number of rhetorical and composition scholars are already actively exploring and expanding the available means of performing, enacting, demonstrating, practicing, and ultimately enlivening rhetorical and composition theory. For example, Steph Ceraso's work on sonic intra-actions of places and bodies and Crystal VanKooten's exploration of chora, connection, and discord through audiovisual experimentation demonstrate how "digital audio can tap into affordances that are simply not possible in strictly textual academic work" (Ceraso). Rosa A. Eberly's transmedia archive *Towers of Rhetoric* examines the intersections of public memory and higher education through the simultaneous

deployment of both linear and circular methods of argumentation and composition. And Jason Helms' digital monograph, *Rhizcomics*, makes his arguments about comics and visuality through a hybrid of print and digital logics while cautioning how "writers of digital scholarly monographs must pay special attention to the eventual form of their work at every stage, from writing a proposal to eventual publication." These scholars, among others, are working to stretch the boundaries of what's possible for rhetorical and composition theory and practice when we produce scholarship that's not limited to the printed page and the written word as well as provide models for other scholars to do the same. My work seeks to join this emergent work by offering a scholarly artifact composed with both academic *and* more popular or familiar modes and genres of knowledge production and circulation in order to differently deliver and apply our theoretical insights to everyday public exigencies.

While not a multimodal work of scholarship itself, Ian Bogost offers an approach or orientation to scholarship in *Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing* that can help rhetorical and composition scholars create scholarship *in any mode* that better align form, theory, and objective to one another. Echoing sentiments I've previously outlined, Bogost observes that "writing is literally the only way to scholarly productivity" in the humanities (88) and frames the issue in these terms: "just as one would likely not trust a doctor who had only read and written journal articles about medicine to explain the particular curiosities of one's body, so one ought not trust a metaphysician who had only read and written books about the nature of the universe" (91). And so, he forwards the notion of philosophical *carpentry*: the purposeful crafting of an artifact that *does* philosophy/theory (rather than simply narrating or explicating it as our print discourses tend to do). For Bogost, "carpentry might offer a more rigorous kind of

philosophical creativity” (92) since the carpenter “must contend with the material resistance of his or her chosen form, making the object itself become the philosophy” (93). Carpentry, then, offers scholars an approach for giving the *material* dimensions of an argument equal weight as the theoretical ones — the artifact being *the palpable enactment of theory in material form*.

To further riff on Bogost's idea, you often hear from those who sculpt, no matter the medium, that they let the source material itself dictate the final form it will take; the material “speaks” to them. That is, the finished object is inside already — it’s their responsibility as the sculptor to, through craft and technique, reveal it. In the spirit of Aristotle's fundamental understanding of rhetoric as a *techne* (art, craft), I propose we approach our scholarly work and labor from the perspective of the carpenter or the sculptor: take the time to sit with our raw materials (theories, cases, observations) and let them speak to us, tell us what shape they might take, what the final form or genre or mode(s) might be — that is, to work *with* our materials to *reveal* the theory-made-manifest-in-objective-form, as opposed to, by necessity, convenience, or otherwise, forcing our design and tradition upon that theory. It doesn’t matter if it’s an artifact of print language or of sound or of kinesthetic experience; what matters is that the shape, form, and modality of the scholarly artifact is fundamentally entangled with the theoretical labor we’re producing/utilizing and our goals for such scholarly production in the first place. Carpentry, then, offers scholars a useful and accessible approach for/orientation towards developing a diverse array of models for enacting scholarship, since, in Bogost’s words, “carpentry entails making things that explain how things make their world” (93), allowing for diverse perspectives, orientations, and approaches to be cultivated, articulated, delivered, and, most importantly, experienced.

An Entangled Dissertation

I argue that we need scholarly and pedagogical methods, genres, and approaches that prepare the *whole* person (body/mind as a single entangled unit) for ethical orientations toward being/knowing/doing within more-than-human existence. Embracing, cultivating, and producing scholarship in modes and genres beyond our traditional print ones will not only open a space for more fully exploring rhetorical theories and their potential to prepare whole persons to embody more-than-human ethical orientations, it will also help us more effectively utilize print scholarship and our established genres of production since, as Bogost highlights, the very *materiality* of scholarly production is brought back into the conversation, centering questions related to inventing, accessing, producing, delivering, and publicizing scholarly insights. How might our scholarship and pedagogy become more or differently accessible, engaging, and responsive to diverse publics if we ourselves value taking up other modes of scholarly production? What new practices, venues, and genres for our scholarly and pedagogical insights might better help us address the complex and ambiguous public exigencies we face? How might we better prepare individuals of diverse and differing publics to embrace and enact more-than-human ethical orientations?

I offer a dissertation project comprised of a range of experimental case studies and compositions that I refer to as “acts” (rather than chapters) to both signal their intention to perform and do scholarship as well as deliberately invoke a specter of drama and performativity via the five-act narrative structure. Collectively, the five acts that constitute my dissertation meld traditional and non-traditional modes and methods for producing scholarship into a single hybrid

artifact in order to explore *what's possible* in our available means of meaning-making, no matter how strange or complex or frightening or exhausting those possibilities might appear. In doing so, I model how approaching scholarship as a work of carpentry offers new possibilities for engaging with and producing scholarly and pedagogical practice in both rhetorical and composition studies.

In particular, each act turns to a different object of study in order to emphasize a theoretical entanglement of key rhetorical concepts, and I allow the particular entanglement of concepts, cases, theories, observations, and my argumentative goals within that act to guide my choices of form, mode, and methodology for composing and delivering it. Acts I (which you're currently reading) and V function as a typical introduction and conclusion would. Act I overviews key concepts and ideas that will influence the rest of the dissertation—in this case, the theoretical threads as outlined in the prologue that form the core entanglement I'm exploring—and overviews the work that is to come, while act V makes lingering connections, articulates takeaways, and points toward the future of this work. Act III looks at the entanglement of *agency*, *ambiguity*, and *action* via an approach I've termed *mattering* (detailed later this act), resulting in a multi-layered analysis of one particular act in one particular professional wrestling match (Candice LeRae's *crimson mask* during a 2014 Pro Wrestling Guerrilla event). By continually troubling, complicating, and reinterpreting her act through various ecological lenses throughout the analysis, I can mimic the shifting, changing, complicated rhetorics surrounding her act and the processes by which it has come to mean what it means.

While acts I, III and V employ a more traditional scholarly approach (since clarity of object and argument are central to the analytical work being performed), acts II and IV

experiment with more radical, extra-linguistic modes of argumentation in an attempt to work with the complexities of a more-than-human rhetoric differently. For act II, I've created a prototype deck of Tarot cards and an accompanying guidebook to explore the entanglement of *rhetorical be-ing*, *attunement*, and *dwelling* (another approach I outline later this act). By creating a dwelling space through which my reader/user can encounter and attune to rhetorical theory *at random* outside of academic contexts, I demonstrate how non-specialist audiences can benefit from applying rhetorical insights to everyday issues, problems, and questions. Act IV entangles the two approaches I detail in this act, *mattering* and *dwelling*, with a more-than-human orientation toward *ethical action* in the form of a choose-your-own-adventure narrative. By asking my reader to encounter, over and over again, a dog trapped in a car on a hot day and make decisions toward how to respond to the situation, I seek to prepare my reader to encounter and act within ambiguous circumstances where every decision is fraught with consequences of varying degrees of benefit and harm. Instead of trying to clarify the complex aspects of their respective entanglements, these two acts emphasize those complexities, foregrounding the highly contextual and multi-faceted dimensionality a given agent must navigate in any entanglement. In emphasizing complexity, these more experimental acts seek to discover/deliver alternative means for preparing whole persons (mind/body as one entangled unit) to differently orient themselves with/in the world, focusing on the active cultivation of necessary rhetorical capacities for contemporary existence (such as attunement or navigating ambiguity).

Taken together, the individual acts of my dissertation entangle to offer a number of ways forward for theoretically, analytically, methodologically, pedagogically, and practically conceiving, delivering, and engaging rhetorical entanglements. Additionally, by hybridizing

traditional and experimental methods of producing scholarship in the same conceptual space via carpentry, I can challenge the de facto primacy of traditional print scholarship genres by demonstrating what's possible for rhetorical and composition scholarship and pedagogy when we dwell with(in) complexity and uncertainty and resist the urge to rationalize or simplify in order to produce and articulate knowledge across a range of modalities and genres (of which written language enacted in print is but one option).

Beyond producing artifacts that do or perform theory, Bogost highlights some additional benefits of carpentry that include increasing “the variety, playfulness, and earnestness of discourse” as well as “inviting thinkers to exercise and develop their natural talents” (93). This is crucial to both my work here and what I see as the future of rhetorical and composition scholarship and pedagogy. If the dissertation-as-artifact is supposed to be an earnest representation of who we are and what we do as scholars and teachers of rhetoric and composition, then an approach of carpentry also allows me to produce a material artifact that embodies myself, my work, and my perspectives and insights: strange and quirky and unconventional but also thoughtful, disciplined, and artistic. So, please, allow me to break the fourth wall for a brief bit of autobiography that underscores the making of this dissertation: my most natural talents center around performance, musicality, and the voice. I've been singing since before I have conscious memory of it. I was maybe 5 or 6 when I started to read music and play other instruments (recorder, keyboard), 7 or 8 when I joined my first choir, and 9 or 10 when I started playing flute and performing in orchestral performances. I also began performing in plays and musicals around this age. I began taking private voice lessons and acting classes as a pre-teen, which continued in some form or another until my early twenties, when my training

became more focused on teaching and scholarly labor. Over the years, I've continued to write and perform music and have recently co-founded a multimedia production company (focusing on film and television to start). I share this background information about myself to ground a critical point about who I am (*my rhetorical being*) and the scholarship and pedagogy I produce: *my understanding of voice, rhythm, narrative and storytelling, rhetor/audience dynamics, text and character interpretation, etc. originate in the performing arts*. I was a musician, a songwriter, an actor, a performer *long before* I worked in rhetoric and composition.

However, I *am* a rhetorician. I *am* a composer (that is, one who practices the academic discipline of composition). Just as I bring my perspectives, tools, and skills as an artist to my scholarly work, so, too, does my academic work impact my art. These two worlds I inhabit are forever *entangled*. My art will always be scholarly, and my scholarship will always be artful. Always-already existing in the borderlands between these two worlds, I feel both empowered and equipped to produce a dissertation that functions as a work of carpentry as Bogost forwards: varied, playful, earnest, and drawing upon one's natural talents *while simultaneously embodying* its theoretical engagements through the form of the artifact itself. Ultimately then, by taking up entanglements through an approach/orientation of *carpentry*, I not only make contributions to the theorization, implementation, and practice of scholarship and pedagogy surrounding entanglements specifically, I also explore the *possibilities for scholarly practice* more generally by producing new models for approaching and delivering rhetorical scholarship and pedagogy in addition to our firmly entrenched textual ones, all while playfully and earnestly (re)presenting myself and the work I do.

Theoretically Speaking: An Entangled, Ethico-Onto-Epistemological Orientation

The above thinking on how *being* (what any thing is), *knowing* (what any thing understands or takes to be true), and *acting* (what any thing does) are complexly entangled, more-than-human phenomena can be captured in the term *ethico-onto-epistemology*. In *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Karen Barad notes how “the separation of epistemology from ontology is a reverberation of a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse” (185) and that *onto-epistemology* instead positions “knowing [as] a material practice of engagement as part of the world in its differential becoming” (89). However, she takes it a step further, by arguing that:

what we need is something like an *ethico-onto-epistem-ology*—an appreciation of the intertwining of ethics, knowing, and being—since each intra-action matters, since the possibilities for what the world may become call out in the pause that precedes each breath before a moment comes into being and the world is remade again, because the becoming of the world is a deeply ethical matter. (185)

Ethico-onto-epistemology, then, emphasizes how knowledge and ethics are complexly entangled with material/metaphysical being. In foregrounding the fundamental entanglement of being, knowing, and ethics, ethico-onto-epistemological rhetoric offers an opportunity to capture and cultivate new capacities for and orientations toward rhetorical action grounded in the material conditions of a complex, intra-active existence. Such radical transformations to our worldly orientations will undoubtedly be difficult, uncertain, and ambiguous to implement, as we both re-open ourselves, as human beings, to alternate and likely uncomfortable ways of thinking, acting,

and being and also experience communal growing pains as we discover, define, and deliver the terms of an ethical more-than-human existence. However, I see immense hope and potential in a more-than-human, ethico-onto-epistemological rhetoric to tangibly provide individuals and societies with the tools necessary to develop in ourselves and others these new capacities and orientations for entangled existence, exploring not only compelling reasons to value non-human beings and things and but also countless insights into other ways of being, knowing, and acting that aren't expressly human or human-centered.

In order to establish the ethico-onto-epistemological orientation that grounds my project, I draw upon two overlapping theoretical conversations that I will here elaborate on: *non-human ontologies*, which de-center the privileging of human existence above all other beings and things, and *theories of entanglement* that draw on new materialisms and ecological orientations to foreground the dynamic and complex interconnectedness of existence. Together, these conversations highlight questions regarding the deep entanglement of being, knowing, and acting, as well as how and why human beings must become ethically response-able to the myriad other beings and things with which we share this entangled existence.

Theories of Being: Non-Human Ontologies

Work in non-human ontologies, particularly Object Oriented Ontology (OOO), offer rhetoricians entry into ethico-onto-epistemological rhetoric by offering insights into how and why human beings should value, tend to, consider, and care for non-beings and things. In what follows, I'll first highlight a central conversation in OOO that seeks to reconceptualize how

humanities scholars can approach non-human existences and experiences. Looking at these insights through an explicitly rhetorical lens, I will then highlight Barnett and Boyle's conceptualization of *rhetorical ontology*: a framework for understanding complex, suasive interactions among human and non-human beings. Lastly, I'll turn to thinking on cyborgs, offering it as one possible rhetorical ontology for circumventing the trappings of human-centered ontology. Collectively, these theories explore different ways of being in the world, inhabiting it, and understanding it, as well as different ways of knowing it, different ways of relating to others in it (human and non-human alike) that center the existential experience of the non-human,—or rather, seek to understand non-human beings and things on their own terms as best as possible by de-centering human subjectivity and experience. Non-human ontologies ultimately highlight the essential entanglement of being (ontology) and knowing (epistemology), which, in turn, helps me lay the theoretical groundwork for the ethico-onto-epistemological orientation towards rhetoric and composition I seek to develop within this dissertation, opening up possibilities for developing scholarship and pedagogy that actively cultivates capacities for attunement, for navigating ambiguity, and for response-ability.

Levi R. Bryant's *The Democracy of Objects* challenges human-centered rhetoric by attempting to understand objects on their own terms. Bryant explains that under the shadow of the Cartesian dualism, "the question of the object, of what substances are, is subtly transformed into the question of how and whether we *know* objects" (16), and we need to recognize that "the *being* of objects is an issue distinct from the question of our *knowledge* of objects" (18). That is, objects *are* without us ever having to know about them. For Bryant, then, questions of ontology (how objects exist) precede questions of epistemology (our knowledge of those objects). In order

to meet objects on their own terms, he proposes a *flat* ontology that: 1) “rejects any ontology of transcendence or presence that privileges one sort of entity as the origin of all others and as fully present to itself” (245), 2) recognizes *the* universe (as a singular concept) does not exist, 3) “refuses to privilege the subject-object, human-world relation” (246), and 4) ensures no singular object “possesses greater ontological dignity than other objects” (246). Though criticized for being potentially a-rhetorical, which I’ll speak to more in a moment, Bryant’s flat ontology offers rhetoricians an impetus for de-centering human subjectivity, acknowledging humans as only one type of being “*among* beings, *entangled* in beings, and *implicated* in other beings” (40), asking us to consider how no single being’s existence is ontologically superior to another’s (i.e., the condition of its existence), as well as what methods exist for considering existence itself as inherently multiple (i.e., there is no singular, universal reality).

Ian Bogost critiques the a-rhetoricity of Bryant’s flat ontology, observing that it treats objects as having multiple beings that “exist simultaneously with, yet independently from, one another” (18). There are no hierarchies in Bryant’s flat ontology; no one version or iteration of the object is more “real” (i.e., authoritative) than another; they all co-exist independently and equally, seemingly not influencing one another. This means flat ontology, as Bogost argues, can be visualized as a plane, where everything exists on the same horizontal surface. Because of this, Bryant’s flat ontology, ignores or renders unimportant questions of power, of access, of intentionality, and of motive—the very factors that add dimension, nuance, and ultimately meaning to surface interactions. That is, while he advocates for understanding and valuing objects on their own terms and acknowledges that human and other beings are entangled and implicated in one another (valuable takeaways), he doesn’t get into the sticky, complicated details

of *how* and *why* diverse beings entangle. Instead of Bryant's plane of flat ontology, Bogost proposes the "*point of tiny ontology*" (21): a "dense mass of everything contained entirely," no matter how it is organized (22). *Tiny ontology*, then, provides a conceptualization of ontology outside of human-centered subjectivity that *emphasizes* entangled states of being and the variety of associations there within. By conceptualizing being as a dense, entangled mass instead of a vast plane, Bogost, then, offers a more useful ontology of objects for rhetorical studies than Bryant since it creates space for exploring dynamic relationships among diverse beings and things.

Within rhetorical studies, Scot Barnett and Casey Boyle, in their collection *Rhetoric, Through Everyday Things*, offer an *explicitly* rhetorical perspective of OOO. They define ontology as the "pervasive relationality of all things—the means by which things come into relation and have effects on other things" (8). Seeing ontology, then, as fundamentally rhetorical, the pair forward what they call *rhetorical ontology*: "a relational framework that...highlights how various material elements—human and nonhuman alike—interact suasively and agentially in rhetorical situations and ecologies" (2). By placing the focus on relations, on places of inter/intra-action, rhetorical ontologies give us both methods and metaphors for approaching meaning-making outside of human-centered rhetoric. Rhetorical ontologies seek to simultaneously treat all agents in a given entanglement with equal seriousness and consideration, yet *also* accounts for how the various relations and intra-actions among these diverse agents form specific arrangements and produce particular effects. Thus, rhetoricians can begin to value and comprehend the non-human on non-human terms while still understanding the material, tangible

implications of the intra-action of various ontological experiences on both human and other beings.

The figure of the cyborg offers one particularly useful rhetorical ontology for ethico-onto-epistemological theoretical orientations in that cyborgs circumvent the Western myth of man's quest for *wholeness*. Donna Haraway in her seminal work "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the late Twentieth Century" turns to the figure of the cyborg *precisely* because it has no original whole. The cyborg is always fragmented, assembled from different parts. Nor does the cyborg *seek* wholeness in others. Thus, the cyborg challenges three key Western binaries: man/animal, organism/machine, physical/non-physical. Additionally, Haraway observes that "there is no drive in cyborgs to produce total theory, but there is an *intimate experience of boundaries*, their construction and deconstruction" (57) [emphasis mine]. Cyborgs, then, offer rhetoricians a way of *defining and inhabiting boundaries* (of discourse, of inquiry, of experience) outside of the logic of human-centered thinking. They establish that our being, our embodied selves, have always been entangled in our technologies and environments, which, in turn, expand our sensual capabilities. In short, we have always been cyborgs. If we understand not just human subjectivity, but *any object's subjectivity*, its experience of being in the world, as cyborg in nature, as always entangled in other objects, we come to know rhetoric itself as an ontological phenomenon as well as an epistemological one.

In general, these various ontological approaches foreground the fact that *being and knowing are themselves complexly entangled*, and engaging this entanglement of being and knowing has fast become the defining work of rhetorical studies in the 21st century. When human beings are conceived of and understood as a single type of being among many, *all* of

which are always-already intra-acting with one another in complex, dynamic ways, we no longer exist at the center of ontological and epistemological inquiry. This more-than-human orientation requires more-than-human insights and methods for tracing the suasive influence of entangled agents on one another. Non-human ontologies offer theoretical entry into such that does not rely upon or inherently reproduce Western, human-centered, binary ways of thinking—a vital move for understanding the non-human on its own terms. Thus, in taking up non-human ontologies, individuals are asked to (re)orient themselves to become responsive to the wants, needs, and desires of myriad others, suggesting a way forward for cultivating more-than-human rhetorical orientations.

More specifically, while not the only ways in which my dissertation cultivates responsive orientations, I actively engage these ideas in acts II and IV by creating two spaces in which I ask my reader to re-orient themselves to scholarly labor. While act II asks the reader of my dissertation to work with the rhetorical tradition side-by-side with the Tarot—literally shuffling and randomly distributing various configurations of rhetorical wisdom into temporary spreads of knowledge in order to think through a vexing problem, issue, or question—act IV asks my reader to consider the well-being of a dog in relation to other human and non-human agents (like property), deciding the fate of the animal through the various actions they take as they choose. In both of these acts, I resist binary thinking and configure rhetorical experiences in which my readers must respond to the myriad possibilities presented to them.

Theories of Entanglement: Relationality and Ecological Thinking

Our scope for understanding the pulse of the universe has been severely limited by our human-centric rhetoric over the last handful of centuries. Fortunately, rhetoricians, philosophers, and social scientists have spent the latter half of the 20th century into our present moment developing and refining a number of theories and metaphors to help us observe, trace, and envision complex processes of meaning-making as *relations* or *associations* among varied agents. In what follows, I first overview a few common metaphors for this relational orientation toward rhetoric before detailing the three reasons I why I prefer a metaphor of *entanglement*—it emphasizes knotted states, it entangles knowledge from quantum physics with the humanities, and it emphasizes the way entanglements are greater than the sum of their parts.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari use the term *rhizome*: “an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system...defined solely by a *circulation of states*” (21) [emphasis mine]. The pair note that a rhizome “is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and which it overflows” (21). Rhizomes, then, are emergent phenomena, always in a state of becoming, never settled or static or still. The pair also use the term *assemblage* when discussing the arrangement of these emergent associations, which Jane Bennett picks up on in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. She defines an assemblage as an “ad hoc [grouping] of diverse elements” (23) with “a distinctive history of formation [and] a finite life span” (24). And Bruno Latour vacillates frequently between referring to these groupings as collectives, networks, and assemblages when discussing his Actor-Network Theory (ANT), what he calls a “sociology of associations” (9). In fact, as Clay Spinuzzi observes, Latour’s ANT fundamentally understands networks to be “*assemblages of humans and nonhumans*” (7).

Spinuzzi continues that “networks are relatively stable assemblages of humans and nonhumans that collectively form standing sets of transformations: the network represents and rerepresents phenomena in various areas” (12). So while rhizomes highlight emergence and interconnection, networks focus on stability and movement. As we can see, there is overlap, flexibility, and interchangeability in these metaphors, as theorists working with them often use or pull from multiple metaphors simultaneously depending on the scale, direction, or boundaries of the inquiry. I, however, prefer *entanglement* as a metaphor for conceptualizing and articulating this relational orientation towards rhetoric, since what any thing (human or non-human) is, knows, and does is *inherently tied up* in the other things with which it comes into contact — what those things are, know, and do.

Specifically, I mobilize a metaphor of *entanglement* for three intra-related reasons. First, entanglements *emphasize* the way various agents/objects/things are knotted together— that there are no definitive boundaries where one agent begins and another ends. In order to explain why such an emphasis is useful for cultivating ethico-onto-epistemological orientations towards rhetoric, I’d like to briefly explore the transformation of *rhetorical situation* over the last 50 years. Early on, rhetorical situation was conceptualized and taught as a discrete, fixed set of elements that worked in roughly similar and predictable ways depending on their arrangement (i.e. the high-school textbook darling that is the rhetorical triangle). However, as Jenny Rice observes, “the elements of rhetorical situation simply bleed” (9). That is, they resist the neat categorization and easy cause-effect binary models that human-centered thinking pushes one towards. Instead, Rice helps move the concept beyond a humanistic scope by calling our attention instead to *rhetorical ecology*: “a circulating ecology of effects, enactments, and events”

that “recontextualizes rhetorics in their temporal, historical, and lived fluxes” (9). Thus, ecology becomes another of these relational metaphors. Inherent in Rice’s definition of rhetorical ecology is motion and mutual co-constituency. Rhetorical ecology is not a static set of circumstances surrounding one textual artifact; instead, in studying rhetorical ecology, a rhetor aims to look at how knowledge is generated, taken up, and changed within a complex, dynamic, and specific system of meaning-making where agency is enacted, often unpredictably, in space/time. Ecosystems, with their bleeding elements, remind us that boundaries are porous, that what one agent does has effects that ripple throughout the system, and these actions or agents themselves are amorously bound together in ways that resist easy categorization.

I position *rhetorical entanglement* alongside rhetorical ecology as an alternate/expanded framework for conceiving rhetorical situation because this metaphor emphasizes the boundary-troubling areas of rhetorical discourse. Rhetorical entanglements simultaneously account for ontological (what/how things *are* in the world) and epistemological (what/how various things *know* in the world) considerations, exploring how both manifest within a spatiotemporal moment as *action* taken in the *material* dimension (tangible objects, bodies, things, landscapes, environs, and so on). A rhetorical entanglement might be anything from a workplace culture that involves people, capital, and technology to a forest ecology that includes fungi, animals, and humans; it could be a situation as local as a small group of teenagers forming a band to a complex international negotiation regarding what actions to take to address a global threat. Rhetorical entanglements, then, are *specific* and *singular* while simultaneously remaining *porous*, blending into other entanglements; while any single one may resemble other similar entanglements (that is, it may cohere into a familiar, generic shape on the surface), it’s important to remember that

unique elements and energies will always be at play. However, this doesn't mean we ignore the generic similarities among types of rhetorical entanglements; in fact, attuning to both the similarities and differences gives us a far more complex portrait of the rhetorics at play and how they function.

Thus, within every specific, material, actualized rhetorical entanglement is also a theoretical entanglement of *generic concepts, energies, beliefs, and processes* that help us analyze and understand the contextual negotiation of meaning. A metaphor of entanglement, then, helps us simultaneously account for and tend to both theoretical and actualized dimensions of rhetorical scholarship, pedagogy, and action. Within my dissertation, act III perhaps best demonstrates this point. In order to understand the significance of LeRae's crimson mask—an act that occurred during an independent, hardcore, intergender wrestling match and performed by a female wrestler—I must first examine the meaning of her act within each general ecology of professional wrestling with which her act intersects (independent, hardcore, intergender, and women's wrestling). A metaphor of entanglement allows me to trace how both the generic and actualized dimensions of her act influence its significance.

A second reason why I choose to engage a metaphor of entanglement is that it critically links work being done in the humanities and social sciences to the “hard” scientific field of quantum physics, the most accurate theorization on the functional nature of the universe outside of human experience we've developed thus far, as Newtonian physics breaks down on a sub-atomic level. Quantum entanglements, as explained by Barad, are scientifically observable phenomena where quantum particles separated (sometimes significantly) in space/time move in coordination with one another so much so that the entire state of entanglement “must be

understood as a single entity” (271). That is, *it’s impossible to examine any entangled quantic entity abstracted from the entanglement as a whole*. Barad argues that quantum entanglements, which have no equivalent or even similar conceptualization in traditional Newtonian physics, provides a lens for approaching scientific *and* philosophic practice without activating the problems of humanist discourse because they encourage us to see how “objects and the agencies of [their] observation are inseparable parts of *a single phenomenon*” (315) [emphasis mine]. That is, *what* we observe and the meaning of such observation is inherently tied to *how* we’re looking in the first place. Quantum physics, then, asks us to consider how *science and philosophy themselves entangle in any act of knowledge production*, something not explicitly theoretically accounted for in other hard scientific disciplines. The arts, the humanities, the sciences all continually inform one another; the knowledge we discover through one field is always-already entangled in the knowledges of other fields. Thus, as someone who sees transdisciplinary work as vital for the future of academia-writ-large, a metaphor of entanglement implies *transdisciplinarity* in a way other metaphors do not because of its quantic roots.

Finally, as I mentioned before, entanglements are part of a group of metaphors for describing how diverse agents relate to one another. Even if I draw on similar theoretical insights, I prefer entanglement over, let’s say, network or assemblage because the concept of entanglement highlights how these elements gain strength and stability *because of* their knotted states. That is, any entanglement is *itself in excess of its individual parts*, which is a key aspect of assemblages that Bennett observes. Specifically, she notes how humans and non-humans alike “*enhance their power in or as a heterogeneous assemblage*” (23) [emphasis mine] and that the assemblage as a whole “owes its agentic capacity to the vitality of the materialities that constitute

it" (34). Thus, diverse agents, each bringing their own unique vitality to the assemblage, together create something larger and more powerful than each constituent part. While assemblage is certainly an apt description of such inter-connected states, I feel it can sometimes obscure the fact that the entire collective becomes more powerful, more potent, the fuzzier the boundaries get between individual participants. I believe a metaphor of entanglement foregrounds this excessive dimension better than other related metaphors, encouraging us to understand entanglements in order to, sometimes, more purposefully *deepen* them (instead of just fix or sort them).

In sum, *entanglement*, as a conceptual metaphor, helps ground and focalize the carpentry I am doing with/in my dissertation project, serving as a theoretical, analytical, methodological, practical, and pedagogical guidepost. As overviewed above, entanglements engage both the *theoretical* and *analytical* aspects of ethico-onto-epistemological scholarship while simultaneously providing metaphorical frameworks, occasions, and opportunities to complexly enact entanglements through *method* as well. By methodologically foregrounding complexity and entanglement, my project not only develops theory, method, and analysis regarding entangled rhetorics, it also provides concrete models and *gedanken* (thought experiments) for performing/enacting/embodying/delivering this theory on/to our bodies/minds through an entangled sensual/intellectual experience. Thus, my project also engages a metaphor of entanglement *practically* and *pedagogically* by considering alternative possibilities for readying whole persons for rhetorical, ethical action. By mobilizing entanglement in such a manner within these five different dimensions of scholarly labor simultaneously, my dissertation-as-artifact functions as a work of carpentry, embodying the very philosophies of entanglement it seeks to explore.

Dwelling and Mattering: A Quantum Framework for Ethical Dispositions and Action within Rhetorical Entanglements

In human-centered orientations to rhetoric, as I've been arguing, there is often a tendency to sort, categorize, strategize, emplace, quantify, solve, fix, and order, and so the frameworks conceived to do such work may not be sufficient or appropriate for the labors of an ethico-onto-epistemological orientation, which seeks to emphasize how knowledge/thought, action/ethics, and being/existence are *always-already complexly entangled* within a given rhetorical situation. An ethico-onto-epistemological requires access to rhetoric's world-making qualities (*epistemological considerations*: what things mean, what beings know and understand to be true, how that knowledge has been constructed) while simultaneously tending to its world-being qualities (that is, *ontological considerations*: what beings and things are outside of a human understanding, what their various wants and needs might be, how they exist on their own terms) in order to make any determinations regarding what constitutes ethical action. As such, any framework for tracing, analyzing, and comprehending such rhetorics must be able to simultaneously account for how general patterns of thought, energy, and emotion circulate within a specific entanglement of rhetorical agents as well as the particularities of how diverse living and non-living agents entangle therein. In short, scholars of ethico-onto-epistemological rhetoric and composition need a framework that's capable of *foregrounding* the inherent intertwinement of agents and agencies, that can *emphasize* the complexly interwoven, interconnected, boundary-troubling places within a given entanglement — not necessarily to sort out, categorize, or isolate the diverse agents that comprise it, but instead to comprehend the dynamic and emergent ways

these agents *attune to and co-constitute one another*. The question is not *if* things are entangled but rather *how* and *when/where* and *to what degree* and *to what ends and consequences/with what impacts*. And so, we need approaches to ethico-onto-epistemological rhetoric that can focus on these questions as the particularities of the entanglement dictate.

Quantum physics, once again, offers a way forward. For example, take the well-known case study in classical physics that posits that light can *paradoxically* function and be perceived as either a particle *or* a wave, depending on the tools and circumstances of observation. Quantum physics, however, pushes us to understand light as *always functioning as both wave and particle simultaneously*; that particle or wave dictates a measurement of *how* we see something, *a frame of understanding*, instead of a fixed ontological state of being. Thus, the particle/wave *duality* in quantum physics is not an either/or divide (à la the Enlightenment's dualism); rather, it is a both/and entanglement that can be taken up, examined, and understood in multiple ways. Like light and other quantic entities, rhetoric also functions in simultaneously dual ways. *Both* epistemological *and* ontological forces always-already act on and manifest within a given rhetorical entanglement; what we notice in a given instance depends on what we look for and how we look for it. Rhetoric, then, is fundamentally quantum.

I believe an intra-active framework of *mattering* and *dwelling* provides rhetoricians with a flexible apparatus for measuring, comprehending, navigating, and shaping these complex, quantum rhetorical entanglements. Similar to the wave-particle duality central to quantum mechanics, both *dwelling* and *mattering* each have dual conceptual and linguistic functions — they both simultaneously function as nouns and verbs, denoting both things and actions, ideas and states of being. This functional duality within the terms themselves, then, gives us flexible

language that can not only capture but also enliven the fundamental entanglement of being/ knowing at the crux of rhetorical ethics and action. Further, mattering and dwelling offer a second quantum duality: each concept individually gives us access into *both* epistemological and ontological questions and considerations, but, depending on which we're actively utilizing at the time, lets either epistemology or ontology occupy the foreground while the other temporarily recedes into the background. A framework of mattering and dwelling, then, offers a quantum approach to rhetorical and composition studies that inherently accounts for the always-already present entanglement of epistemology, ontology, and ethics.

In what follow, I overview how mattering and dwelling provide rhetoricians with a quantum framework for penetrating the deepest layers of the complex rhetorical entanglements we navigate in everyday life, offering flexible, overlapping pathways through the fundamental entanglement of epistemology, ontology, and ethics. I detail how one can choose to individually perform acts of mattering (actively shaping knowledge and meaning) to foreground epistemological considerations or dwelling (a more patient, slower coming-to-knowledge or understanding over time) to foreground ontological considerations, or one can simultaneously perform both actions in order to examine the complex negotiation of epistemology, ontology, and ethics.

Mattering

Mattering can be understood as the purposeful *shaping of knowledge*—of our perceptions and understandings of what some thing is, does, or means—for specific aims, purposes, and inquiries. It's a quantum rhetorical framework for capturing, understanding, and articulating

processes of rhetorical poiesis: that is, the ways in which things, human and non-human alike, come to or are made to matter through more conscious and intentional acts. Mattering, then, is about meaning-*making*. As epistemological knowhow regarding knowledge generation and utilization, mattering can be a collaborative and multi-faceted experience, taking from many ways of being, seeing, and doing in order to better serve all participants' ontological needs in a given entanglement (that is, needs that are fundamentally present as a condition of existence), which often times are discovered through dwelling. Mattering then, foregrounds epistemological considerations by explicitly tending to and performing the act of knowledge construction. And so, I forward mattering as a quantum approach to epistemological rhetorical practices, as it highlights the active, emergent ways in which knowledge is produced, negotiated, and circulated among diverse beings and things within a given rhetorical entanglement.

Take, for example, a cave. A cave can be many things, depending on who you are and how you're looking at it. In certain hands, a cave can be an art gallery: either through the framing of discovered paintings or etchings from a bygone time or through the production of new works upon the extant surfaces. Or perhaps could be a recording studio, lending its reverberations to the ambiance of an album. It might be a tourist attraction or a protected wildlife area or a popular local teenage hang-out spot. It might be a hiker's shelter from a passing storm, or, for a young bear cub, perhaps it's home for the winter months—or a permanent residence for the mushrooms growing deep within it. Mattering, as an act performed by any being or thing, is the active shaping of the cave into a particular and specific use/function/iteration/meaning. As a scholarly orientation or approach, mattering would seek to understand how the cave has acquired its meaning, has become what it is, *in the context of* who or what is using it and for what purposes.

Mattering, then, traces the active, dynamic, emergent, and fluid ways in which particular and specific agents entangle.

My own conceptualization of mattering is heavily influenced by Barad's work with and understanding of quantum theory in *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. Importantly, quantum physics asks us to consider how matter (what things are physically, materially) and meaning (how those things are perceived or understood) are relentlessly entangled in the process of *mattering*. Barad claims that "mattering is *simultaneously* a matter of *substance* and *significance*" which makes tangible the "*inescapable entanglement* of matters of being, knowing, and doing, of ontology, epistemology, and ethics, of fact and value" (3) [emphasis mine]. She uses this quantum logic to demonstrate how scientific observation and practice *cannot be uncoupled* from philosophic frames of understanding since "practices of knowing are specific material engagements that participate in (re)configuring the world" (91). I find Barad's understanding of mattering useful for rhetorical praxis in general because it helps us overcome any lingering impacts of Enlightenment binary thinking—such as man vs. nature or mind vs. body—that may currently be influencing our tools, methods, and approaches to epistemological theory and practice by, instead, asking us to consider conceptual frames such as man/nature or mind/body as entangled in one another *as a fundamental condition of existence*. Since being/ontology, knowing/epistemology, and acting/ethics are inescapably entangled on a quantum level, I argue that a framework of *rhetorical mattering* asks us to consider how we observe, move through, and make sense of our physical, material worlds to be a *single, entangled process of meaning-making*. Mattering, then, requires tending to the complexities of rhetoric's world-making possibilities *and* actualities in order to, in Barad's words, "[take] account of the

entangled materializations of which we are a part” (384). In act III, for example, I attempt to capture this entangled process of meaning-making by tracing how professional wrestler Candice LeRae— acting on yet-to-be-materialized changing attitudes towards women’s wrestling— forcefully rends open a space for herself and other women to become central heroic figures within wrestling narratives, a shift representative of larger shifting cultural attitudes toward women’s agency in professional spheres.

While Barad uses quantum theory to configure scientific and philosophical practice as a singular, entangled phenomenon, Timothy Morton, in *Realist Magic*, turns to quantum thought to make the argument that *causality*, “*how things become entangled in one another*” (121) [emphasis mine], is “wholly an *aesthetic* phenomenon” (19) [emphasis in original]. Morton observes that post-Newtonian physics acknowledges how “entities interact in a *sensual ether* that is (at least to some extent) nonlocal and nontemporal,” since “objects can influence one another despite the fact that they are enclosed from all forms of access,” as in entangled states (20). As opposed to *occupying* space and time, Morton forwards that we should think of objects as *spaced* and *timed* by other entities in what he calls the aesthetic dimension: “a nontemporal, nonlocal space that is not in some beyond but right here, in your face” (19). This sentiment is directly echoed by Barad when she notes that space and time are “intra-actively produced in the making of phenomena; neither space nor time exist as determinate givens outside of phenomena” (315). This paradoxical non-spatiotemporal dimension is simultaneously directly in front of you yet somehow still inaccessible, undeterminable, and mysterious, leading Morton to conclude that matter (as traditionally conceived) doesn’t exist—that it’s better understood as *a state of information-for* or *materials-for*, since “matter requires at least one other entity in order to be

itself” (42). So, for Morton, physical reality and matter *are* real, but only because they are “encrypted against access by any object, including a probing human mind” (31); that is, reality itself is the *relation between* objects—or, reality is *interobjective*—which is why the aesthetic dimension is so important. Causality *is* the spacing/timing of objects by other objects, which leads Morton to propose that aesthetics are an exploration of causality, of *how* things entangle. Morton’s causality, then, offers a framework of rhetorical mattering that entangles quantum physics and aesthetics, and in doing so, affirms the necessity of the arts and humanities in *all* processes of meaning-making, including scientific, as these disciplines already have extensive theoretical and practical knowledge of aesthetic phenomena and can bring new energies, perspectives and techniques to rhetorical praxis— something I aim to demonstrate with my own work in this dissertation project through Bogost’s approach of carpentry. For instance, in act IV, by entangling my background in the arts (particularly in narrative-centric, performance-based media) with my scholarly exploration of the entanglement of mattering, dwelling, and ethics, I’m able to produce an object that enlivens the particularities of that entanglement in a manner unusual to traditional rhetorical praxis— a choose-your-own-adventure story.

Finally, I turn to the social sciences for one last framework for rhetorical mattering. Janet Vertesi’s *Seeing Like a Rover* follows the Mars Rover teams for two years to trace the complex intra-actions between living and non-living agents that produce our knowledge of Mars. Particularly, she forwards the idea of *drawing as*: “a synthesis—or perhaps a drawing together—of current formulations about representation in scientific practice into a suggestive way to formulate image work: as simultaneously the site and document of knowledge production in the sciences” (242). Vertesi is concerned with how *literal* ways of (en)visioning and documenting

an object of study (imaging) are inherently entangled with the particular *theoretical* or *methodological* ways of (en)visioning and documenting that knowledge acquired through scientific training. Echoing observations made by Barad, Vertesi reminds us that scientific seeing and vision are not natural phenomena, but rather, faculties that, “[entail] acquiring a particular visual skill that allows a scientist to see some features as relevant for analysis and others as unimportant” (8). Though Vertesi is explicitly concerned with literal images produced by/ through mars rovers and their operational teams, her concept of drawing as can be applied to metaphorical images, pictures, or scenes as well, bringing our attention to the “intersubjective activities” that lead to knowledge formation (Vertesi 244), both in the sciences and more generally. Vertesi’s concept of drawing as, then, offers a method for performing rhetorical mattering that figures *what* we see, *how* we see it, and what it *means* as a singular, entangled process and that artifacts of scholarly production function as both a space (site) where knowledge production happens as well as the material documentation of such knowledge production—which, much like Morton’s work, is useful for my own application of Bogost’s carpentry in this dissertation. On a macro-level, I create various artifacts of scholarly practice that act simultaneously as sites of knowledge production—spaces where I am actively developing the pieces of my argument that constitute my dissertation—*and* as the material documentation *of* that intellectual labor: in brief here, act II, a Tarot deck and guidebook (site) to dwell within and attune to various configurations of rhetoric as a discipline (labor); act III, a multi-dimensional analysis (site) delivering an argument that women’s professional wrestling matters (labor); and act IV, a choose-your-own-adventure story (site) asking the reader to experience the complex ways being, knowing, and ethics entangle within everyday action and decision making (labor).

Whether viewed through Barad's lens of mattering and intra-activity, Vertesi's intersubjective activities, or Morton's interobjective relationships, what we see emerging here about knowledge formation is that it's a deeply entangled process informed by many diverse and interconnected agents. Mattering, then, goes beyond physical and intellectual representation (though mattering certainly encompasses that); we are talking the shaping/shaped, the touching/touched, the making/made. Together, then, these different approaches to rhetorical mattering help us see, understand, and talk about 1) the intra-active/subjective/objective relationships that happen between beings and things of all kind (human and non-human alike); 2) the myriad ways in which knowledge gets generated, shaped, and transmitted among such beings and things; 3) how power and agency circulate within and across particular entanglements of diverse agents; and 4) the influences of ideologies, cultures, social structures, etc. on everyday acts of rhetorical world-making.

Dwelling

If mattering can be understood as the purposeful shaping of knowledge, then *dwelling* can be understood as a slow *coming-to-knowledge* that unfolds over time and in space, often through prolonged contact with or immersion in a given entanglement. To dwell, in its starkest form, is simply *to be* alongside other beings. As a tool/capacity for accessing and comprehending being, dwelling asks one to sit with and be present among an entanglement (or any agent within) in order to first better understand it on *its own* terms before deciding what to make of it or how to live alongside it—that is, how to matter, make meaning, together. Dwelling, then, foregrounds ontological considerations and postpones interpretation and intentional action/meaning making

in order to cultivate the capacities necessary to become better listeners who are more attuned and responsive to the *particular* needs of a given entanglement. Thus, dwelling, as a quantum approach to ontological rhetorical practices, insists on a slow coming-to-knowledge through extended be-ing amongst diverse others.

Allow me to return to my example of a cave. An act of mattering gives the cave a specific meaning, and a scholarly approach of mattering traces the acquisition of meaning. But, what is a cave unto itself? What are its terms for existence? Well, to begin to approach the answer to those questions, one must dwell. Perhaps a team of scientists spends months studying an unusual stalagmite formation in a cave, discovering something new about its geologic past? Maybe a group of friends out for a walk in the woods stop by to “check it out,” take in the sights, and leave. Dwelling is noticing the way the light from the river reflects off the cave wall just before sunset, or how after the rain, the smell of moss becomes pungent. Dwelling, as an act, is to be within a cave, observing or studying or appreciating its existence-as-is. Dwelling, as an approach or orientation, seeks to understand a cave for what it is or what it offers. Dwelling, then, comes-to-knowledge about an entanglement by observing it as it exists.

Though not often highlighted, dwelling’s roots extend to the origin of Western rhetorical thought/practice. While we generally think of *ethos* as related to character, spirit, or ethical code, Michael J. Hyde reminds us in his edited collection *The Ethos of Rhetoric* that ‘dwelling place’ is one of the root meanings of *ethos* historically overlooked by, yet useful for, rhetoricians. Hyde claims a given rhetoric transforms “space and time into ‘dwelling places’ (*ethos*; pl. *ethea*) where people can deliberate about and ‘know together’ (*con-scientia*) some matter of interest” (xiii).

And in *Ambient Rhetoric: The Attunements of Rhetorical Being*, Thomas Rickert continues

developing these connections between ethics, dwelling, and communal knowledge. In order to access, observe, and understand the processes that influence/manifest how we exist and subsist, Rickert proposes that we *attune* ourselves to a given entanglement and the participants therein, or more accurately, that we *adjust* the way we are attuned within it since we are “always already attuned; there are only changes in attunement” (9). Attunement requires tending to the ways in which *all* participants both exist and act within an entanglement. Thus, *attunement* becomes a dwelling practice that’s not mired in human-centered rhetoric, but rather allows for any agent to shift its frames for being, knowing, and doing in order to meet others on their own terms. Or rather, dwelling practices, like attunement, help us ethically encounter and make meaning alongside an other that exists and matters differently than us—a point I attempt to make clear in act IV by asking my reader to *repeatedly* encounter a dog trapped in a car on a hot day and choose from a variety of actions of varying ethicality in order to prepare the reader for such encounters in everyday life.

Brandon LaBelle offers another frame for dwelling when he observes the dynamics between silence and noise in *Acoustic Territories*. LaBelle positions both silence and noise as “spatial and ethical volumes” that “contour the exchanges that come to pass between inside and outside” a place (66). Here, space and ethics entangle in sound and place. LaBelle observes that silence, the desire “to minimize, cut off, and define limits in volume, vibration, and leakage,” often insulates a place and its occupants from an other, “thereby locating notions of quiet within the maintenance of domestic stability” (64). Silence, then, in seeking to stabilize by minimizing, cutting off, and limiting, renders the domestic (the intimate) inaccessible to the other, a violent, unethical act in a more-than-human rhetoric. If silence “paradoxically supplies the mechanics of

social values with a vocabulary of control and constraint” (Labelle 64), then noise becomes “an ethical encounter from which to generate *care* for the unknown, for the other” (83). Labelle notes how noise “supplies a rich encounter for the making of responsibility” since it “creates a forceful chance for understanding the flows of power as they move in and out of the home, as part of the intensities of listening” (82). Instead of constraining or controlling how everyone matters in a given entanglement (a rhetoric of silence, of control, of mastery, of Western logics), noise allows access to the intimacies of (a) dwelling by asking one to listen and tend to the various agents (others) that flow into and out of the space in order to ethically respond. LaBelle, then, goes beyond Rickert’s observation that dwelling readies us to encounter difference; dwelling causes us to *care for* and *tend to* difference. That is, difference shouldn’t be fixed or solved for, but rather preserved and emphasized as a source of strength for the larger entanglement—a point I attempt to drive home in act II where I present multiple, sometimes conflicting configurations of rhetoric side-by-side within a single Tarot deck, commenting on the various ways in which rhetoric has been conceived, portrayed, and utilized over two and a half millennia. Since these configurations are drawn at random when using the deck, I’m asking readers to make sense of the “noise” of imagery and symbols and theories in the moment by listening and tending to the particular, temporary configurations of the cards, thus, preparing my reader to tend to difference through the act of dwelling and to mobilize rhetorical wisdom through nonlinear problem solving that also draws on intuition and a semi-stable set of representations to creatively reflect on the particularities of a given problem, issue, or question.

Collectively, Hyde, Rickert and LaBelle position dwelling as a way to gain a fuller access to one’s own and a *piece* of the other’s ontological experience, since we can seldom (if

ever) *actually* experience an other's existence for ourselves. That is, accessing an other's experience, relating and communicating to one another, is a *mediated* process, and dwelling affords us the opportunity to learn which of the available means for such mediation may be most responsible in a given instance. Dwelling, then, is a habitual process; it's hardly effective if we do it once and think we're done. Rather, it unfolds continually over time in particular places and requires patience, consideration, and reflection. Simply put, the more dwelling something or someone has done, the more effectively it (they) can matter (noun and verb) within a place and time.

Mattering/Dwelling in Ethical Action

Having just drawn distinctions between mattering and dwelling for the purpose of offering working definitions of the two approaches/orientations, I now want to suggest ways in which they are intricately enmeshed in one another—for, like our hiker or bear or mushroom taking up (even temporary) residence in the cave, an act of mattering might also require or lead to dwelling, the two experiences anything-but-mutually-exclusive. For example, ethos as “dwelling place,” as described by Hyde, sounds quite similar to Morton's aesthetic, causal dimension: a location where *rhetoric spaces and times conscientia* (knowledge, consciousness). This similarity is even more striking when taking into consideration Morton's understanding of consciousness: “consciousness-of anything is *action at a distance*. Empirical phenomena such as mirror neurons and entanglement bear this out” (21) [emphasis mine]. We can see the complex interplay of mattering and dwelling already emerging here: if consciousness is action at a distance, dwelling (both as a space and an action itself) *creates* distance in order to know/

understand the actions that are unfolding in a given rhetorical entanglement. That is, consciousness, knowledge, and meaning-making, all processes related to mattering, *require* dwelling. Further, the fact that ‘dwelling place’ shares an etymological root, *ethos*, with moral or ethical character or spirit implies that dwelling creates distance in order to *ethically* produce knowledge and consciousness. In a quantum rhetoric that foregrounds our entangled states of being and knowing, acting ethically means tending to *all* human and non-human participants, since each has a stake in and impact on the entire entanglement. Thus, to ethically participate in entanglements, we must dwell-together in order to know-together.

Further, Rickert defines ethics as “a set of comportments that emerge from life as it is lived, from what we do, say and make” that “give meaning and direction to how we dwell with things and each other in the world (223). Here, echoing Barad, Rickert’s entangles ethics and action — what we “do, say, and make” both produces and is produced by the ethics that shape how we dwell. Ethics, then, are emergent and iterative at once; they are always-already enacting their influence, which means that dwelling “entails more than existing and subsisting; it... [includes] the richness that is developed and pursued in *how* we are doing so” (Rickert 243) [emphasis mine]. In “Orientations Matter,” Sara Ahmed picks up upon this relationship between dwelling and the (re)production of always-already-circulating ethical orientations: “the starting point for orientation is the point from which the world unfolds: the ‘here’ of the body and the ‘where’ of its dwelling” (236). Orientations (perspectives, points of view, frameworks for understanding—in short, everyday ways of mattering) are formed *through* dwelling. We must dwell within some specific *where/when*, and from that material, sensual place we watch the

world unfold. Which means that orientations emerge from the world just as they are world-shaping as well.

Ahmed observes that when we orient ourselves through dwelling, “we are also orientating ourselves toward some objects more than others, including not only physical objects (the different kinds of tables) but also objects of thought, feeling, and judgment, or objects in the sense of aims, aspirations, and objectives” (246). Here, Ahmed gets to the crux of rhetoric’s dual concerns of dwelling and mattering: we form our orientations to/within the world by dwelling, but these orientations themselves tangibly affect the knowledge we produce about/in the world. In a statement that echoes Barad, Ahmed claims, “If matter is affected by orientations, by the ways in which bodies are directed toward things, it follows that matter is dynamic, unstable, and contingent. What matters is itself an effect of proximities: we are touched by what comes near, just as what comes near is affected by directions we have already taken” (234). That is, matter, as a physical, corporeal substance, is tangibly shaped by what we think/say/feel matters (i.e. is important or significant) *while at the same time* what matters, what’s important, is shaped by the matter, the bodies and materials, we encounter. Thus, orientations are entangled phenomena themselves which “point to the future, to what is not yet present” while also being “shaped by what is behind us, creating a loop between what is toward and behind” (Ahmed 247) — or put another way, a feedback loop between dwelling and mattering, the two always in dynamic entanglement.

In a quantum rhetoric, dwelling and mattering become rhetoric’s particle and wave: different orientations, different methods, different ways of seeing and measuring *a singular ethico-onto-epistemological phenomenon* that help us flexibly tend to, care for, and, ideally,

ethically respond within rhetorical entanglements. Since epistemological and ontological considerations are both always-already present in any entanglement, mattering and dwelling can be performed simultaneously in a given project or inquiry in order to examine the active negotiation of rhetoric across diverse agents within a specific context. That is, when the goal is to look at the *relationship* between being and knowing in a given instance, how one informs, impacts, and co-constitutes the other, a person can both matter and dwell at the same time, gaining access into how ethical action might be conceived of or advocated for within a given entanglement.

Delivering Rhetorical Entanglements

Delivering Rhetorical Entanglements is a work of rhetorical scholarship produced in the genre of the dissertation, but it's also a *dramatization* of that very scholarship: the processes of scholarly production, the theories and insights gleaned therein, and the function of the dissertation-as-artifact itself. Before I overview each of the forthcoming acts, allow me to briefly highlight the core elements of the five-act narrative structure generally in order to purposefully color the scholarship presented hereafter. Act I, which you are now dwelling within, functions as the exposition, introducing the various elements at play in a narrative. That is, it reveals to the audience the background information necessary to move the plot forward, which is the function of act II, the rising action. Act II advances the narrative towards the climax, the turning point, which unfolds in act III. In act IV we witness the falling action, where the ramifications of the three previous acts play out, setting up the dénouement, act V, wrapping up all loose ends and bringing the narrative to a cathartic conclusion. Applying this dramatic structure to my

dissertation object as an organizing principle, I hope to suggest, on top of all else explored here, that scholarship and pedagogy are always-already themselves artifices, narratives, that, just like our fictional stories, we use to frame, comprehend, order, and interpret the reality we, as human beings, inhabit.

Here in act I, the exposition, I've drawn upon work from varied fields of thought, including new materialisms, non-human ontologies, ecological and entangled rhetorics, and quantum physics, to overview the theoretical groundwork for my dissertation regarding *entanglements* and offer a framework of *dwelling* and *mattering* that can be flexibly enacted across genres, modalities, and contexts to help bring into focus, to varying degrees of scope and richness, the complexly entangled agencies in/of/between rhetorical ecologies. In this framework, one can choose to *matter* (shape knowledge for specific aims, purposes, and inquiries), *dwell* (come-to knowledge through prolonged contact with/immersion in an entanglement-as-is), or do both simultaneously in order to negotiate contextualized meaning. Applying this framework, acts II-IV each entangle various theoretical or scholarly concepts and use that entanglement as a lens for both positioning the object of inquiry as well determining *the best available means* for achieving argumentative goals, demonstrating how, conceptually, dwelling and mattering help us analyze and produce artifacts that embrace complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty.

Act II, the rising action, invites readers to leave the traditional boundaries of the dissertation artifact (that is, the printed or digital manuscript) and enter an interactive, non-linear, and material dwelling space in which they *experience* (rather than read about) the focal theoretical entanglement of *attunement, dwelling, and rhetorical be-ing* via the form, structure,

and mechanics of the Tarot. Split between two coordinating objects, a prototype for a rhetorical tarot deck and a guidebook for using/interpreting it, act II juxtaposes varied insights from rhetorical theory with the imagery and symbolism of the Tarot in order to 1) offer students, citizens, and scholars of rhetoric a dwelling space in which we can consider the wisdoms of our field anew (both what it is and how one does its work; that is, our *rhetorical be-ing*) and 2) offer broader publics a tangible tool through which they can apply rhetorical reasoning to tasks of everyday reflection, invention, and problem solving. In delivering a non-linear experience of rhetorical theory, I ask my reader to orient themselves *differently* (physically and metaphorically) to the field by making them *actively attune to, dwell within, and (re)configure* rhetorical wisdom by drawing upon cards/insights at random and arranging them into temporary configurations known as *spreads*. The insights gleaned from the cards emerge based on one's reason for consulting the cards, what cards randomly appear and in what positions/relations to one another, and who is doing the interpreting. This act, then, enacts a different way of expressing, engaging, and experiencing the random, dynamic, unpredictable and emergent qualities of rhetorical theory in a manner irreproducible through traditional print discourse, modeling one possible method for cultivating capacities for embracing ambiguity, uncertainty, and difficulty.

Act III, the climax, returns to more traditional scholarship, exploring the entanglement of *ambiguity, action, and agency*, via a method of *mattering* by analyzing the complex rhetorics at work in a particular instance of the *crimson mask* (bloody face) donned by professional wrestler Candice LeRae. In wrestling, the concept of intent is always-already ambiguous due to *kayfabe* — the fictional (or pre-determined) aspects of a storyline/event; there is never a *definitive* intent or interpretation of an action, only an entanglement of simultaneously deployed intentions that,

depending on one's vantage point, capacities, and insights, *appear* to be/mean one thing over another. We never know for certain whether LeRae bled intentionally, only that she bled. Further, wrestling narratives are overwhelmingly told on/with/by male bodies; yet LeRae, at 5'2" and 110 lbs, built a career on being cute, bubbly, tough, and unabashedly *female*. I argue LeRae embodies her agency through the violent visage of the crimson mask, using its complexity, ambiguity, and sheer rhetorical force to create space for feminine representation, action, and mattering in a traditionally masculine ecology. Since *fictional* narratives unfold through *actual* bodily acts/labor in front of audiences who offer instantaneous feedback on the ambiguously entangled fictional/actual event as it unfolds, wrestling rhetorics provide unique access to the liminal, emergent, experiential qualities of *episteme*, of knowledge. Thus, by examining agency and action vis-a-vis pro-wrestling, this act offers theoretical insight into dealing with ambiguity, complexity, and uncertainty—as well as new approaches to framing and engaging these insights via an approach/orientation of mattering—in order to comprehend the situationally specific ways in which ethics emerge in a given entanglement.

Act IV, the falling action, experiments with print scholarship and pedagogy, exploring/performing an entanglement of *dwelling, mattering, and action* by taking up an ambiguously ethical case and laying bare many *possible* actions and outcomes in the style of a choose-your-own-adventure novel, illustrating how we *could* utilize print's oft-ignored material dimensions to complexly enliven rhetorical theory and simulate complex entanglements that invite readers to tangibly grapple with everyday decision making processes. Within the narrative presented in act IV, the reader begins by stumbling upon a dog locked inside of a car on a hot day and quickly comes to a series of emplaced decisions/actions; each choice leads the reader down a series of

choices until they have reached the end of the path (and faced the consequences of their choices). In making my reader simultaneously dwell and matter within the narrative by asking them to choose between myriad possibilities for action over and over again, I can connect ethics to the particular ways in which they choose to act in a given iteration of the narrative. This act, then, *dramatizes the possibilities for ethical action* within a given complex and ambiguous rhetorical entanglement; rather than exploring ethical choices exhaustively, it models how to conduct analysis and engage pedagogy that take up ethico-onto-epistemological orientations and the questions they produce/engage. From where does ethical action come when every decision is fraught with consequence and harm or when no clear path exists? How might such ethical capacities be required of us in this moment to manage ambiguity and uncertainty? This act offers a pedagogical method for approaching ethical communication by exploring how dwelling with(in) varied *possibilities* for action prepares one to ethically respond to the localized needs of others in a given entanglement.

Finally, act V, the *dénouement*, explores how the personal and the professional are always-already-entangled, particularly for academics. I suggest that this entanglement can be productive for rhetorical and composition scholarship and pedagogy because it can help us begin to bring *artistry* back into all dimensions of our work: *the capacity of making something new from the known*. If we can acknowledge how our personal ways of seeing, knowing, being, and acting influence the scholarship and pedagogy we produce, then these personal/professional entanglements can become productive spaces in which we can facilitate the creation and expression of new knowledge. I end by offering five particular orientations or rhetorical

capacities that get cultivated when we bring artistry back into our work: possibility, play, collaboration, resourcefulness, and empathy.

Collectively, then, *Delivering Rhetorical Entanglements* explores how the affordances of print (like any mode) simultaneously enable and limit *possibilities* for knowledge production. Since traditional print-based academic genres can only take us so far, I argue that teachers and scholars of rhetoric and composition can do more to cultivate dynamic, complex, ambiguous, and non-linear genres for delivering rhetorical scholarship and pedagogy in a manner that best enlivens and enriches the particularities of whatever theories, cases, and goals/aims are being engaged. I argue that cultivating new and varied genres, pedagogies, and methods for delivering theory, as well as more purposefully using our tried-and-true ones, can increase the public reach, value, and impact of rhetorical and composition scholarship and cultivate various necessary capacities for approaching the messy, complex, difficult, and ambiguous entanglements that characterize 21st century everyday life.

Entr'acte I: Magical Reasoning, Rhetoric, and the Tarot

In act I, I argue that our traditional genres of print scholarship often leave elements of ethico-onto-epistemological rhetorical theory—which understands being, knowing, acting, and ethics as fundamentally entangled—unexplored or under-explored because, like all modes of production and meaning-making, the genres themselves bound and structure knowledge in particular ways for particular audiences. If we seek to discover different knowledges and ways of being in the world, as well as different dispositions and capabilities, to cope with 21st century problems, then we must develop additional genres and methods for scholarly production that function, well...differently from our tried-and-true ones. More precisely, if human beings en masse require new ways of inhabiting and acting within the world to address our public problems—given the complexities, the ambiguities, the vastness and scope—then I am suggesting we also need new ways of conceiving and delivering our scholarship and pedagogies that can cultivate *public or non-specialist* capacities for both imagining or envisioning humanity as inexorably enmeshed with other beings and things and also for acting responsibly alongside these myriad others as part of larger entanglements. While our traditional genres for scholarship and pedagogy are productive within academic communities and environs, they also exclude a large number of people who could benefit from our theoretical insights, wisdoms, dispositions, and perspectives. I offer this project as part of my hope that rhetoric and composition can imagine and do more to produce artifacts that do, perform, and/or enact rhetorical theory for public audiences by taking advantage of the entire range of available means at our disposal. Doing so can help us better cultivate *in all individuals* various ethico-onto-epistemological capacities, such as response-ability, attunement, and the ability to dwell within uncomfortable, amorphous, and/or

complicated situations and environs. Act II is the first of two such artifacts I offer as part of this dissertation project.

In Act II, I demonstrate how a framework of *dwelling* might be enacted to produce a work of rhetorical theoretical scholarship that comes-to knowledge and produces meaning (and possibly action) differently than what's possible within our traditional print genres. As a reminder, when I say dwelling, I mean to signal an approach that centers being present among or sitting with a given rhetorical entanglement in order to discover, via prolonged contact, the specific ways the myriad agents entangle within it. Act II consists of two correlating objects: a deck of Tarot cards that I have named *Techne Psychagogia: A Rhetorical Tarot* and a guidebook for interpreting their meaning. While I will get into the specificities of my work in act II momentarily, I'd like to first discuss my goals for this artifact as a work of theoretical scholarship surrounding three entangled concepts: *dwelling*, *attunement*, and *rhetorical be-ing*. By be-ing, I mean to signal how rhetoric exists in the world and shapes action—its definitions, conceptualizations, and applications. As part of my dissertation project, I wanted to create/deliver an experience that asks my reader to dwell within a pre-defined space in order to attune to the theory and criticisms of rhetoric explored therein without assuming prior knowledge of or experience with rhetoric; further, I wanted to create an experience with and encounter of rhetorical theory and wisdom in a non-linear, unpredictable, and non-academic manner in order to mimic the way in which everyday acts of dwelling and attuning can often be uncertain, ambiguous, and fraught with complexity. In addition, I wanted to explore rhetorical be-ing from a disciplinary perspective: how we define what rhetoric is and how we do it through the historical and theoretical conceptualizations and purviews of rhetoric as a discipline. For act II,

then, rather than make a linear argument *about* the field in order to explore the entanglement of dwelling, attunement, and rhetorical be-ing, I instead produce a critical, reflective, and embodied space where my reader must actively dwell with and attune to key ideas within the evolution of rhetorical theory. This dual function of my deck (that it can be used by non-specialists and specialists alike) renders our rhetorical theories, insights, and wisdoms both accessible and applicable to everyday acts of contemplation and action while offering an opportunity for users to dwell within rhetorical theory, come-to-know it, through prolonged engagement with the cards. Further, it performs this work in an emergent, unpredictable, and dynamic manner that mimics the ways in which rhetoric unfolds in everyday life, offering a method or heuristic of cultivating ethico-onto-epistemological dispositions for approaching ambiguous and complex entanglements.

This brings me back around to the details of what I tangibly, materially offer in act II of my dissertation: a Tarot deck and guidebook. As I explain in my guidebook (which is included next in this dissertation and from which I'll be quoting heavily, here), the deck:

“uses the structure, imagery, symbolism, and mechanisms of the Tarot as a method for both applying the ancient art of rhetoric to everyday problem-solving as well as framing and delivering deeper insights into and perspectives on rhetoric itself... [As the reader consults the cards, they are not only] drawing upon an image and its traditional function within the Tarot, [they're also] drawing upon correlating rhetorical wisdom: a quote from rhetorical theory that provides insight into and prospective on rhetoric and its various conceptualizations, associations, and applications in everyday life [and] a rhetorical question posed to trigger contemplation about the theme or meaning of that card” (4).

As a complementary object, the guidebook offers various tools and interpretive frames for divining meaning from the deck, “placing occult and rhetorical reasoning side-by-side [in order] to produce new, fruitful, and unexpected insights into everyday issues, problems, difficulties, and anxieties as well as the art of rhetoric itself” (5). By putting magical reasoning via the Tarot side-by-side with the *techne* of rhetoric within act II, I ask my reader to literally shuffle and distribute rhetorical theory into random configurations in order to discover and create different and meaningful insights, associations, and conversations. In so doing, act II provides a model for using the Tarot as a form of rhetorical invention; it offers an alternative heuristic or method for approaching, representing, and generating rhetorical reasoning and analysis. Similar to a genre analysis, a pentadic analysis, or even the textbook-darling rhetorical triangle, the Tarot can prompt and shape thinking about a particular question, situation, or issue for a variety of aims and intentions. Like these and other rhetorical strategies and heuristics, the Tarot can help prompt ways and habits of thinking rhetorically, of exploring different dimensions of a rhetorical situation, of contemplating what and who matters most to the particular circumstances, of the consequences and warnings one should heed, and of imaginative and creative ways to solve problems. *Techne Psychagogia: A Rhetorical Tarot*, then, simultaneously enables non-specialists to use rhetorical theory to frame, discuss, reflect upon, and solve various issues, questions, or problems they may be facing while also offering students and scholars of rhetoric an opportunity to both critique and utilize the insights we’ve produced differently than we can through traditional print genres.

Speaking of magical reasoning, I find the long-standing associations between rhetoric and magic productive for crafting different orientations to not only rhetoric’s form and function but

also to scholarly production itself. In the Western rhetorical tradition, this association has been present since the initial systematic teachings of the Sophists who believed, as John O. Ward highlights, that “the magical, poetic, rhetorical, musical power of language was the only reality,” with Gorgias even conceiving of language as a kind of sorcery (58). Terrific work has been done by scholars like Ward, Jacqueline De Romilly, William Covino, Joshua Gunn, and Daniel O’Keefe (among others) to suss out the history, context, and development of such conceptualizations of rhetoric as magic. While I’ll not be going deep into this history within this entr’acte, I do find Covino’s articulation of a core tenant of magical reasoning useful for my invocation of the Tarot in act II. He argues that: “Mind exists *in* matter, and language *affects* matter: words and things are themselves volitional forces” (352) [emphasis in original]. He elaborates, explaining how in magic, “distinctions between literal and figurative identity are impossible to maintain because everything is both actual and symbolic: a talisman or a word signifies a magic power and is that power” (352). That is, to reframe this idea within the quantum perspective I introduce in act I, both magic and rhetoric are simultaneously literal and figurative, actual and symbolic; they are both quantum discourses.

In spellwork, for instance, talismans such as herbs, spices, and resins take on symbolic meaning (i.e., cinnamon for success, dragon’s blood for protection and purification) and release their physically-contained powers through the material enactments of the spell (through burning, offering, anointing, burying, etc. the talismans). This is why Covino asserts that “magic is not the instant and arhetorical product of an otherworldly incantation; it is the process of inducing belief and creating community with reference to the dynamics of a rhetorical situation. Magic is a social act whose medium is persuasive discourse, and so it must entail the complexities of social

interaction, invention, communication, and composition” (349). Cinnamon doesn’t symbolize/enact success simply because one says so; rather, its “power” is tied to systematically categorized and cultivated sets of knowledge shared among specific communities of practice. Even if rhetoric isn’t inherently magical, then, magical reasoning certainly appears to be a rhetorical endeavor—or, as Covino claims, “magical consciousness...makes participatory, exploratory, generative rhetoric possible” (350).

This leads to a second reason why magical reasoning assists my work in act II — it offers an alternate approach to scholarly production that can be accessed and used by wider-reaching audiences than conventional scholarship. In *Modern Occult Rhetoric*, Joshua Gunn argues that academic discourse itself has become occultic, working from a notion of the occult as “the study of secrets and the practice of mysticism and magic, comprising a centuries-long dialogue between occultists and their detractors about metaphysical secrets, the role of the imagination in apprehending such secrets, and who has the authority to keep and reveal them” (xxii). With our specialized vocabulary and dense, often alienating prose, Gunn notes how the rhetorics of scholarly production reinforce the “secrecy” around the knowledges we produce, alienating those outside of the academy: “in our era of publicity and corporatization there is immense pressure on us academics to popularize our work and to justify our existence, and consequently an intense desire to thicken our prose and to create the conditions that require our interpretive expertise and thereby guarantee our survival. In short, we are encouraged to be snotty” (235). He uses the figure of The Fool (card 0 in the major arcana of the Tarot, of which you can read more about in the guidebook portion of act II) to note how “the card is an allegory for the contemporary occultic enterprise of academics in the humanities, if not an apt condensation of how non-

academics, especially cultural conservatives, view the professoriate...academics are often regarded by outsiders as fools—intelligent, perhaps, but fools nonetheless” (231) and that the rhetorical lesson academics should learn from viewing traditional scholarly production as occultic “is an ethical one, a lesson that has...to do with the ways in which we ignore or forget those whom we exclude or discipline with our words *in here, in the academy*” (234) [emphasis in original].

If the occultic discourse of academic rhetoric functions as a gatekeeper, revealing our secrets only to those who know how to decipher the language, speaking to those who’ve already been granted special access, then perhaps magical reasoning via the Tarot offers a way for broader publics to access the knowledge we as scholars of rhetoric produce/possess. The Tarot deck I’ve prototyped for this dissertation intends to de-mystify and make more accessible rhetorical theory, taking wisdom from our field and framing those insights within the context of a semi-stable set of images and representations designed to prompt focused contemplation, mobilize intuition, and reimagine or approach anew one’s current problems or issues. I call the Tarot a semi-stable set of images and representations because there is a shared symbology to contemporary Tarot decks, yet every deck has its own variations, nuances, interpretations, and uptakes of that general symbology. Further every reader will have their own understanding and ways of interpreting the cards’ symbols, all of which themselves have complex and double-edged meanings, even within a single deck. In short, “The Tarot” itself is a complicated rhetorical entanglement of communal and individual imagery and symbolism, no doubt a product of its cumulative history of production and use.

As Helen Farley argues in her book *A Cultural History of Tarot: From Entertainment to Esotericism*, “the divergent functions, structures, multiplicity of symbolism and the vastly differing cultural milieus in which the Tarot deck evolved” has shaped the Tarot into its current function as “a tool for personal transformation” (176). Farley notes that “Tarot has evolved and been accommodated within the cultural currents of different times; its purpose altered to suit the prevailing attitudes and beliefs. The symbolism on the cards likewise reflects the fickle results of this human reflection” (173). This evolution and situational nature of meaning in the form is key. Her research traces the origins of the Tarot to playing cards (decks of 52 cards divided into 4 suits of numbered & court cards), which were introduced to Europe from the Middle East in the late fourteenth century. She observes that “the oldest extant Tarot decks were from northern Italy and were dated to the first half of the fifteenth century” (18), with a deck known as the Visconti di Modrone being the oldest existing deck, dating back to 1442 (33). While the Tarot has earned a reputation for fortune-telling and divination, Farley claims, “there is no evidence to suggest that it fulfilled such a role before the end of the eighteenth century.” (43) Rather, it was primarily used for gaming and entertainment, though some theories suggest it might have additionally been “a form of *ars memoria* or *ars memorativa*” for teaching narratives, histories, and even logic (Farley 44).

It’s only in France during the 18th century that we see the first shift in the Tarot’s function from a card game for entertainment into an occult tool for divination. As Farley observes, “The first evidence of cartomancy in France was in a book entitled *Etteilla, ou manière de se récréer avec un jeu de cartes* (Etteilla, or a Way to Entertain Oneself with a Pack of Cards) which was published in 1770 and subsequently reprinted in 1773 and 1783,” written by Jean-

Baptiste Alliette (who reversed his surname to take on his adopted name, Etteilla) (95). Etteilla provides the earliest association of Tarot with divination, but Éliphas Lévi, the man who was “almost single-handedly responsible for the surge of interest in occultism in the nineteenth century,” associated the Tarot with esoterism (Farley 112). Farley notes that “though [Lévi] admitted that tarot was a perfect instrument of divination, he believed its most valuable purpose was that of conveying all the wisdom of the universe,” which meant it was a central component of his “[vast] synthesis of kabbalah, alchemy, Hermeticism, astrology, magnetism and black magic into a coherent tradition” (113). French occultism spread to England by the latter half of the 19th century, where the figuration of Tarot-as-esoteric-wisdom continued to develop, and in 1909, Arthur Edward Waite and Pamela Colman Smith created the Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot deck, which remains to date the most popular and influential iteration of Tarot imagery and interpretation.

Art historian Emily E. Auger notes a second significant shift in the popular understanding and application of Tarot in the latter 20th and early 21st centuries: that of a “meditation deck.” In *Tarot and Other Meditation Decks*, she defines meditation decks as a set of cards with images purported to have “particular spiritual or psychological import for, or effect upon, the ‘reader’” used for “contemplative, creative, and divinatory exercises, as amusement, and as collector’s items” (1). This transformation of the Tarot into a meditation deck, however, has not *replaced* older functions; rather, as Auger notes, “the effectiveness with which [the changes in function] have accrued, rather than substituted for each other, in Tarot, supports the genre’s *unique contemporary function as a heterotopian ‘space’* where the individual may seek transformative understanding of himself, society and the universe” (x) [emphasis mine].

In fact, the Tarot's ability to function as a heterotopian space energizes and informs my work in act II, providing a literal and symbolic space for readers to practice dwelling within, attuning to, and navigating ambiguous circumstances through the consideration and application of rhetorical theory. As Auger notes, during a reading, “the querent-reader strives, not to merely read the signs, but to empathize, commune, or to even more thoroughly enter the archetypal content of the cards by looking, reading, thinking, and living” (143). It's this transformative potential of the meditation deck—taking inner worlds and experiences and giving them conceptual frames for outward comprehension and manifestation—that I'm interested in within my dissertation project. Placing rhetorical wisdom within the space of the Tarot asks users to approach the tasks of problem-solving and knowledge construction differently than within traditional rhetorical discourse.

While our traditional genres for academic discourse can certainly teach individuals to attune to rhetorical situation or dwell within a complex theoretical thread, the pressure to produce a product (essay, article, monograph) often has students and scholars alike rushing through the processes of dwelling and discovery. In contrast, the Tarot *centers* the act of dwelling within an amorphous or ambiguous set of images, symbols, and ideas in order to discover what new insights, perspectives, or solutions may be gleaned from the randomly drawn cards that apply to the everyday situations, relationships, and challenges on which an individual seeks guidance. Rather than quickly and decisively jumping into action (an orientation often taught through the creation of essays, for example), what's being nurtured and valued through my rhetorical Tarot deck is a slow, patient, reflexive, and accessible method of coming-to-knowledge so that the rhetorical insights contained within may become internalized and intuitive, available

for spontaneous, flexible, response-able utilization as the situation sees fit: necessary capacities and orientations for ethico-onto-epistemological rhetoric.¹

In particular, there are four specific logics and mechanics of the Tarot I find useful for arranging and delivering rhetorical theory that, collectively, orient the field differently toward scholarly production and uptake: representation, reflection, repetition, and randomness. The first logic is *representation*. A typical Tarot deck consists of 78 cards; the 56 cards of the *minor arcana* are evenly divided into four suits (swords, cups, pentacles, and wands), with the remaining 22 cards comprising the *major arcana*. These five categories/sets of cards structure the representative frames of the deck, each one corresponding to one of the “five elements” (earth, wind, fire, air, and spirit/quintessence) as well as a domain of human experience (the physical, the intellectual, the emotional, the inner-self, and the archetypical). Within the guidebook (and included here as figure 1), I’ve produced a table of additional *suggested* representative frames that map rhetorical concepts and heuristics (what I’ve categorized as rhetorical domain, element, appeal, and canon) onto the structure of the Tarot. While I suggest in the guidebook why I’ve mapped out these various divisions as I do, these are not meant to be definitive or stable categorizations or associations; rather, I view them as productive or generative lenses through which to think about these two arts/disciplines side-by-side. One could easily configure a rhetorical tarot where pentacles (the earthly, the physical) are positioned alongside a conception of rhetoric as persuasion or invention (instead of swords), or wands (as fire, the inner-self/spirit) is figured as material or associated with pathos. These rhetorical concepts/heuristics, then, add a

¹ Starting on page 76, I offer a sample reading to better contextualize what I’m doing with and how to use the deck and guidebook. I encourage you at any point to pause and skip ahead to the sample reading if you would find it useful.

Figure 1 — Suggested Frames: A Comparative Chart (from guidebook)

	Traditional Domain	Traditional Element	Rhetorical Domain	Rhetorical Element	Rhetorical Appeal	Rhetorical Canon
Swords	the intellect	air	persuasion	emergent	logos	invention
Cups	the emotions	water	expression	dynamic	pathos	memory
Pentacles	the physical	earth	communication	material	body	delivery
Wands	the inner self	fire	energy	ambient	ethos	style
Major Arcana	archetypes	spirit	“the field”	performative	disciplinarity	arrangement

layer of complexity to the meaning of the cards within the deck: while they aren’t inherently necessary (though *certainly* useful) for interpreting the meaning of the cards when using the deck for considering everyday problems, issues, or occurrences, they invite scholarly conversation and critique when the deck is used explicitly to study, contemplate, conceive of, or critique rhetoric (as a discipline). Further, by placing a *decontextualized* quote from rhetorical theory on each card, I can offer not only a specific insight about rhetoric connected to the traditional meaning of the Tarot card that may help prompt reflection, but I can also invoke the specter of the entire quoted text as well as the quoted individual’s oeuvre in a succinct and non-prescriptive manner, serving two very different audiences in different ways in the same gesture/action. In visualizing and utilizing rhetorical theory in these two ways, I demonstrate how the Tarot offers rhetoricians a novel and nuanced way to categorize, cluster, and sort various rhetorical insights, putting these conceptualizations in conversation with one another while holding all of them equal—that is, not condemning or praising a certain view of rhetoric, but seeing what those varying conceptualizations might yield in juxtaposition with one another.

This leads to the second logic: *reflection*. Reflection is the purpose of the cards themselves. I note in the guidebook how “the Tarot is a mirror; it reflects back a person’s

anxieties, concerns, experiences, and challenges regarding their present in order to more purposefully and intentionally act towards a desired future” (1). Within the context of a reading, whether a simple one-card reflection or an elaborate twelve (or more) card spread, the cards drawn are seen as defining the issue or situation, and the querent (the person who is receiving the reading or doing it for themselves), after being presented with the various representations of each card, reflects on what comes to mind with those bits of prompting material and does so in relationship to their question, situation, and interconnected meaning emerging among the cards: hence why Tarot *reflects back* one’s already existing anxieties, concerns, experiences, knowledges, and challenges. As a genre for knowledge generation, then, the Tarot uses a semi-stable set of representations to reflect back and focus a person’s thinking around and intuitive feel or sense of a specific question, issue, or problem. Further, by mapping rhetorical frames onto the representative frames of the Tarot, this genre can be used to prompt reflection about how we conceive of and use rhetoric (as a field and as a society), among other things—like conceiving of communication as an earthy, physical, bodily phenomenon or framing the canon of memory or an appeal to pathos as water-like: fluid, without fixed form, slipping or leaking from one’s grip. Further, since all Tarot decks work from a shared framework and mechanics yet offer differing depictions and variations of the cards and what they represent, I offer a method of configuring and delivering rhetorical knowledge that beckons other scholars to take up this work as well, create their own decks with their own arrangements and applications of rhetorical theory. Like any Tarot deck, individuals will gravitate towards one that speaks to them, works for them; the more decks exist, the more varied and useful this tool becomes to diverse audiences. Thus, act II

offers rhetorical scholars a new potential genre for academic practice that can be iterated and utilized for myriad purposes and in diverse ways.

The aforementioned logics of representation and reflection within the Tarot help us frame and understand the history and purview of rhetoric (its *be-ing*) differently than traditional academic genres. The Tarot also helps us develop the capacity of *attunement* differently than these traditional genres largely because of two central mechanics of using a Tarot deck: *repetition* (the same cards are drawn over and over again in myriad associations/relations with one another) and *randomness* (one can never predict what cards will be dealt). In general, attunement occurs as a result of multiple encounters that unfold over time and in space and often requires some sort of habituation; the more time a person spends attentively dwelling in a given environment or entanglement, the better they can refine their attunements to the specificities and myriad dynamics and potentialities of that entanglement. In terms of the Tarot, the capacity for attunement gets cultivated in two ways. First, the randomly drawn cards in any given reading create a temporary entanglement of images, interpretations, wisdoms, questions, and personal associations that a person can dwell upon/within to approach problems, issues, relationships, conflicts, or challenges anew and discover fruitful or even surprising insights, solutions, and possibilities for future/further action. Second, the more time one spends repeatedly dwelling with the cards (say as part of a daily meditative habit), the sharper one's intuitive knowledge of the deck and its myriad entangled contents will be. Through this repeated exposure, a Tarot reader attunes to the broad strokes of meaning suggested though each card, and since the cards, their positions, and the relations they form to one another are randomly configured each reading, the attunements produced through the Tarot are not stable, but rather active and shifting, giving way

to the nuanced ways these cards interact and produce meaning in a given spread depending on their positions and relations to one another. Thus, the Tarot offers rhetoricians an approach that teaches and develops the capacity for attunement via the practice of dwelling. Further, by placing rhetorical theories and frames in direct conversation with the symbolic content of the individual cards in the deck, I ask my reader to not only engage general capacities for attunement, I also ask them to specifically attune to the ways in which rhetoric, as a field, has configured and portrayed itself. It is through attuning to the random mini-arguments enacted via a given arrangement of cards that insights from various theories and times and perspectives can be reflected back to the reader to prompt idea generation and problem solving. Thus, by asking my reader to dwell in an unfamiliar space in order to experience attunement as a necessary capacity for coming-to-knowledge.

Entangling everything I've discussed so far: in act II, I prompt reflection about our field, its history, our present ways of knowing, and rhetoric's future uses/applications. Instead of making a direct argument, I create a *dwelling* space where my reader can *attune* to the various ways rhetoric *is/acts* in the world as part of a richer theoretical conversation about how this field has been conceptualized and perceived as well as how it has evolved over millennia. I enact this labor by taking what we know about rhetorical theory and transporting the frame in which we view/sort/understand it to that of the Tarot. In doing so, act II resists control, completeness, or clarity - traditional aims of academic argumentation. Instead, the cards that appear during a given reading are drawn at *random*; it's out of the reader's control. Further, even with *repeated* use of the deck, it's likely impossible for someone to actively configure every permutation of the deck—we're talking about a total of 78 cards, drawn in myriad combinations (I offer suggestions for

3, 4, and 5 card spreads, though there are far more (and larger) Tarot spreads out there). That's a lot of possible arrangements! Nor do any of the cards offer clear or definitive answers; rather, they pose questions and prompt deeper thought about an ambiguous set of ideas offered at the same time. So, instead of a clear, linear, traditionally-conceived argument, act II instead provides a set of randomly juxtaposed *representations* on which to *reflect* and put into conversation with one another in order to see what perspectives and insights about rhetoric one can attune to.

Further, since I ask my reader to interact with a *fundamentally visual and material* dwelling space in order to attune to the theoretical content being delivered via the Tarot cards, act II also interrupts the expected flow of my physical dissertation artifact in space/time. Or rather, act II spaces/times my dissertation differently: my reader must leave the traditionally-conceived confines of the dissertation artifact (the physical or digital manuscript) and, quite literally, consult the Tarot cards in order to discover, critique, and configure knowledge of our field. Thus, in creating a physical, material dwelling space to which my reader must attune to insights about rhetoric as a field/discipline, I offer an alternative approach to scholarly production and mode for delivering academic knowledge that resists its traditional genres, methods, and outcomes as well as a method for individuals to dwell with and attune to rhetorical wisdom in order to generate reflection and conversation on how to best approach troubling questions, issues, problems, or situations.

With all that I'm simultaneously entangling and putting into play, I recognize that act II could feel a little disorienting or uncomfortable or even overwhelming to some readers. However, 21st century existence is fraught with disorienting, uncomfortable, and overwhelming problems and issues with no easy or clear solutions, and so we need to continue developing

methods and approaches that work *with* these feelings as opposed to resisting or trying to control them, that help us orient ourselves when no clear path exists, and that provide us a modicum of comfort or grounding when the situation appears too complex or difficult to handle. Further, when our thoughts around such problems become entrenched in certain perspectives, it becomes difficult or sometimes even impossible to approach those situations anew using traditional methods. As I demonstrate in act II, using the Tarot to frame and organize a dwelling space for rhetorical theory requires my reader to attune to rhetoric differently by randomly drawing upon temporary and surprising configurations of decontextualized and recontextualized rhetorical knowledge in order to directly reflect on a specific problem, issue, or question. I offer the Tarot, then, as one possible method for exploring and experiencing and enacting rhetorical wisdom as it unfolds and matters in everyday life: in a non-linear, ambient, dynamic, emergent, kairotic, and ultimately unpredictable manner.

One final note on act II: while a fully-realized version of this project would consist of a full Tarot deck (78 cards), for my dissertation, I offer a prototype of eleven cards (two from each suit of the *minor arcana* and three from the *major arcana*) in order to demonstrate how such a rhetorical Tarot deck might function. For this prototype, I've used images from the classic Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot deck both for the deck's ubiquity and influence as the most commonly circulated and referenced set of Tarot images and interpretations throughout the 20th and into the 21st century, and because the images are in the public domain. In addition to integrating the textual elements, I've added a new border around each card, as well as upped the vibrancy and saturation of the colors to make everything pop.² While this works for the prototype, for a fully

² With the help of my partner, Nick Dailey, who generously provided his photoshop skills to the endeavor.

realized deck, I'd work with an artist/illustrator to create custom images for the cards that can, from the start, seamlessly integrate the textual material.

Additionally, a lot of labor went into determining which rhetoricians and rhetorical wisdom I would draw upon for this prototype: in only eleven cards, I wanted to represent not only a historical range of rhetorical thought, I also wanted to explicitly draw upon thinkers of varying genders, races, sexualities, and rhetorical traditions. This means influential voices have been left out of the conversation (like Kenneth Burke or Jenny Rice) while ones I have included may get shuffled around or associated with other cards when the full range of possibilities are available (Karma Chávez, for instance, would be at home in the major arcana). Finally, the guidebook itself was written with the intention that a broad, non-specialist audience should be able to read and comprehend it. I explain key details for using and interpreting the Tarot, but other than offering conceptual rhetorical frames, I purposefully leave out deeper and more nuanced conversations of rhetoric so as to not exclude or alienate potential public audiences, inviting outsiders of the academy to access and utilize the insights of the field, and in so doing, increase the reach, range, and potential impact of rhetorical scholarship while still affording me space to facilitate various constructions of rhetorical theory intended for scholarly and pedagogical uses of the deck. The resulting prototyped deck and guidebook, then, suggests the scope of what this project *can be* in a fully-realized form.

I encourage you now to open and read through the guidebook, at least the first half before the card descriptions. When you're ready, focus on your question (personal, professional, pedagogical, cultural, or otherwise), choose your spread, and see what the cards have to say.

Sample Reading

To demonstrate what *Techne Psychagogia: A Rhetorical Tarot* looks like in action and to model the possibilities of Tarot for generating new or surprising insights into vexing questions, problems, or issues, I now offer a sample reading, complete with images from the deck and guidebook, to help contextualize the artifacts that comprise act II. For this reading, I'll be focusing on a question I'll turn to again in act IV: *How can one act ethically in complex, more-than-human entanglements?* For this reading, I've chosen to do a four card spread (see page 15 in guidebook) since I'm seeking to dive deep into this question. After shuffling, I drew the following cards in this order: 1) Three of Wands, 2) Ace of Wands, 3) King of Cups, 4) The Fool (figure 2). In what follows, first, I'll examine the card in position one (the Three of Wands), which is meant to summarize the overall energies, qualities, or characteristics pertinent to my query about acting ethically in more-than-human entanglements. Then, I'll overview the key features of cards two, three, and four which provide, *without* hierarchical order, deeper insights into the contributing factors surrounding my question, nuancing the initial examination of card one along the way. Doing so should provide a rich, engaging, and possibly surprising conversation surrounding my query.

The Three of Wands occupies position 1. It features the image of a man looking away from us and toward a horizon. Three long wooden rods stand around him, his right hand clutching one of them. This card features a quote from Thomas Rickert's *Ambient Rhetoric*—"An ambient rhetoric continually attunes itself both to what is present and to what withdraws: they are the conditions that give rise to our ongoing perceptions and understandings of the world."—as well as the following question: What opportunities are making themselves present?



Fig. 2. Four card spread: How can one act ethically in complex, more-than-human entanglements?

In the guidebook, I note that the Three of Wands is “a card of abundance and expansion” and that “mind, body, and spirit are working in harmony at the moment, helping you envision [and manifest] your possibilities for action” (42). Additionally, I say that, “Your energy is at once active and forward-looking while remaining patient and rooted. You’re aware of what the journey ahead entails and are equipped to deal with any ambiguity that may appear along the way” (42). Taking all of this information in at once and given its position in the spread—as a card summarizing the general spirit of my question—the Three of Wands suggests that perhaps acting ethically in more-than-human entanglements requires finding a balance between mind,

body, and spirit, both internally and reaching out and expanding into the world. The reminder to remain patient and rooted while sending your energy forward seems to call upon us to practice dwelling, listening, and restraint in order to act ethically in complex entanglements; it also suggests we should be working to attune to and with others in our environments, and that doing so means sending our energy outward as much as being open to receiving possible energies, signals, or vibrations from others. However, the card also notes that despite knowing how difficult this work will be, we're already equipped to deal with any ambiguity we might face. Since the card is asking us to recognize opportunities that are making themselves present, the Three of Wands also suggests that ethics emerge from entanglements, and that we bear a responsibility to recognize opportunities for ethical action.

Now that we have a basic understanding of the fundamental spirit or character of the question I've asked (how can one act ethically in more-than-human entanglements), I'll overview the three cards that signal contributing factors and add further nuance, perspective, and specificity to this reading. Card two, the Ace of Wands, features a hand appearing out of the clouds, or perhaps smoke, grasping a single wooden rod: a branch with leaves growing out of it. The card features a quote from Laurie Gries, "On Rhetorical Becoming"—"To think intuitively...is to perceive reality as change and mobility—a world in flux constituted by an entangled web of creations, or becomings, each moving toward something new"—and poses the question, how might intuition lead to radical possibilities for action? In the guidebook, I claim that the Ace of Wands "indicates new enterprises and opportunities are about to present themselves to you" and that you are "brimming with potential" (40). I also note how this card asks a person to "use this opportunity to expand your view of yourself and the world; look

beyond your superficial, material reality to experience inner self– realization” (40). In conversation with the Three of Wands, the Ace of Wands reminds us that our quest for ethical action in more-than-human entanglements is still a new one—one that’s brimming with potential and offers an opportunity for expanded and more world-oriented (rather than self-oriented) action. Our desire to listen, dwell, and attune that the Three of Wands highlights offers a productive way forward to cultivate new orientations toward difference and intuitive ways of thinking and acting in these complex and ambiguous entanglements. These new ethical orientations are still emerging, still becoming; we should trust our intuition that these are the ways we need to grow, change, and progress.

Card three, the King of Cups, features a ruler upon his throne: a scepter in one hand and a cup in another. We’re presented with a quote from Quintilian—“We are to form, then, the perfect orator, who cannot exist unless as a good man; and we require in him, therefore, not only consummate ability in speaking, but every excellence of mind.”—and asks the following question: What does it look like to lead with empathy and wisdom? As I note in the guidebook, the King of Cups “represents the balance between intellect and emotions, focusing on generosity, compassion, and personal restraint” (30). This card asks us to rely upon a “strong moral compass when making difficult decisions, acting out of fairness and empathy” and “to direct your personal power and energy towards socially responsible achievements” (30). When put in conversation with the Three of Wands, the King of Cups calls to our attention our moral responsibilities within more-than-human entanglements. In order to act ethically in such entanglements, we must act with empathy and wisdom, possessing a strong sense of what actions are fair or socially responsible. This card reminds us that acting ethically requires excellence of mind, of speech,

and of character, and that a more-than-human ethical orientation is one that is generous, compassionate, and restrained. The King of Cups, then, offers us necessary skills for being patient and rooted, as the Three of Wands asks us to be.

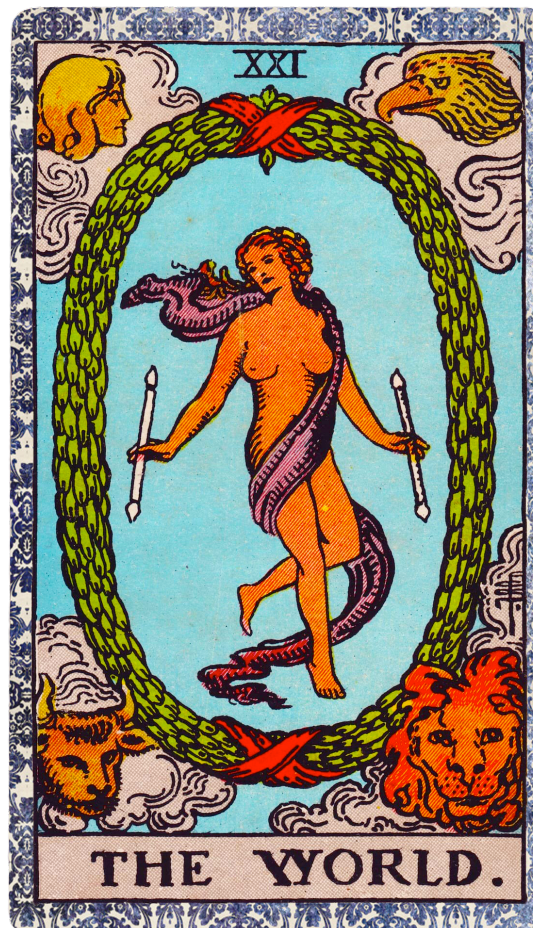
The Fool, card four in the spread, features an individual balancing on one leg on the edge of a cliff, a bundle in one hand and a flower in the other. They are looking toward the sky, either unaware or uncaring of the possible danger they are in. The card offers a quote from Aristotle —“Rhetoric we look upon as the power of observing the means of persuasion on almost any subject presented to us; and that is why we say that, in its technical character, it is not concerned with any special or definite class of subjects.”— as well as the question, What are the benefits of risk? In the guidebook, I note how The Fool, both/either ignorant and/or innocent, “sits at the crossroad between possibility and manifestation...a space of endless potential [that] brings with it a flexibility, emptiness, carelessness, and lightness” (46). This card says that we’re a “little inexperienced, but nonetheless excited for what lies ahead” and that we must “recognize where [we] are now, but envision who [we] want to be” (46). Finally, The Fool tells us to “Free [ourselves] from limitations (particularly self-imposed one), attune...to [our] instincts and surroundings, and take a leap of faith” (46). The Fool tells us we must go ahead and take the risk on the opportunity that the Three of Wands is presenting to us to cultivate new ways of acting ethically in more-than-human entanglements. While it may appear innocent or naive or rather foolish to seek harmony between mind, body, and spirit out in the world, it’s an endeavor that’s full of possibilities and potential. While such ethical orientations may be new to us, if we stay committed to our vision, this is the opportunity to progress beyond human-centered models of ethics and manifest a new, exciting, and abundant orientations to being, knowing, and acting.

It's interesting to note the dominance of the element of fire in the reading (the two wands cards), which is tempered a bit by water (the King of Cups). In the guidebook, I suggest that these dynamics imply that rhetorical qualities such as energy, ambience, and ethos (all of which I associate with wands in the guidebook) will need to be tempered or balanced by the cups-associated rhetorical qualities of expression, dynamism, and pathos—a balance that, perhaps, the Three of Wands presence is reminding us to centralize as we go forward cultivating more-than-human ethical orientations to being, knowing, and acting. Collectively, then, these four cards suggest that acting ethically in more-than-human entanglements requires empathy, restraint, a strong moral character, and a world-oriented point of view, all of which will help us dwell, attune, and listen in the ways demanded of us in the ambiguous ethical entanglements we find ourselves in. Further, such work is brimming with potential; now is the time to seize the opportunity and begin cultivating such necessary orientations. It may be risky work, but The Fool tells us it's a risk worth taking, and one that's likely to work out in our favor (with the Ace of Wands on our side).

Act II: Techne Psychagogia

TECHNE PSYCHAGOGIA

A RHETORICAL TAROT



By Jacqui Pratt

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Welcome to Techne Psychagogia: A Rhetorical Tarot

Contrary to popular belief, the Tarot is not about predicting the future or finding magical solutions to one's problems. It's not about discovering ancient, esoteric secrets or mystical communication with the spirit realm. Rather, the Tarot is a mirror; it reflects back a person's anxieties, concerns, experiences, and challenges regarding their present or past in order to more purposefully and intentionally act towards a desired future. It's not a tool of prognostication but, instead, a way of framing, interpreting, examining, and mobilizing the myriad wisdoms and agencies of everyday life.

The Tarot, then, makes an interesting parallel to rhetoric, the study and practice of symbolic communication. Rhetoricians seek to understand how, on an everyday basis, symbols frame what people know about the world: how they influence our behaviors, shape our identities, organize and structure our communities, and mediate power—that is, who is allowed to speak, act, or even exist in a space and how they are expected to do so. They believe that by observing and understanding how symbols are used and interpreted, people can evaluate both past and present situations and occurrences in order to purposefully or deliberately (re)shape the future in a desired trajectory.

Rhetoric, like the Tarot, has been portrayed as manipulative, as a tool of swindlers and con artists, as false and empty. But both arts have also been viewed as generative tools of reflection and knowledge-building accessible to any and all who are interested. Both Tarot and rhetoric traffic simultaneously in generalities and specifics, in ambiguities, in individual and collective intuition and wisdom, and in nuance. Both have been widely misunderstood and misused, yet both arts can offer expansive insights into the inner workings of a situation,

context, or entanglement—helping to sharpen our awareness to the myriad forces and energies that we encounter in everyday life and guide us towards appropriate action.

Socrates described rhetoric as a *techne psychagogia*, an art of leading or influencing the soul. While Socrates associated rhetoric with *logoi*, with leading the soul through words, I suggest that the Tarot is another *techne psychagogia* that uses images to lead the soul to deeper insights about itself and the world-at-large.

So please, come consult the cards and dwell awhile in *Techne Psychagogia: A Rhetorical Tarot*. You never know what wisdoms you may discover herein.

HOW TO USE

DECIDE WHAT TO ASK

Keep in mind your intention for consulting the cards: what you are trying to know, discover, understand, generate, act on, let go of, or think through. Your question should be phrased in a way that helps you achieve your intention through deeper reflection, gaining insight by weighing a variety of contributing factors. For example, yes and no questions don't offer much room for conversation or reflection. Asking *Is accepting this job offer a good idea?* might not generate the types of insights, perspectives, or answers you're looking to obtain. However, something like *What are the positives and negatives of accepting this position?* or *How might accepting this position impact my quality of life?* will help you focus your thoughts and intentions as you consult the cards.

SHUFFLE & CUT THE CARDS

Begin by clarifying and focusing on your question while shuffling the cards, repeating it either internally or out loud—almost like a mantra. When it feels right, cut the cards into three piles and recombine. Don't overthink this process; just let it happen. Allow your *intuitive* sense of when to stop shuffling, where to cut the cards, and how to recombine them back into a single pile guide your actions while you keep your *mental* attention on your question.

DRAW YOUR SPREAD

After shuffling and cutting, draw the necessary number of cards into your desired spread. Take a moment to dwell upon the images, quotes, and questions presented to you, paying attention to your gut reaction to the cards, before you consult the guidebook for more pointed interpretation. As always with the Tarot, let your intuition and instinct be your guide.

UNDERSTANDING THE DECK

Techne Psychagogia: A Rhetorical Tarot uses the structure, imagery, symbolism, and mechanisms of the Tarot as a method for both applying the ancient art of rhetoric to everyday problem-solving as well as for framing and delivering deeper insights into and perspectives on rhetoric itself.

A traditional Tarot deck features 78 cards split into two groups: the minor arcana and the major arcana. Similar to a deck of playing cards, the minor arcana features four suits of cards, fourteen cards each suit (for a total of 56 cards): swords, cups, pentacles, and wands. These cards direct attention towards the concrete circumstances surrounding the question being asked. That is, the minor arcana tends to reflect or represent the specific people, objects, situations, environments, or feelings impacting the inquiry. The major arcana functions differently than the minor arcana. These 22 cards represent the complete, cyclical journey of the psyche from ignorance to enlightenment, directing a person's attention towards where they might be on that inner journey at a given time or what they might need to be mindful of as they proceed along the way. The major arcana uses archetypes to represent the various stages of this journey, asking the querent to reflect upon how they might either be embodying or encountering this figure in the present moment.

As you draw a card, you'll not only be drawing upon an image and its traditional function within the Tarot, you'll also be drawing upon correlating rhetorical wisdom: a quote from rhetorical theory that provides insight into and prospective on rhetoric and its various conceptualizations, associations, and applications in everyday life. Further, each card contains a question posed to trigger contemplation about the theme or meaning of that card. Use the emerging relationships and juxtapositions between images, quotes, and questions (on a singular card or across multiple cards in a spread) to reflect upon or discuss a question, problem, or issue currently vexing you. Once you've taken time to sit with the cards in front of you,

consult the guidebook for deeper meaning as well as additional questions for reflection.

While you can apply the rhetorical reasoning contained within the deck to everyday acts of problem solving without any prior knowledge of or experience with rhetoric, this deck can *also* be used to study, critique, and dwell with rhetoric as a field of knowledge, making it a fantastic tool for rhetorical education and scholarship in addition to everyday problem-solving.

Traditionally, each of the four suits of the minor arcana as well as the major arcana correspond to one of the “five elements” (air, water, earth, fire, and quintessence) as well as a domain of human experience (the intellect, the emotions, the physical, the inner-self/ spirit, and the archetypal), all of which helps add nuance, texture, focus, and perspective to your reading. This deck *also* offers some additional rhetorical frames — concepts and characterizations from rhetorical theory — to add complexity and further dimensionality to the conversation within and across these different categories: a rhetorical element and domain of experience, as well as a correlating rhetorical appeal and rhetorical canon (see chart on page 10 for details).

These additional frames are *not* definitive applications, representations, or categorizations of rhetoric; I’m *not* saying that only pentacles should be associated with delivery or the material qualities of rhetoric, or only swords should call to mind ideas of persuasion or logos. Rather, the frames I outline below are *suggestions* for how you might visualize and organize your thoughts around the particular question you’re bringing to the cards. Treat each cluster of associations as an *entryway* into a deeper conversation surrounding these various frames, but let your intuition tell you what may or may not be useful in a given instance. Ultimately, these rhetorical frames offer various ways to conceive of or comprehend the various cards that appear during the reading by placing occult and rhetorical reasoning side-by-side in order to produce new, fruitful, and unexpected insights into everyday issues, problems, difficulties, and anxieties as well as the art of rhetoric itself.

MINOR ARCANA

SWORDS

The suit of swords focuses on thoughts, behaviors, and attitudes—matters of the *mind*. Ruled by the element of *air*, swords ask us to consider our abilities to both create and destroy, to use our power and intellect for both good and evil, as a ‘double-edged sword.’ With its focus on conflict, action, and particularly the mind, swords make a fitting parallel to rhetoric conceived as *persuasion* and appealing to *logos* (reason): an understanding hearkening back to ancient Western civilizations in Greece and Rome. Additionally, as swords are ruled by air, this suit is useful for considering the canon of *invention* as well as rhetoric’s more *emergent* qualities, happening/appearing ‘out of thin air,’ so to speak.

CUPS

The suit of cups, ruled by *water*, corresponds to our *emotions* — our connections, feelings, and relations. In essence, cups concern matters of the heart. As such, I think this suit helps us think about how rhetoric appeals to *pathos* (emotion) and has been conceived of as *expression*, since both of these aspects of rhetoric deal with making inner felt experiences known to others. Seeing as cups are ruled by water, which flood and fill whatever shape contains it, this suit also provides an interesting lens for thinking about the canon of *memory* and the *dynamic* elements of rhetoric because of the ways these qualities call our attention to the ebb and flow of time, of relationships, of feelings.

PENTACLES

With its focus on the *physical*, it should be no surprise that the suit of pentacles is ruled by *earth*. Pentacles brings our awareness to the material, tangible objects in our lives (be it our possessions, our work,

our finances, our health, our bodies, our spaces, our environments or our homes) and our relationship (positive and negative) to these objects. The suit of pentacles, then, is helpful for thinking about the *material* elements of rhetoric, as well as the way rhetoric appeals directly to our *bodies*, our material forms. The materiality of this suit is also useful for thinking about the canon of *delivery* as well as a conceptualization of rhetoric as *communication*, calling attention to the physical, tangible qualities of how information is exchanged in everyday life.

WANDS

The suit of wands concerns ambitions, goals, dreams, inspiration, and creativity: qualities not yet manifested in the physical world. Wands, then, ruled by the element of *fire*, focuses on the *inner-self* or *inner-spirit* and all of its passions and primal, intuitive energies. Wands act as a vector, pointing us toward our potential: directions we might head, paths we might take, forces that leads us this way or that. Because of this, I find the suit of wands useful for thinking about rhetoric conceived as *energy* as well as the more *ambient* qualities of rhetoric: the way rhetoric emerges from collective, intersecting forces. Also, given its associations with the inner-self/spirit, I think wands make an interesting frame for thinking about the canon of *style* and how rhetoric appeals to *ethos* (character): the idiosyncratic and personal yet simultaneously identifiable and communal qualities of rhetoric that resonate in the gut, with the most instinctual part of the self.

MAJOR ARCANA

The major arcana functions differently than the four suits of the minor arcana. Starting with 0, the Fool, and ending with the World, 21, the major arcana represents the thematic journey or transformation from innocence/ignorance to wholeness and completion, from confusion to clarity, from self-interest to worldliness. The progression through these cards is a progression through the stages of enlightenment, of coming-to-knowledge (particularly about the self), so the major arcana works in *archetypes*, representing the various types of people or roles individuals will both encounter and be throughout the course of their lives. The major arcana is associated with the fifth element, quintessence, which is also sometimes referred to as *spirit*: those difficult-to-define qualities that makes up the essence of a thing.

Given the way these cards function differently from the minor arcana, I find the major arcana an interesting way for thinking about how rhetoric, as an academic discipline, constructs, organizes, and structures knowledge about itself. That is, these 22 cards are useful for thinking about the ways rhetoric itself gets continually defined and redefined: both *what it is* and *how one uses, studies, or applies it*—the archetypal definitions, portrayals, and understandings of what rhetoric is and does. In this deck, the major arcana, then, represents an appeal to *disciplinarity* itself, to how individuals come to know, reproduce, and circulate “the field” of rhetorical studies. Because of this, I also suggest that the major arcana might be a useful frame for thinking about the rhetorical canon of *arrangement* as well as the *performative* elements of rhetoric, the ways in which we structure, iterate, and apply the field. In other words, the major arcana (as a series of canonical archetypes) calls attention to the way rhetoric (as a discipline or field of knowledge) is a deliberately crafted and articulated set of insights, practices, and beliefs, not a naturally occurring phenomenon.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

The power in a Tarot reading comes from how the various cards relate to and interact with one another in particular configurations during the reading and in response to the questions and intuitions people bring to the deck. If your reading is dominated by one suit, then the cards are telling you to specifically tend to or reflect up the aforementioned qualities of that suit and how those qualities are currently appearing in or affecting your everyday life. For example, if your reading is dominated by cups, pay close attention to your emotions, feelings, and passions (if it's a more personal query) or to the emotions, feelings, and sentiments that might be circulating (if tending to a more communal or public situation or problem). Maybe the cards are pointing toward how past trauma is informing present actions, or how you're currently expressing your feelings in either healthy or unhealthy ways. As you proceed in your readings, be mindful of how often a given suit appears and what that repetition or recurrence might be telling you.

If a mix of suits appears, be mindful of not only what qualities are being drawn up but also how those qualities intersect, interact, inform, and enhance one another. Say both swords and pentacles appear heavily in the reading. The cards are telling you to consider mind *and* body, the intellectual *and* the material, invention and delivery, alongside one another. Perhaps they're reminding you how persuasion involves more than a keen intellect and the ability to reason, but also involves your material conditions and the resources you can access. Perhaps they're suggesting you need to somehow balance your body and mind: that while one is ill, the other cannot be well. Perhaps they're implying that a focus on communication will help you manage the flow of ideas on a group project. How you understand or interpret the interrelationship of images and insights between the cards is highly dependent on the question you are asking or situation you are facing, the spread you have chosen, as well as your own intuition for how to reflect upon or receive what the cards are relaying to you.

Lastly, major arcana cards are important and should be tended to seriously in any reading. A reading dominated by these cards should be seen as a sign to journey inward, examining the deeply rooted aspects of who or what you're inquiring about and offering insight into what's holding you/them/it back and what can set you/them/it free. If these cards appear in context with other suits, you may need to reflect on how the respective qualities and traits associated with those suits may be contributing to, influencing, or might potentially help us address these deep rooted, quintessential aspects. For instance, if your reading is dominated by wands and major arcana cards, you may be asked to explore how your inner fire and energy, personal sense of style, or perceived character traits might be impacting a present situation or relationship.

SUGGESTED FRAMES: A COMPARATIVE CHART

	Traditional Domain	Traditional Element	Rhetorical Domain	Rhetorical Element	Rhetorical Appeal	Rhetorical Canon
Swords	the intellect	air	persuasion	emergent	logos	invention
Cups	the emotions	water	expression	dynamic	pathos	memory
Pentacles	the physical	earth	communication	material	body	delivery
Wands	the inner self	fire	energy	ambient	ethos	style
Major Arcana	archetypes	spirit	"the field"	performative	disciplinarity	arrangement

SPREADS

Your reading will largely be governed by your chosen *spread*: the number of cards you draw and their physical and metaphorical arrangement to/with one another. The spread provides context for the reading; it denotes the shape of the relationship, guides how exactly the cards influence or connect to one another. While readings with fewer cards make it easier to focus on the crux of the issue, problem, or situation, more cards in your spread offer additional information to work with, providing nuance, subtlety, and specificity to the reading.

Here are a few spreads and suggested applications to get you started. These are by no means the *only* possible ways to configure the cards, so as you get more comfortable using the deck, I encourage you to look into other Tarot spreads and their functions and applications to increase the scope, range, and possibilities of your practice.

Remember: don't forget to shuffle and cut the cards while focusing on your question before each new reading!

ONE CARD READING

Turn over the top card from the deck and reflect upon the given imagery and insights. This straightforward “spread” is useful for quickly prompting a focused reflection or conversation.

This could be a pointed and specific question, such as *How should I approach having a difficult conversation with my boss?*, or it can be a broad, generally applicable inquiry, like *What will today be like?* In short, this is your to the point, no-nonsense reading.

A one card reading is also a simple and effective way to get to know the cards and their meanings so you can develop an intuitive relationship with the deck.

Suggested Applications

In the classroom:

- generating responses to a free-write or small group discussion
- prompting discussion about an issue or idea from course readings

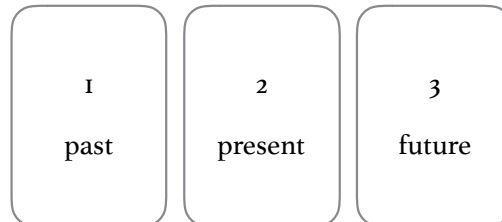
In the workplace:

- seeking guidance for or insight into a problem that needs immediate resolution
- setting a team focus for employee development

For personal use:

- providing a topic or theme for a daily journaling or meditative practice
- framing an unexpected disruption

THREE CARD READING



Turn over the top three cards and place them in a horizontal line. This spread is also designed to get to the heart of the matter quickly and efficiently, offering some of the nuance of a multi-card reflection without over-complicating the situation with *too* many factors for consideration.

While traditionally representing some variation of past, present, and future (i.e. who was I/am I/will I be; past pattern of behavior/current impact/future trajectory), it's useful for thinking through anything with a cause/effect relationship, linear progression, or easily-defined three-part structure. Whatever your intention, focus on the movement *through* the cards (from the first card, to the second, then the third) and how that relationship shapes what you see.

Try asking a question like *Where should I focus my energy so I can successfully complete this task I've had difficulty with in the past?* or *What would come of collaborating with so-and-so on this project/idea/undertaking?*

Suggested Applications

In the classroom:

- discussing how different critical movements inform one another
- tracing the development or transformation of a complex idea or concept over time

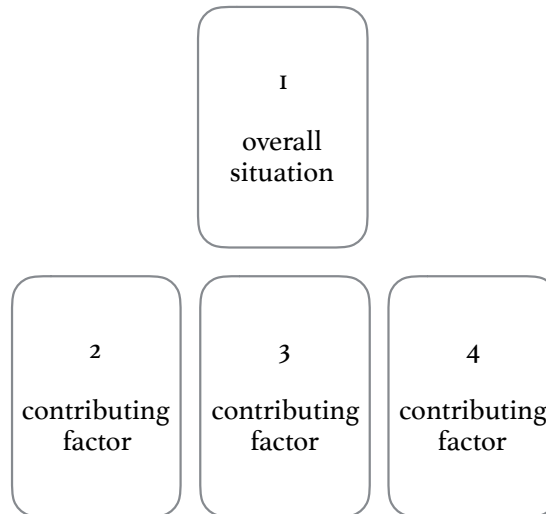
In the workplace:

- analyzing the potential of a person, relationship, project, or situation
- creating a through-line for understanding recent trends with customers, coworkers, or clients

For personal use:

- revealing personal patterns of thought and behavior
- comprehending the transformative potential of a messy, difficult, or painful situation

FOUR CARD READING



Place the top four cards from the deck in the depicted configuration. This spread combines the directed focus of a one card spread with the nuance and accessibility of a three card spread to provide clarity regarding a situation or problem.

The first card summarizes the overall energies, characteristics, or goings-on within the situation at hand, while cards two, three, and four provide, *without* hierarchical order (unlike the three card spread), deeper insight into and clarification on the contributing factors surrounding and influencing this situation. Use this spread to dive deep into a *single* idea or occurrence; rather than looking at how something has progressed, changed, or developed, this spread closely examines the state of things in the first card *at a particular point in time*.

Questions you might ask include *How can I bring attention to an ongoing problem that people have been ignoring or not taking seriously?* and *Why do we have a high turnover/low retention rate for employees?*

Suggested Applications

In the classroom:

- thinking deeply about a single critical concept or idea
- conceiving a thesis and supporting arguments for an essay

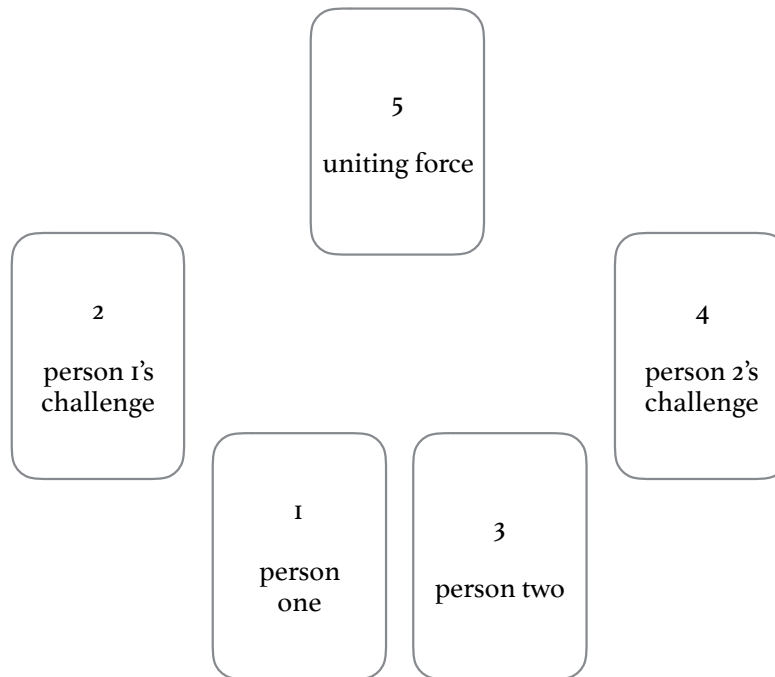
In the workplace:

- solving a complex problem (interpersonal, fiscal, organizational, creative, and so on)
- discovering the root causes or key components of a recurring situation or systemic issue

For personal use:

- examining a situation that's causing distress, distraction, or difficulty
- reflecting upon a past event in order to seek new perspectives or understandings

FIVE CARD READING



Take the top five cards and place as depicted in the visual, paying careful attention to the order of the cards and their relative placement. This spread focuses on (dis)connections and is especially useful for thinking through tense, difficult, or complex relationships or situations.

Traditionally, the first two cards would apply to the querent (the person asking the question); however, this spread is useful for thinking through relationships of any type between two differing individuals, groups of people, or even general perspectives/positions. While cards one and three characterize the respective individuals or positions in context of the question being asked, cards two and four represent oppositional forces — the distractions, bad habits, challenges, bones of contention, difficulties — that pull these two people, groups, or positions apart from one another. In short, cards

two and four represent what's contributing to the disconnection. Card five typically points toward a uniting force: either a way forward for mending, strengthening, or cultivating a connection between these two different people/positions or a belief, quality, or understanding shared by both. Be aware, if the card in this position is a card of conflict, a way forward may prove difficult or even impossible.

Consider a question such as *How can we best create shared understanding so conflicting groups can move forward with an action or decision?* or *Why does so-and-so keep ignoring my request to stop a certain harmful behavior?* or *How can people who have experienced harm, conflict, or misunderstanding in this situation begin to heal and better cooperate?*

Suggested Applications

In the classroom:

- finding common ground between two opposing sides of a debate
- producing a compare/contrast argument between two different texts, authors, critical movements, concepts, or other applicable topics

In the workplace:

- resolving a conflict between coworkers
- considering the similarities and differences between two ways forward on a project or task

For personal use:

- uncovering the central tension between two individuals or groups
- making amends with a friend or family member after a disagreement or falling out

THE CARDS

SWORDS



V OF SWORDS

“In our modern times, persuasion or persuasive discourse is primarily employed to influence audience (individual or collective) to an action or belief by appealing to reason or emotion; and its main underlying assumption becomes no more than that of conflict or confrontation between writer and audience.” — LuMing Mao, “Persuasion, Cooperation and Diversity of Rhetorics”

The Five of Swords warns of self-sabotage, conflict, and defeat. Ambition, ego, and/or desire (for power, for victory, for being right) are getting in the way of success. You are acting without regard for the how your actions will impact others, trying to win at all costs, defending your position in an endless conflict about who or what is right. Or perhaps you are struggling with another person being reckless, self-serving, or eager to fight. Sometimes, though, trying so hard to win means *everybody* loses. Whomever this card applies to, heed this advice: even if you win the battle, you’re losing sight of the big picture. Be weary of giving into unproductive conflicts. This will only lead to continued loss and defeat for all involved. Instead of operating from a place of selfishness and self-righteousness, acting intellectually superior to those around you, think about *how* you want to win or lose.

Make a conscious choice to give ground and think about the collective good of those around you. No matter who might be embodying the Five of Swords, they should avoid letting their emotions or ego drive them. Standing up for one’s beliefs and standing one’s ground are important, but there are ways to do this without being confrontational, alienating or harming others, or ignoring the



collective good and interests; it is also important to know when it's time to walk away from a conflict altogether and how to engage *productively* when conflict is the only way forward.

Questions for Reflection

What matters more: winning or mutual progress and cooperation? What's the difference between selfish action and acting in your best interest? Why have you been looking out for yourself at the expense of others or common interest? How has your or another's selfishness impacted your reputation, integrity or relationships? What's so important that you have to prove everyone else wrong? Why does being right matter so much to you? What do you damage or risk—to yourself and others—in doubling down on being right about something? Does being right justify using that knowledge at the expense of others? How do you behave when you win and lose, and what does that say about you? What is causing division in the solidarity of your group? How can you seek to persuade without making others feel defeated? What would be the ethical thing to do? When do you stand your ground, and when do you compromise? How might you or others be engaging in ultra-competitive or self-serving behaviors?

PAGE OF SWORDS



“Queerness’ is a coalitional term, a term that always implies an intermeshed understanding of identity, subjectivity, power, and politics...By understanding queer as orienting us not toward the ‘not yet’ but rather toward coalition, we find a vital alternative to both inclusionary and utopian politics.” — Karma R. Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics*

The Page of Swords is a keen observer: she’s detail oriented, curious, alert, and can see to the core of the issue. At her best, she’s honest and insightful, understanding that old ways of thinking could be blocking or preventing potential insights and understandings. She encourages those around her to seek the truth and drive for transformation by exploring different ways of thinking,

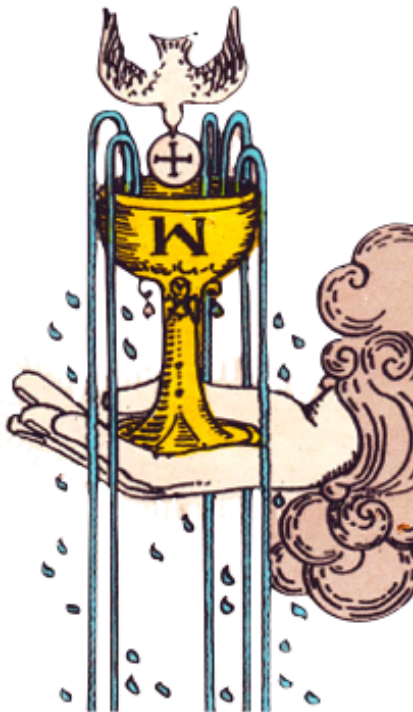
communicating, and acting to combat injustices, so pay attention to the fresh and demanding challenges she offers to your worldview. Commit to this shift in perspective; embrace seeing the world from new, strange, and exciting angles.

However, be mindful not to overthink or get bogged down by the details of what could have been done better in the past. Ruminating too long on the “what ifs” will only overwhelm you, perhaps making you bitter or judgmental. *Remember*—your integrity is your sharpest weapon; use it as an internal compass for remaining open to novel and challenging perspectives and situations.

Questions for Reflection

How might queer orientations bring about new possibilities? To what extent are you open to new information, new viewpoints, or novel ways of looking at the world? How might you “speak truth to power,” challenge old ways and habits of thinking? What arouses your curiosity? What new experiences, orientations, or perspectives have you recently discovered? What are you overthinking? To what have you become desensitized or overly-sensitive? Who might be trying to form a coalition with you? How might you or others benefit from such a coalition? How can you determine which coalitions are productive and which ones are no longer of service?

CUPS



VI OF CUPS

“This first-time-ness of wonder is not the radical present – a moment that is liveable only insofar as it is cut off from prior acts of perception. Rather, wonder involves the radicalisation of our relation to the past, which is transformed into that which lives and breathes in the present.” — Sarah Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*

The Six of Cups represents childhood magic, wonder, and innocence. You may be remembering past events from childhood, experiencing nostalgia for previous times, or seeking the warmth and comfort of those who offer you unconditional love. Use this period of remembering to let those dear to you know how you feel. While this card implies joy and satisfaction in returning to a familiar place or reconnecting with your past, be cautious of trying to *re-live* it or you may get stuck.



Instead, use this moment to reconnect with your spontaneous, playful inner child: the person you were before the world started having its way with you. Life is demanding, so bask in the presence of this healing, renewing, revitalizing energy, embracing this opportunity for childlike creativity, play, levity, and freedom from the obligations and responsibilities of adulthood.

Questions for Reflection

How is the past manifesting in the present? How is wonder holding you back or inspiring you to create and experience anew? How might

childlike wonder currently benefit you? In what ways are you clinging to your past, and how are they preventing you from moving forward? How can you learn to enjoy the present moment? What is renewing and revitalizing you? What memories, relationships, or events from the past have reappeared or recurred? What might you discover by revisiting them? How might wisdom from generations past help you approach contemporary problems? What do you cherish about your childhood? What needs to be released? How might you cultivate a joy for life akin to the carefree days of childhood? In what areas of your life is your childishness unproductive or negatively impacting those around you? What childhood traumas have you allowed to grow wild? How do they prevent you from moving forward? How can you tend to these wilds before they overtake the grounds?

KING OF CUPS



“We are to form, then, the perfect orator, who cannot exist unless as a good man; and we require in him, therefore, not only consummate ability in speaking, but every excellence of mind.” —Quintilian, Institutes of Oratory

The quintessential “good man,” the King of Cups represents the balance between intellect and emotions, focusing on generosity, compassion, and personal restraint. Diplomatic and open-minded, he supports his family and community, leading with sensitivity, wisdom, and a worldly calm that comes with maturity and experience. Unsurprisingly, the king of cups relies upon his strong moral compass when making difficult decisions, acting out of

fairness and empathy, and calls upon his subjects to do the same.

The king may be telling you to direct your personal power and energy towards socially responsible achievements. Or perhaps he’s reminding you to maintain a calm and open-hearted demeanor, leading with an unconditional commitment to the greater good. Follow the king’s example, and seek opportunities to give emotional comfort, support, generosity, and respect to those around you.

Questions for Reflection

What does it look like to lead with empathy and wisdom? What does it mean to be a “good person”? To act on behalf of the good of all? How do you ensure the needs of others are met? In what ways do you give care or counsel? How can you ensure you’re being as objective

and fair as possible? How can you maintain an even-tempered approach when chaos appears? Who can you reliably consult for good advice? How might you embody an advisor, mentor, or admirable leader's best qualities?

PENTACLES



ACE OF PENTACLES

“Kairos tells us to look for the particular opportunity in a given moment, to find - or construct - an opening in the here and now, in order to achieve something there and then...[pointing] to the ways that situations change over time, to the relationship between past and future, to the ways that one moment differs from the next...” — Carolyn R. Miller, “Opportunity, Opportunism, and Progress: Kairos in the Rhetoric of Technology”

When the Ace of Pentacles appears in a reading, it means a new, positive, and prosperous endeavor is beginning. A sign of growth and emergent vitality, if you’ve been contemplating investing time, energy, and resources into a new project or opportunity, now’s the time to go for it. This is an exiting and opportunistic energy, akin to a seed taking root: the first signs of success. Establish your goals and develop a plan to achieve them – then act on that plan.

This opening for success is being offered to you, not dropped directly into your lap, so you must take the necessary first steps toward materializing all of this potential. You have everything you need to make it happen. Stay grounded and remember: you are manifesting an abundant opportunity, here! If you stay patient and nurture it well, luck and timing will be on your side.

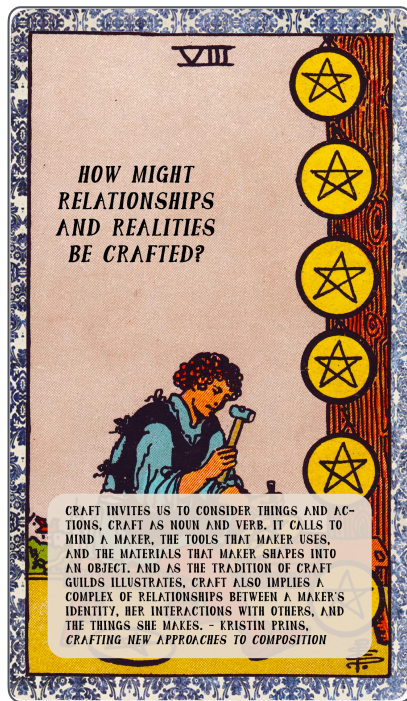
Questions for Reflection

What resources are available to nurture opportunity? What plan are you putting in motion? What do you seek to manifest; what is it you envision? What seeds are you planting? How will you recognize it’s



the right time to act? What practical, material concerns do you have about your present situation that you want to change? What gifts have you recently received? How will they help you be successful? What new opportunities can you envision: at work, at home, for your finances, for your health, or otherwise? What material resources do you have at your disposal to help you achieve this vision? How will you take first steps and prepare yourself to receive and take advantage of the opportunities present in the situation?

VIII OF PENTACLES



“Craft invites us to consider things and actions, craft as noun and verb. It calls to mind a maker, the tools that maker uses, and the materials that maker shapes into an object. And as the tradition of craft guilds illustrates, craft also implies a complex of relationships between a maker’s identity, her interactions with others, and the things she makes.” — Kristin Prins, “Crafting New Approaches to Composition”

The Eight of Pentacles asks that you hone your skills and focus on the details as you strive for mastery of your craft. You know your materials and techniques well and aim for excellence in your disciplined execution, letting the quality of your work speak for itself. A card of practice and refinement, it calls upon you to remain focused on the work itself, eschewing any shortcuts offered along the way.

Keep dedicating yourself to expertise — develop your abilities, refine your skills, and remain committed to your personal goals. You can achieve anything you set your mind to with some hard work and diligence. If you put care into your work, the world will care about it in return. But remember: true craftsmanship carries with it its own internal rewards and satisfactions. Even when the work feels tedious or daunting, hold fast to the knowledge that it’s worthy of your time and effort.

Questions for Reflection

How might relationships and realities be crafted? What does it mean to do meaningful work? How do you determine if a project is worth the effort? What skill or craft are you developing? What institutions are you building or processes are you developing? How are you crafting the future you envision for yourself and others? What new social paradigms and structures can be collectively built and consciously crafted? What work do you do best? What about it appeals to you? How can you improve your dedication and focus? How might you to sharpen your skills? How can you collaborate with others to complete your work? When was the last time you were “lost in your work”? How satisfied are you with your craft? What do your recent projects say about you? How might your work need to develop in order to improve your image and reputation? How can you create a regular time and place to work?

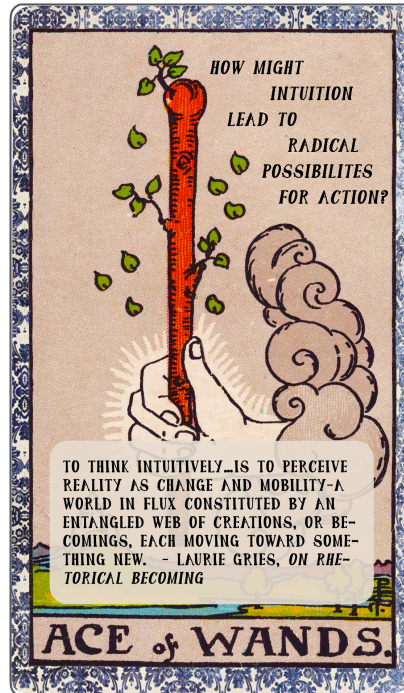
WANDS



ACE OF WANDS

“To think intuitively...is to perceive reality as change and mobility—a world in flux constituted by an entangled web of creations, or becomings, each moving toward something new. — Laurie Gries, “On Rhetorical Becoming”

A sign of action, fertility, and new growth, the Ace of Wands indicates new enterprises and opportunities are about to present themselves to you. You might be feeling inspired, even. This is the time to evaluate what you really want out of life and set it into motion. Use this opportunity to expand your view of yourself and the world; look beyond your superficial, material reality to experience inner self-realization. Now is the time to accept any invitations or offers coming your way.



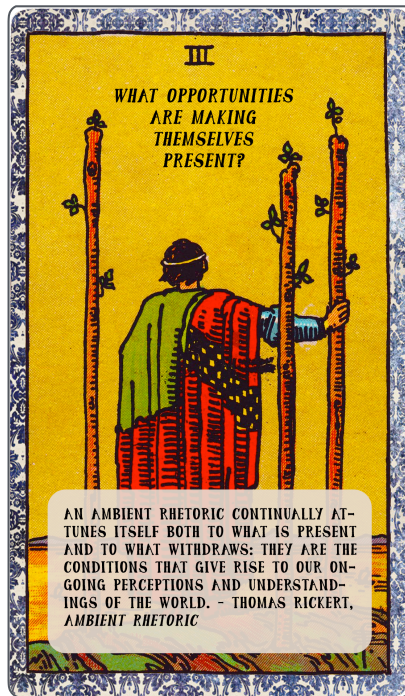
The ace of wands often points you toward your creative path in life, so if there is a project or idea you've had in mind, take a chance and go for it! You're brimming with potential; find your voice and channel your instincts into this new endeavor.

Questions for Reflection

How might intuition lead to radical possibilities for action? What is the relationship between intuition and inspiration? What are the benefits of cultivating your instinct? What do you feel the impulse to do? What do you find inspiring? What do you want more than anything else? How do you want to express yourself creatively? What changes would you like to initiate in your life right now? How clearly

have a group or collective defined their current directions, values, and goals? What do they need in order to achieve these collaborative visions? What signs of evolution should you see as you and others grow?

III OF WANDS



“An ambient rhetoric continually attunes itself both to what is present and to what withdraws: they are the conditions that give rise to our ongoing perceptions and understandings of the world.” — Thomas Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*

The Three of Wands is a card of abundance and expansion, indicating your foresight and vision while you execute plans and create a stable foundation for yourself. An exciting journey is in store for you, but you first need to acquire a sense of your terrain before you embark. Now’s the time to survey the situation and plan accordingly. Don’t limit your vision, though—make *big* plans and, even more important, set those plans into action.

The good news is that your mind, body, and spirit are working in harmony at the moment, helping you envision your possibilities for action and manifest them as you travel. Your energy is at once active and forward-looking while remaining patient and rooted. You’re aware of what the journey ahead entails and are equipped to deal with any ambiguity that may appear along the way. Think big, and keep an eye out for opportunities on the horizon, either with a current project or even some new enterprise altogether.

Questions for Reflection

What opportunities are making themselves present? What opportunities are receding? Who and what are you attracting to and repelling from yourself through your vitality, power and energy?

What do you need to become aware of at the moment? Where are you placing your attention? Where is your time and energy being spent? What results are your past actions bringing back to you? How can you take decisive action in ambiguous circumstances? How can you gather information? What have you learned from being patient and attentive? Where should you be focusing your energy and vision in order to discover new possibilities for action? What are you envisioning for your future? What is your big vision? Where do you want to go next?

MAJOR ARCANA



THE FOOL - 0

“Rhetoric we look upon as the power of observing the means of persuasion on almost any subject presented to us; and that is why we say that, in its technical character, it is not concerned with any special or definite class of subjects.” — Aristotle, *Rhetoric*

Both innocent and ignorant, The Fool is ready to take a risk and embark on a new adventure. *Ready* is the operative word, here. Representing a moment of potential before the actual beginning of a journey, The Fool sits at the crossroad between possibility and manifestation — starting in nothingness, reaching into the infinite. This space of endless potential brings with it a flexibility, emptiness, carelessness, and lightness: a field of new possibilities and options.



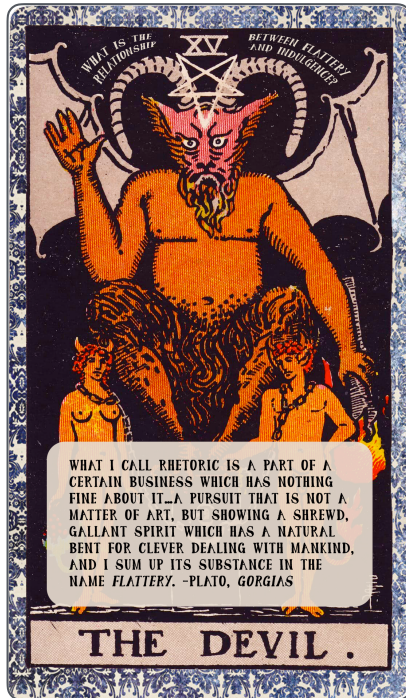
You might be feeling spontaneous and care-free, perhaps a little inexperienced, but nonetheless excited for what lies ahead. You may also be a tad naive, but don't let others' doubt prevent you from getting started in the first place. Besides, life is a cycle of cycles, a series of journeys and transformations, and The Fool, at number zero, embodies this cyclical nature. Recognize where you are now, but envision who you want to be at the end of this cycle.

Free yourself from limitations (particularly self-imposed one), attune yourself to your instincts and surroundings, and take a leap of faith, embracing all of your potential. Your journey is about to begin, so enjoy this idealist outlook while you still can, and continue to greet each new challenge with awe, curiosity, and anticipation.

Questions for Reflection

What are the benefits of risk? What are your limits? What boundaries define you? How do you feel when you take a risk? What's holding you back? What does it mean to be fearless? How are you oblivious to what is happening around you? How willing are you to be vulnerable? To open yourself up? How might past experiences help you on this new journey? Where in your life do you operate entirely on faith and trust? What has you feeling foolish? What are you feeling idealistic or optimistic about: in your life, in your community, in society, in the world? How can you preserve this feeling when you bump up against systemic pressures and entrenched attitudes? What collective leaps of faith must we be willing to make to solve recurring problems?

THE DEVIL - XV



“What I call rhetoric is a part of a certain business which has nothing fine about it...a pursuit that is not a matter of art, but showing a shrewd, gallant spirit which has a natural bent for clever dealing with mankind, and I sum up its substance in the name flattery.” —Plato, Gorgias

A master of entrapment and manipulation, The Devil revels in instant gratification, selfishness, and a desire for power and control. The Devil represents what you’ve surrendered yourself to, what you’ve willingly given up control of, what enslaves you. When this card appears in a reading, it might be a sign your losing sight of your needs, instead of getting caught up in what you want or desire. Maybe you’re going down the wrong path; perhaps you are in a negative

relationship with someone or something, or in a situation that is filled with toxicity or negativity. This might be a sign to stop indulging your addictions and inner demons or perhaps to reassess which relationships might be toxic or codependent.

This is an opportunity to recognize the unproductive patterns, negative forces, and ugly relationships that are holding you back from being the best version of yourself: in essence, to master your demons. Everyone has a dark side; make sure you’re dealing with yours in a healthy way.

Questions for Reflection

What's the relationship between flattery and indulgence? What habits or attitudes hold you back most? What are you addicted to or obsessed with? How are you struggling with your sense of self? Where are you seeking to please others at your own expense? What makes you feel trapped? What negative things or relationships do you allow to remain in your life? Where do you need to let go? How can you free yourself of your demons? To what extent do your appetites define you? What are the current boundaries and limitations in your life? What harmful attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors do you indulge? What systematic injustices might you be practicing, repeating, or enabling; both purposefully and without your awareness? How can you seek to address these injustices in your everyday life? What types of harm get reinforced or even celebrated on both an individual and collective level?

JUDGEMENT - XX

“In acknowledging that rhetorical history as a discipline has emerged from elite, male, Western practices, we make more visible the extent to which this knowledge-making area has gained primacy within the context of social, political, and cultural domination.”
— Jacqueline Jones Royster, “Disciplinary Landscaping”

Judgement is concerned with seeking the truth and the liberating effects of doing such. It's time to move beyond the ambiguities and obfuscations of the past and understand those experiences with a newfound sense clarity and certainty. Spend some time reflecting on your actions; you'll gain a clearer and more realistic sense of where you are now, what's unfolding around you, and what growing you still need to do. This may mean accepting responsibility for and reckoning with past actions, but with this awakening comes forgiveness and a new, mature relationship with life. Perhaps, even, an older version of yourself had to die along the way, but do not grieve this fact — recognize that old habits, old actions, old ways of seeing the world must be shed to make way for new orientations, new ways of being, seeing, and doing.

Use your new wisdom to make just choices going forward, and become a motivating force for those around you, actively participating in the process of shaping the future toward a more ethical one for all. Now's the time to seek a higher calling; allow forces greater than yourself to lead you and those around you towards truth, justice, and liberation.



Questions for Reflection

How is judgement transformative? What judgments are you making? How do you know you can trust your own judgement? What new realization is transforming you? Who would you become if asked to reinvent yourself? How is resentment or guilt about the past holding you or others back? How is it getting in the way of collective progress? How can you forgive yourself and others? What is ready to be born or reborn: in your life, in your community, in the world? What is your true calling? How might a higher purpose be calling out to you for attention? What are you feeling a strong pull towards doing right now? What old systems and practices are ready to be transformed? What can be built when we focus on the good of the collective?

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Act III: Blood, Thumbtacks, and Tears
Ambiguity, Action, and Feminine Agency in Professional Wrestling

“Individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating. Which is not to say that emergence happens once and for all, as an event or as a process that takes place according to some external measure of space and of time, but rather that time and space, like matter and meaning, come into existence, are iteratively reconfigured through each intra-action, thereby making it impossible to differentiate in any absolute sense between creation and renewal, beginning and returning, continuity and discontinuity, here and there, past and future”

—Karan Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*

“Wrestlers can’t retire. We find it impossible...and I can’t really explain it other than [professional wrestling] just gives you the chance to completely forget who you are for a bit...it’s completely freeing...To suddenly be able to suspend people’s disbelief, control them in a way to want to, and be this strong superhero—why would you not want to keep doing that for as long as possible.”

—Heather Bandenburg

“Women’s wrestling can be just as amazing as men’s wrestling, and almost even better, because you never see those strong women anymore. Buffy’s gone. Xena’s gone. We need some women heroes.”

—Emily Read

I open act III with a story—one from the bizarre and beautiful, violent and vibrant, weird and wonderful world of professional wrestling—in hopes to capture the way being, knowing, and acting complexly and ambiguously entangle. While I understand it might feel abrupt to narrate the final two minutes of a wrestling match within a dissertation on ethico-onto-epistemological orientations toward complex entanglements, I will later argue that this historical moment you are about to read is useful because the particular arrangement of agents and ecologies generates a difficult conversation surrounding the agency of female bodies; presents narratives for resisting portrayals of women as weak, helpless, or objects in need of saving; and captures a dynamic,

emergent shift in attitudes and orientations toward not only women's wrestling but women in society at large. In so doing, this act demonstrates how an active ambiguity can be productively used to cultivate more responsive and attentive orientations toward difficult, uncertain, and complex rhetorical entanglements. But more on that later. For now, I take you to a small, crowded, uncomfortably hot American Legion hall in Reseda, California on July 26, 2014, where a few hundred people gather to witness what would become an unforgettable moment in professional wrestling history...

Eighteen minutes into a no disqualification Guerrilla Warfare match for the tag team championship, it appears as if Nick and Matt Jackson, real-life brothers and defending champions together known as The Young Bucks, are about to get the better of their opponents Joey Ryan and Candice LaRae, The World's Cutest Tag Team. Candice is still out of action from the brutal Tombstone Piledriver¹ she took on the concrete floor outside of the ring earlier in the match, while Joey is currently suffering a beating at the hands of the dastardly Young Bucks, culminating in the pair shoving a fistful of thumbtacks into Joey's mouth. Matt holds Joey's mouth shut as Nick delivers a vicious Superkick to his face. Matt wastes little time going in for the pinfall. One, two—NO! Joey Ryan kicks out, and the Bucks can't believe it! The raucous, predominantly male crowd chants "You sick fucks!" at the brothers as Matt leaves the ring to retrieve a shoe covered in thumbtacks that he'd planted under the ring before the match. He displays it to the crowd who are on their feet, booing and jeering and groaning, as Nick takes off one of Matt's boots. The tension mounts as their intentions become clear: Matt plans to deliver another Superkick to Joey Ryan's face, this time using the gimmicked shoe.

But wait, wait, wait just a minute. What's this? Just as Matt is about to deliver the final blow of the match, Candice LeRae stumbles back into the ring, still reeling. The commentators, clearly weary of what she's about to do, exclaim, "Candice's heart will never, ever be questioned!" Crawling on her hands and knees, she positions herself between Matt and her partner, Joey, while audible cries of "No!" emanate from the crowd. What is she doing? Is she really going to sacrifice herself, take this devastating kick, to save her partner? Unbelievable! The heart! The grit! The intestinal fortitude! Just as she manages to stumble onto her feet, wobbling and shaking—how can the referee let her continue in this state!—the sickening smack of foot meeting face reverberates through the small hall. Groans and gasps from the crowd are echoed by the repetition of "Oh my god! Oh my god! Oh my god!" by the commentators. Candice falls to the mat,

¹ A move where a wrestler is picked up, turned upside-down, and spiked head-first onto the ground.

and, once again, Matt goes in for the pin, hoping to secure the tag team championship. One. Two. Thr—denied! Candice manages to get her shoulder up while, at the same time, her partner, Joey Ryan, throws himself on top of Matt and Candice in a last-ditch effort to break up the pin. The atmosphere suddenly shifts from excitement to a more quiet, somber concern as the commentators note, “Her face is...oh my god. She is bleeding.” It is here that, for the first time, we get a clear glimpse of Candice’s bloodied face, her crimson mask. Those evil Young Bucks have taken it too far this time.

The men continue to fight among themselves for a moment, ramping up the excitement and tension after this sudden dramatic turn. Candice LeRae remains out of sight, until — “Candice is up! Candice is up!” — both her and Matt Jackson are suddenly stumbling around near one corner of the ring. Out of nowhere, Candice, still covered in her own blood, grabs Matt by the crotch from behind and executes one of her signature moves, the Ballsplex, tossing him backwards over her shoulder into the corner of the ring. She’s running on pure adrenaline, now, as the crowd cheers her on. Without hesitation, Candice grabs a handful of thumbtacks off the mat and authoritatively shoves them down the front of Matt’s tights. She delivers one final Ballsplex, slamming Matt onto the bed of thumbtacks strewn across the mat: a bit of poetic justice for the earlier Shoe-perkick. She goes in for the pin, and the roaring chant of “One! Two! Three!” erupts from the crowd in celebration. Candice LeRae wins the tag team championship for the World’s Cutest Tag Team! “Candice is a bloody mess,” we hear on commentary as she rests on her back in the ring a moment—hands shaking, breathing hard, face and hair caked in a thick coating of her own blood— while the referee places the newly-earned championship title across her stomach before she slowly rises to join her tag partner in celebration (“Candice LeRae & Joey Ryan”).

If LeRae were a male competitor, there’d be nothing particularly unusual about this moment in professional wrestling. However, her involvement in this Guerrilla Warfare match in 2014 makes it unusual in the American tradition of professional wrestling *precisely* because she is a woman. The singularity of this moment at this point in time, already noteworthy for her championship victory, is punctuated and visually encapsulated by her donning of what is known in professional wrestling as *the crimson mask*: a profusely flowing mixture of blood and sweat coating the face of a competitor in a climactic performance of pain. As an icon of suffering, the mask rhetorically functions to escalate the drama and tension of a wrestling narrative; whatever

the conflict between the competitors in a given narrative might be, it has escalated to a point of viciousness and brutality where blood is/must be shed. However, LeRae's act is rhetorically complex — we not only have the visual shock of a *woman* donning the crimson mask (a rarity in American professional wrestling), she also does so in an intergender match alongside and against men for the honor of being crowned a champion. Her act, then, not only invokes the traditional iconography of the crimson mask, it also imbues it with rhetorical significance beyond the traditional narrative function it typically performs.

At its core, professional wrestling is a storytelling medium that uses the human body as its primary expressive mode to tell narratives centered around communal assumptions of justice. In his *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes defines wrestling as a “spectacle of excess” (15) where the public expects to see “the great spectacle of Suffering, Defeat, and Justice” (19) which, in American wrestling, often “represents a sort of mythological fight between Good and Evil” (23). Often, the good guy or hero of the narrative (the *babyface*) must suffer at the hands of the villain (known as the *heel*), who will do whatever it takes, especially cheating, to win. But typically, with persistence, heart, and grit, the babyface, eventually, overcomes the antagonist and justice prevails. This may play out in a single match or in a series of matches over a period of time—the longer the feud, the more exaggerated and spectacular the conflict must appear as the dramatic tensions escalate. Further, as wrestling scholar Sharon Mazer explains, “All wrestling matches follow a performance tradition in which the spectators can be confident that the final outcome will ultimately reflect *communal* assumptions of what is inherently right” (“Doggie” 102) [emphasis mine]. In other words, *what* is just and unjust in any given narrative depends upon the audience's collective values and ethics—expressed via chants, cheers, taunts, claps, and stomps

—and they *expect* to see their notions of justice played out by the end of the narrative.

Throughout the history of the sport, though, these narratives of justice have overwhelmingly been *male*; male bodies telling the stories of man's suffering. Up until quite recently in the American tradition of professional wrestling, relatively few *female* bodies had been given opportunities to tell their own stories of suffering and justice.

In the match described above, however, Candice LeRae is *the* central narrative agent in the finish of the match in question, and based on the crowd's chants of "she's hardcore!" and the commentators' insistence that "enough cannot be said about Candice LeRae...what a gutsy performance by Candice as a professional wrestler" ("Candice LeRae & Joey Ryan"), this moment encapsulates shifting cultural attitudes toward the *vitality* of not only female wrestlers and athletes, but women-at-large in American society. By vitality, I reference Jane Bennett's conceptualization of "the capacity of things...to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own" (viii). Given the traditional emplacement of women as *objects* within not only professional wrestling but American society generally, I find Bennett's language of vitality useful for this analysis. I argue that LeRae uses both the rhetorical force of her blood, a typically hidden yet vital material force of the body, as well as the complex ambiguity of wrestling's defining ethos, *kayfabe*, to rend open a space for resisting traditional representations and narrative functions of women in professional wrestling and, reflexively, women in American public spheres. In performing this penultimate icon of suffering, the crimson mask, during her championship victory, LeRae simultaneously enacts multiple intentions within an ambiguous space in order to make herself and the central injustice underscoring her narrative

—sexism—matter by portraying herself as a legitimate female athlete who is willing to endure whatever punishment inevitably comes her way to prove she deserves to be a champion.

In what follows, I first discuss my method/orientation for analysis within this chapter, an example of what I've termed *mattering* in Act I: the conscious and deliberate shaping of knowledge to explore and/or articulate particular aims, purposes, inquiries, and intentions. I argue that *mattering* is a useful approach for capturing, analyzing, and understanding not just *what's* important and *why* in a given entanglement, it also accounts for *how* that entanglement has come to be/mean what it is/does (*as* an entangled phenomenon). I turn to professional wrestling for a demonstration of *mattering* because its central ethos of *kayfabe*, the *illusion of authenticity*, creates a complex, dynamic, and foundational ambiguity that permeates any and every wrestling narrative. By examining the function and impact *kayfabe*, I demonstrate how *mattering* can help scholars of rhetoric and composition grapple with difficult and amorphous entanglements where fact and fiction, truth and fabrication, authenticity and spectacle collide and congeal. After overviewing my method/approach and unpacking the concept of *kayfabe* as well as the general iconography of the crimson mask, I then analyze LeRae's act within four different yet intersecting wrestling ecologies—*independent wrestling, hardcore wrestling, women's wrestling, and intergender wrestling*—in order to finally demonstrate how the *unique* entanglement of these ecologies, the iconography of the crimson mask, and the central ethos of *kayfabe* provided LeRae space and occasion to use her agency as a *female* professional wrestler to publicly perform a narrative *about* the struggle against and triumph over sexism, an injustice experienced by many women throughout American society. In so doing, I can make her struggle matter to rhetorical studies—both deem it important *and* gain perspective on how and why it is

important—offering insight into the construction and circulation of knowledge about and within ambiguous, challenging, and complex situations.

Mattering in Action: Navigating Ambiguous and Complex Entanglements

As I'll demonstrate below, LeRae's crimson mask, like all acts in professional wrestling, cannot be understood as a singular action; it *must* be understood as part of a complex, emergent entanglement of diverse agents, intentions, actions, and mythologies. In "Wrestling Isn't Wrestling," a self-described "educational parody video" that defends the art form and educates the viewer about the fundamental appeal of wrestling, screenwriter and producer Max Landis claims that professional wrestling "allows for interesting, diverse, and compelling stories" because of its *continual* nature. After presenting the over two-decades long (and still developing) character arc of wrestler Triple H to support his claim, Landis explains, "The story goes on. That's the thing about wrestling — it doesn't end. But that's the thing about life, too." In this moment, he is able to acutely articulate the fact that due to wrestling's always-already-ongoing nature, wrestling functions as a microcosm of real life. He notes how human beings "love watching people grow, change, struggle. Good people, bad people, we don't care —we wanna see it!...And when you watch wrestling, that's what you get." Professional wrestling, then, provides a bounded environment (through its fictionalized nature) to watch rhetoric dynamically emerge, circulate, evolve, and come into itself. It not only allows for simulations of authentic struggles with justice, oppression, unfair treatment, and other social and personal conflicts to play themselves out *in real time/space*, but it also allows for immediate feedback from *actualized* publics on these simulations and the character arcs within. When it comes to storytelling

mediums, then, to steal a phrase from *The Atomic Elbow*, a professional wrestling fanzine, one might say that “only wrestling is real.”²

Within LeRae’s match, we can hear the audience vocalize its support and concern for her during the climax and resolution; their cheers, gasps, and chants in the moment let her and the other wrestlers know immediately how their characters and actions are being received. However, this reaction is also informed by previous matches and storylines; it’s not an isolated conflict. Rather, a year prior, *former rivals* LeRae and Joey Ryan teamed up to, unsuccessfully, challenge The Young Bucks for the tag team championship. The two teams spent a year locked in an intense rivalry with one another, and the match in question, LeRae and Ryan’s second opportunity to win the titles, marks the culmination of this feud (“Candice LeRae”). This means that regular viewers are not only watching the individual story of the match play out, they’re also understanding the match in context of this much larger story that’s been unfolding over the course of a year: former rivals-turned-partners working together to defeat the evil, arrogant jerks who think they’re untouchable (and seemingly are). Over the course of this year-long story unfolding over multiple events and stemming from previous interrelated conflicts, audiences witnessed LeRae, Ryan, and the Young Bucks—to use Landis’ terms—struggle, grow, and change: the authentic drama of existence.

Landis’ particular argument focuses solely on *one* wrestling promotion, World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), a nearly 70-year-old, multi-million dollar, publicly traded, local-wrestling-promotion-turned-global entertainment company that has overwhelmingly dominated the global wrestling market, particularly since 2000 or-so. However, there are innumerable

²This phrase has appeared on merchandise (t-shirts) for the fanzine.

wrestling promotions of varying degrees of popularity and reach across the globe. Much like a soap opera, these promotions run episodic content, live and/or televised, continuously at regular intervals, sometimes over the course of decades. While individual storylines have beginnings and ends, they unfold in overlapping and intra-related ways stemming from previous events in the promotion's history and continue to develop based largely on *kairotic* factors like audience reaction, injury, personal grievance, and current events, as I touched upon briefly above with the backstory of the match in question here. Wrestlers, over the course of a career, may work for several promotions as the same character, and/or might portray several characters (for a single promotion or across multiple promotions). Further, an act performed within one wrestling promotion can have consequences within *another* promotion, and this doesn't even *begin* to factor in the various styles, genres, and cultural expressions of professional wrestling across the globe that form a web of intersecting, interrelated, yet also unique ecologies that, collectively, make up "the world of professional wrestling."³ Lastly, to make matters all the more complex, as I'll explore further in the next section, the central ethos of professional wrestling, kayfabe (the illusion of authenticity), brings a specter of ambiguity to the aforementioned elements, making it unclear in the moment the degree to which a given action or storyline performed during a wrestling event might be authentic or fictionalized.

In short, I believe professional wrestling provides a rich case study for my argument that scholars of rhetoric and composition can do more to cultivate ethico-onto-epistemological orientations to knowledge generation and circulation. As a reminder, these orientations help us focus on the dynamic, emergent, ambivalent, and co-constitutive ways in which being, knowing,

³ Credit for this phrase goes to independent wrestler Colt Cabana, who uses it during the introduction of his longtime running (since 2010) weekly podcast, *The Art of Wrestling*.

and acting entangle. Professional wrestling offers a chance to observe and learn from an always-already-ongoing saga in a perpetual state of becoming comprised of complex and ambiguous intra-actions among wrestlers, promoters, audiences, and the material space/times in which they exist. When I say intra-actions, I am invoking Barad's conceptualization of the term as "the *mutual constitution of entangled agencies*," which "recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action," meaning "*agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements*" (33) [emphasis in original]. These always-already-ongoing intra-actions make it difficult to establish boundaries around any inquiry into such entangled agencies within any entanglement, including, in this case, the world of professional wrestling. In order to examine the complex, emergent rhetorics entangled in LeRae's crimson mask, then, I need a method that can capture the various individual threads of the entanglement *not* to fix them in place as definitive interpretations of her act, but rather to better understand *how* those threads entangle in a particular way in this particular moment, for, as Barad notes, "the specificity of entanglements is everything" (74). While I am attempting in this act to capture the action and mobility of mattering as it manifests within the context of professional wrestling, I hope more broadly to model a way of approaching ambiguous and complex entanglements of all types—and the dynamic, emergent, confusing, and conflicting rhetorics circulating within—that could be useful for students, scholars, or others who seek to better understand and articulate the *specificity* of agential intra-action.

In act I, I overviewed the idea of *mattering* as a quantum framework for rhetorical scholarship aiming to intentionally explore the epistemological workings of a given rhetorical entanglement: that is, the active shaping of knowledge/meaning about an entanglement. In what

follows, I'll perform such *mattering* work by examining a complex *matter* in professional wrestling, LeRae's crimson mask, in order to demonstrate how in "the mutual constitution of entangled agencies" that becomes her act, LeRae is able to demonstrate why female wrestlers *matter* within the scope of professional wrestling storytelling. In temporarily pinning down six vital agencies entangling in LeRae's act (kayfabe, the crimson mask, and four wrestling ecologies — independent, hardcore, women's, and intergender), I can glean information that, when viewed as a whole entanglement, provides vast and complex insights into LeRae's unique articulation of those six commonplaces (topoi) of professional wrestling and the rhetorical velocity of such. Rhetorical velocity, as defined by Jim Ridolfo and Dànielle Nicole DeVoss, is "a conscious rhetorical concern for distance, travel, speed, and time." Given the always-already-ongoing nature of the artform, professional wrestlers, I argue, are uniquely attuned to the rhetorical velocity of their actions and performances, of how they might project into the future and inform still-to-come contests, stories, rivalries, and opportunities. As I'll detail later, within five years of her original act, the rhetorical velocity of LeRae's crimson mask has helped rend open a space for her and other female athletes to be legitimately respected and valued as competitors. Ultimately, then, through this inquiry and analysis, I hope to demonstrate what *mattering* might look like and how it might help scholars better articulate and tend to the *specificity* of rhetorical entanglements, particularly when examining dynamic, shifting, complex, difficult, and ambiguous objects, cases, and situations that unfold over an always-already-ongoing period of time.

Embodied Ambiguity: Kayfabe and The Crimson Mask

Before I can temporarily untangle and entangle again the various agencies in play within LeRae's singular act of donning the crimson mask, I must take a moment to explain the defining ethos at work in arguably all actions performed within and around a wrestling ring, *kayfabe*: "the fact or convention of presenting staged events, performances, and competitors' rivalries as if they were authentic or spontaneous" (kayfabe). Throughout this section, I'll demonstrate how during a professional wrestling event, *fictional* narratives unfold through *actualized* bodily acts/labor and intra-actions with the audience under a *guise* of authenticity. Every participant in the space (wrestlers, promoters, fans, etc.) must participate in the emergent phenomenon *as if it were authentic*, even though most present also know *it's all only a show*. Thus, professional wrestling events, much like a magic show, can be defined by their *illusory* nature—we *know* a magician is merely performing a trick, but even with that knowledge, we find enjoyment in the illusion.

The importance of this illusion of reality produced through kayfabe cannot be overstated, as clarity or authentic violence spoils the fun. As Barthes notes, "The spectator does not wish for the actual suffering of the contestant; he only enjoys the perfection of an iconography" (20). This iconography of suffering, its visibility and symbolism, is what matters in professional wrestling; unexpected, *authentic* suffering can shatter the illusion, expose the work,⁴ and taint the enjoyment of the spectacle. In fact, when a competitor gets legitimately, seriously hurt during a match, it often halts the momentum of the event. When the audience knows for certain that someone is *authentically, involuntarily* injured (that is, when the illusion is broken), it becomes difficult, sometimes even impossible, to keep enjoying the spectacle. For example, during the

⁴ In professional wrestling, a fictionalized aspect is referred to as a *work*, while real, authentic, not-for-show aspects are known as *shoot*.

2018 Mae Young Classic, one of the competitors who couldn't compete in the previous year's tournament because of an injured knee, Tegan Nox, injured her *other* knee not even 30 seconds into a quarterfinals match. To watch her crying in the ring, "I can't do it again," while the referee and medics check on her is absolutely heartbreaking to witness ("MYC").

For professional wrestling to work as intended as an artistic mode of expression and storytelling and for audiences to tolerate the violence, authenticity must remain *suspect*; it's best that the audience never quite knows what's authentic and what's part of the show. That is, there's pleasure and excitement in the *threat* of danger caused by the ambiguity of the spectacle. As long as Nox's injury isn't obviously *real*, the audience can take satisfaction in the fight that's unfolding since the people whose characters are pretending to fight *appear* to be safe despite the simulated violence. If a competitor continues to compete despite an "injury," be it storyline *or* authentic, it gives the audience permission to continue enjoying this moment of weakness and vulnerability as part of the story that's unfolding and even take pleasure in debating whether the injury was real (proving the toughness of the wrestler in finishing the match) or kayfabe (proving the quality of the wrestler's craft in order to produce such an effective illusion of injury). During Nox's match, though, the excited and anticipatory energy of the crowd dynamically shifts to concern and stunned silence as what *appears* to be a storyline injury (it's common for old "injuries" to become story fodder in future matches) reveals itself to be *authentic* as Nox makes it clear she is unable to continue with the match. Kayfabe, as the illusion of reality or authenticity, is a *vital* structural element of the spectacle that is professional wrestling because it's what makes all of the action, the violence, not only tolerable but also *enjoyable* in the first

place—the audience can watch and enjoy because they *know* for certain it's a production, a story. Kayfabe assures us that, at the end of the day, it is all, in fact, theatre.

However, like any actor playing any character, the audience can and does appreciate wrestlers for their talents independent of the role(s) they play, which is why no matter how fictionalized the narrative events might be, *reality* always creeps back into professional wrestling. Generally speaking, if a performer is good at their job, audiences want to see them rewarded for their efforts. In wrestling, those rewards come in the form of more opportunities for significant screen/stage time (more and/or longer matches, interesting storylines) and title opportunities—all *fictionalized* aspects of the event. However, as I'll touch on more in a moment, wrestlers use their *actual* bodies in myriad ways to produce a *fictional* story, and in the process, put their bodies through tremendous abuse. While at times wrestlers are making something that's not at all painful look devastating (like a hair pull, which is, in reality, fully controlled by the person whose hair is being pulled), many everyday in-ring actions *hurt*. In fact, some of the labor wrestlers perform is to *hide* how painful certain actions *actually* are. For instance, a standard back-bump, where a wrestler falls flat on their backs, is utterly painful, and this is one of the basic foundations everything else is built upon. Stories circulate within wrestling communities about individuals who quit after the first couple days of training because the pain is intense, and that's before they've learned any substantial moves/maneuvers. So, the everyday labor of professional wrestling includes a *real* person whose *real* body is regularly and repeatedly self-abused who is then *hopefully* rewarded for this labor by being prominently featured within a *fictional* narrative.

Cue *the crimson mask*: one of the most iconic and impactful images in the world of professional wrestling. As a visible marker of pain and labor worn on the face, it's a relentless image, one the viewer *cannot* look away from without missing narrative action; that is, if one averts their gaze *away* from a wrestler's bloody face, they're *also* no longer watching the wrestling action, which unfolds via the wrestler's body. More often than not, the crimson mask is donned at the climactic moment of the match to communicate the penultimate suffering a competitor is willing to endure to win; however, it *can* occur anywhere within a match's narrative structure, and it is up to the wrestlers to escalate the action afterward in a believable way. Wrestlers who don the crimson mask don't always win their matches. However, "winning" and "losing" in wrestling don't translate to what winning and losing do in the context of an authentic fight; that is, they're not markers of success. A wrestler who dons the crimson mask but "loses" the match could, in terms of positive career growth and audience traction, still emerge a winner. For example, during a match at WrestleMania⁵ 13, Stone Cold Steve Austin, blood gushing from the head, refused to tap out (submit) to his opponent. He ended up "passing out" in the submission hold, which was part of the intended storyline, technically losing the match; however, the audience found this heroic since he would not give up or give in, his body giving out before his spirit. Here, the crimson mask helps sell⁶ the story: Austin is trapped, screaming in agony, blood gushing from his face and pooling underneath him on the mat, eventually passing out in a puddle of his own blood. It's a gruesome and powerful image, enough so that even

⁵ WrestleMania is currently the largest annual event in professional wrestling, running yearly since 1985, and is often referred to as *the Superbowl of wrestling*.

⁶ *To sell* in wrestling is to make the action believable; it's the performance/acting quality.

though he started the match as a heel and “lost,” he emerged as a babyface, eventually going on to become one of the top talents in the company during the late 1990s and early aughts. Since professional wrestling is about the emotional experience of the match, about making the audience *believe* what’s happening is real when they already know it’s not, the audience must be rewarded for suspending their disbelief. And, as the Austin example demonstrates, the crimson mask is occasionally what the story needs to heighten both the emotional and intellectual experience of the match.

Thus, no matter where it appears within the narrative or why, the crimson mask functions to *undeniably* conflate reality and fiction by invoking the vital agency of blood within a fictionalized context. That is, it reinforces the illusion produced through kayfabe. As theatre scholars Broderick Chow and Eero Laine note, “The presence of authentic blood in an openly theatrical spectacle points to the unusual nature of wrestling labour” (48). I argue that the labor of professional wrestling is noteworthy precisely because it is a *fiction* produced simultaneously with/on/of an *actual* body. That is, for a professional wrestler, the physical body, both its material form and kinesthetic expression, is *the* primary tool for storytelling. Barthes observes that “the physique of the wrestlers...constitutes a basic sign, which like a seed contains the whole fight. But this seed proliferates, for it is at every turn during the fight, in each new situation, that the body of the wrestler casts to the public the magical entertainment of a temperament which finds its natural expression in a gesture” (18). Put differently, it is the *body* of the wrestler that communicates the narrative to the viewer through the unfolding action. Wrestlers use their bodies in tandem with one another to perform various offensive/defensive maneuvers (labor *with* the body) and communicate the “pain” of such moves to the audience through bodily gestures and

facial expressions (labor *on* the body). Further, labor is produced *of* the body as well, since bodily fluids like sweat, spit, and blood also perform rhetorical and narrative work within the story of a given match. Thus, to circle back to Chow and Laine's observation, the material authenticity of the body, and the *bloodied* body specifically in terms of the crimson mask, reinforces the fictional narrative being told. In other words, when the narrative arc of the story demands undeniable visual evidence of pain and suffering, a wrestler sometimes bleeds to mask the fiction with the real, so to speak, both preying on and feeding back into the ambiguity of the moment established via kayfabe.

In professional wrestling, blood works to affirm the legitimacy and authenticity of the spectacle witnessed, even if the winner is predetermined. However, to further complicate matters, a crimson mask is often *self-inflicted*; that is, at a key, dramatic moment of the match, a competitor uses a small razor blade hidden on their person (often concealed in wrist tape) or provided by the referee to covertly cut open their own forehead in a practice known as *blading*, *gigging*, *juicing*, or *getting color*. At other moments, though, a competitor can don the mask the *hard way* (that is, getting legitimately busted open during the action of the match). Bleeding the hard way doesn't *necessarily* mean unintentional, though; while accidental cuts, tears, and gashes certainly occur in professional wrestling, an expertly-placed elbow to just above the eyebrow can also do the job. So, no matter how the crimson mask appears on a competitor, there is *always* an element of rhetorical ambiguity: the viewer rarely definitively knows *how* a wrestler bleeds as the action unfolds (that is, if it's done purposefully or not), only the undeniable fact that blood is presently being invoked as a material agent for storytelling purposes. Thus, under the ethos of kayfabe, the crimson mask demonstrates how, in professional wrestling, the focus is on the

occurrence of rhetorical acts/demonstrations themselves (the what) and the narrative *framing* of those acts (the why); how a wrestler performs an action as the event unfolds, like bleeding, only matters in *appearance*, not actuality.

As such, the crimson mask concretizes and renders visible the defining paradox/duality of professional wrestling's ethos of kayfabe: much like light is at once simultaneously a particle and a wave, wrestling is at once simultaneously real and false, and how one is looking and what one is looking for fundamentally shape what's seen. Reality and fiction, authenticity and illusion, then, are always-already ambiguously entangled within an ethos of kayfabe. Within any wrestling narrative, there is never a singular, definitive intent behind or interpretation of an action, only an entanglement of simultaneously deployed actions that, depending on one's vantage point, capacities, insights, and goals *appear* to be or mean one thing over another. That is, the narrative (fictional) and behind-the-scenes (real) intentions of a singular act entangle in its enactment, simultaneously functioning as both. Wrestlers *appear* to hurt one another during a wrestling event as part of the narrative being told (fiction), all the while taking extreme care to protect one another from *actual* injury and harm (reality). A referee *appearing* to check on an injured competitor (fiction) could *actually* be receiving the next series of moves in the match from that competitor (reality). A wrestler *appearing* to bleed as a result of being hit by a weapon (fiction) could *actually* have cut themselves open a moment after taking the hit (reality). Thus, since intention is always-already ambiguous and multiple in any wrestling act, an ethos of kayfabe renders the "why" and "how" behind a given action important only in terms of one's vantage point (how one is looking) and what one is trying to understand or see (why one is looking). In the case of the crimson mask, it doesn't matter if a wrestler *intends* to bleed during a

match for the audience to understand the fictional narrative that's unfolding; that is, it makes no difference to the viewer if a wrestler is bleeding by choice or on accident (the *actual* cause of the blood), all that matters is 1) there is blood and 2) it makes sense within the context of the specific story of suffering being spun.

In the weird, ambiguous space produced through kayfabe, everything is *exactly* as it appears, yet, simultaneously, *nothing* is as it seems. Professional wrestling, then, is an ideal object for teaching people to sit with complex, ambiguous, paradoxical situations because participants (wrestlers, promoters, *and* the audience) themselves must simultaneously sit with multiple, often contradictory truths (actualities), hold them all equally as true, yet also know that they are only "truths" from a particular vantage point. In any given act, is one considering/ examining/looking at the *narrative* presented to the audience (a *work*), the backstage *decision making/politics* with the real people playing these characters and their employers (*shoot*), or the *marketing* of the product from a business standpoint designed to generate revenue and buzz (unknown how much is shoot and how much is a work)? The answer: *all* of these things are happening simultaneously at all times, which is why wrestling, as a medium, leans into, and in fact *requires*, ambiguity. When the fans know the events are staged, how does one sell the fight, the conflict, as an authentic spectacle? Easy: blur the lines between fiction and reality so it's impossible to tell the authenticity of an action. When authenticity is always-already under suspect, only *what* actions are performed and how those actions are *framed* (that is, *why* they are happening within the context of the narrative action) matter. Professional wrestling, then, provides rhetorical scholars an occasion and space to develop methods and techniques for discovering what matters as well as why and how it matters within ambiguous and

interdeterminate contexts and entanglements, accessing the liminal, emergent, and subjective qualities of *episteme*, of knowledge generation and production, *precisely because* wrestling's central ethos, kayfabe, is grounded in this indeterminacy, this conflation, of reality and fiction.

Candice LeRae's Crimson Mask: One Act, Four Intra-acting Ecologies

In the immediate impression of Candice LeRae's crimson mask, we are greeted with a visible, quantifiable marker of suffering anchored in the body: profusely flowing blood covers her face, coats her hair, streaks across her neck, chest, arms, and stomach, and stains her ring gear (figure 1). While it *appears* as though LeRae dons the crimson mask the hard way as a result of taking a thumbtack-laden Superkick to the face in the final minutes of the match, it is impossible to gauge how, when, and why she begins to *actually* bleed. After the match, LeRae shared a photo on social media of her post-kick injury; certainly, the kick made contact, as evidenced by the many pin-hole injuries on her forehead (figure 2). Before ever taking the kick, however, LeRae stumbles around the ring with her head tilted down and her hair covering her face; additionally, we hear commentary saying, "Candice is bleeding! Look at the blood on her leg" ("Candice LeRae & Joey Ryan"). While this blood *could* be from a previous moment in the match, it *could* also be a few errant drips from a blade job being hidden by her hair until after the kick that *supposedly* bloodies her face is delivered, or it *could* even be from an injury sustained hard way when she took the piledriver on the concrete floor outside of the ring. In essence, the Superkick which appears to draw blood could very well be a simulation of that act. In the moment, it's impossible to tell. Either way, though, the result is the same — after she takes the kick, she is undeniably bleeding, undeniably suffering. Thus, it doesn't matter if the blood was

drawn by blade or by boot; *what matters is that it was drawn at all*. In invoking the history and iconography of the crimson mask, LeRae renders visible the struggle of women trying to become champions in a male-dominated industry.

But this is only the beginning of comprehending all that is entangling (with)in LeRae's act. In addition to pinpointing the authentic cause of her bleeding, it is also complicated and interdeterminate to understand its significance and meaning. Particularly, LeRae dons her crimson mask in a match that sits within a complex intra-action of independent, hardcore, women's, and intergender wrestling, and so, her act must be examined first within the context of



Fig. 1. The crimson mask by @candicelerae. “#tbt ‘To dream the impossible dream/To fight the unbeatable foe/To bear with unbearable sorrow/And to run where/ The brave dare not go...’ #candiceandjoey” *Instagram*, 31 July 2014, [instagram.com/p/BltNvY4nNBd/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BltNvY4nNBd/). [cropped]

each of these four rhetorical ecologies in order to then understand it within its entangled state. When I say rhetorical ecology, I'm referring to Jenny Rice's construction of affective rhetorical ecologies: the mixture of "temporal, historical, and lived fluxes" (9) that allows one to "[read] rhetoric both as a process of distributed emergence and as an ongoing circulation process" (13). Any act of professional wrestling is inherently entangled within multiple complex rhetorical ecologies; the act is both local and contextual as well as generic and systemic. It is important, then, to situate LeRae's crimson mask within the general ecologies of independent, hardcore, women's, and intergender wrestling to contextualize how the rules, expectations, traditions, and histories of



Fig. 2. Thumbtack impressions by @candicelerae. "Yes! The thumbtack Shoe-perkick DID hurt..." *Instagram*, 27 July 2014, [instagram.com/p/q-h39VGBwj/?taken-by=candicelerae](https://www.instagram.com/p/q-h39VGBwj/?taken-by=candicelerae)

each collectively intra-act in her enactment of the crimson mask. It's only when we come to see the specific entanglement of these various threads that we can begin to comprehend the significance of her act as representative of the tide-change, the momentum shift, of collective attitudes towards women in professional wrestling, part of a larger socio-cultural shift towards celebrating women's vitality in professional spheres.

But first, I'd like to share a little background on Candice LeRae herself, her career and reputation up to this moment, to contextualize the analysis that follows. Already a twelve-year veteran of the sport at the time of her crimson mask in 2014, LeRae began wrestling in 2002, working for small independent promotions in California. In 2006, she began working for notable California independent promotion Pro Wrestling Guerrilla (PWG), competing in primarily

intergender matches during her decade-long tenure with the company. In 2007, she began wrestling regularly outside of California, and over the next 7 years, she continued developing a name for herself as one of the more popular female wrestlers on the independents, working for various promotions across the U.S., competing against and alongside women and men in the process. LeRae and Joey Ryan began tagging as the World's Cutest Tag Team in 2013, and the pair produced a weekly YouTube series chronicling their careers, "The Candice and Joey Show," which ran for 130 episodes (until 2016). By the time of the match in question in July 2014, LeRae earned a reputation for being a tough-as-nails competitor (or as she brands herself on her merchandise, a 'tough cupcake') for her willingness to compete in not only intergender competition but particularly violent hardcore-style matches (which not every wrestler will do). Thus, when LeRae dons the crimson mask, she is already a well-traveled and respected competitor in the wrestling community.

In what follows, I'll examine the significance of LeRae's crimson mask within the context of four different wrestling ecologies that intersect within this match in order to analyze how her act functions differently in each ecology as a product of the various rules, expectations, traditions, and histories. I first examine her act in the context of independent wrestling, which, much like independent music, is an ecology centered around three key identifiable markers: 1) events are often a labor of love with little monetary reward, 2) they often serve as training ground for individuals to ply their craft and build a reputation, and 3) they tend to draw people who are passionate about the product. By examining LeRae's act in the context of independent wrestling, I can demonstrate how the crimson mask can, no matter the gender, render a competitor visible, generate buzz, and assist in building a reputation. Next, I look at LeRae's

crimson mask within the ecology of hardcore wrestling, a style in which bloodshed is a promise waiting to be fulfilled. Within the context of a hardcore match, LeRae's act is simultaneously unsurprising—*someone* was likely to bleed during the match—yet unexpected as well, which ties directly into the third ecology I examine: women's wrestling. Because women have been largely excluded from American competition as legitimate competitors, the reach and impact of LeRae's crimson mask resonates beyond her individual character. In examining the ecology of women's wrestling—both at the time of LeRae's act *and* how it's evolved in the nearly five years since—I can demonstrate how her act is *kairotic*, emblematic of and contributing to the shifting cultural landscape of attitudes toward the vitality of women both in professional wrestling and American society-at-large. Finally, I take up the controversial ecology of intergender wrestling, where men and women compete against and alongside one another. This ecology both troubles and clarifies LeRae's crimson mask since a particular subset of viewers either 1) believe that intergender wrestling celebrates or condones violence against women or 2) find it incredulous that a woman can win a fight against a man, both of which are inherently sexist positions that fail to adequately consider kayfabe. Within the context of an intergender match, then, her mask becomes an act of rebellion meant to challenge these two fallacious understandings of this wrestling ecology. Ultimately, by emplacing LeRae's crimson mask individually within these four complexly interacting ecologies—*independent, hardcore, women's, and intergender wrestling*—the significance of her act within the world of professional wrestling emerges.

Independent Wrestling

To start, Candice LeRae dons the crimson mask during an independent wrestling event. Social psychologist R. Tyson Smith identifies the independent wrestling scene as a “loose-knit association of low-budget, community-based entertainment [that] lacks affiliation with the WWE and consists of pro wrestling schools, websites, and regional promotions held in modest venues” (159). While Smith fixes his understanding of independent wrestling to promotions *not* affiliated with WWE, I’d argue that the rise in prominence of televised wrestling promotions like Ring of Honor (ROH) and Lucha Underground; streaming services like New Japan World, run by the international tour-de-force New Japan Pro Wrestling (NJPW); and the newly-minted, wrestler-run and billionaire-backed All Elite Wrestling (AEW) have created a more mainstream wrestling circuit that currently benefits from more status, social currency, choice, and viewership than *truly* independent wrestling promotions are afforded.

Regardless, the general ecology of independent wrestling can be categorized by a few signature traits. First and foremost, independent wrestling shows are small, localized events that don’t expect to turn a significant profit. While individual wrestlers and promotions alike *can* (and do) accumulate significant followings, independent wrestling events are generally labors of love shared among performers and their audience. Wrestlers are often paid very little to wrestle on independent shows, and Smith notes that independent wrestlers often still work day jobs and wrestle at a financial loss once meals, travel, and potential injury are accounted for (160). Given that reality, it is common for wrestlers to sell their own merchandise. Often, wrestlers will sell shirts, stickers, autographed photos, replica masks, and other material goods to fans, providing

not only additional monetary support, but also the opportunity to refine their wrestling personas by interacting directly with fans. Which leads to the second trait: independent wrestling shows are often where wrestlers start out, learning and plying their craft as they gain experience working as professional wrestlers. Working for crowds as small as five or six people at times, independent wrestlers not only learn the *physical* craft of wrestling, they learn the *psychological* craft as well. The physical and psychological elements of wrestling combine when wrestlers tell a story in the ring; the narrative progression relies on a sound understanding of both. Thus, independent wrestling shows provide wrestlers with a stage to learn and develop away from the pressures of a large in-person crowd.

Finally, independent wrestling shows tend to draw people who are passionate about the product, both local fans who may not follow a lot of wrestling but enjoy the particular brand of live entertainment produced by a particular promotion, as well as individuals who would label themselves as “wrestling fans”: people who consume a wide range and variety of professional wrestling products. In particular, wrestling fans tend to appreciate diverse styles of wrestling, and want to follow as many promotions or wrestlers as they can, a task that social media and streaming platforms makes easier than ever nowadays. Knowing this, while many independent wrestling events may have small in-person crowds, some promotions produce DVDs and/or online streams of their events to make them available to a larger, more globalized audience. Plus, the existence of social media accounts like TDE Wrestling, which posts gifs of highlights from various wrestling events around the world (both independent and mainstream), and Independent Wrestling, which (as the name suggests) curates and circulates a collection of independent matches and events, helps amplify the reach and circulation of these small-scale events and the

wrestlers who perform on them. Thus, while wrestlers can use the small crowds to hone their craft, they can also take advantage of a globalized network of distribution to build names and reputations for themselves in hopes of, perhaps, one day being offered a mainstream wrestling contract.

Candice LeRae dons her crimson mask wrestling for a promotion named Pro Wrestling Guerrilla (PWG). Performing out of a small American Legion hall in Reseda, California and run by a group of independent wrestlers, PWG is continually lauded as one of the top independent wrestling promotions in the world. The live events typically sell-out, and since PWG releases DVD copies of their live events and many matches are available on YouTube, wrestling fans around the globe have relatively easy access to any of their content. Since LeRae bled in the confines of an independent match, she is doing so for a small but passionate group of fans without the guarantee of adequate compensation (financial or otherwise) for her labor. However, to perform this act at a PWG event, in particular, is to demand attention from not only the global wrestling fans who explicitly seek out this entertainment but also, potentially, from a mainstream wrestling promotion. Around this time, the WWE began to legitimize the independent circuit by treating it like a minor league system; they would send scouts out to PWG (and other) independent events to recruit talent. Given that LeRae donned the crimson mask during the emergence of this practice, she not only demanded to be seen by a global network of wrestling fans, she was also demanding attention from mainstream wrestling promotions (even though there were few opportunities for women in those spaces at the time of her act). When understood within the ecology of independent wrestling, then, LeRae's crimson mask is a declarative statement of visibility: I am here. See me. I *will* be respected as a competitor.

Hardcore Wrestling

While PWG regularly features a diverse array of wrestling styles, it is vital to recognize that Candice LeRae was competing in a *hardcore* match (specifically dubbed a Guerrilla Warfare match by the promotion) when she donned the crimson mask. Hardcore wrestling is characterized by particularly violent maneuvers and the use of objects, such as chairs, tables, fire, thumbtacks, and barbed wire, to escalate the infliction/illusion of pain. Blood, then, functions in a rhetorically peculiar way within hardcore wrestling as a promise of *authentic* suffering, heightening the tension between the actual and the illusory during a wrestling event. Chow and Laine, for example, claim that “the hardcore style aestheticizes (however brutally) spectacular displays of pain, suffering and humiliation. Rather than being a symptom of competition or the narrative, real pain and blood become fetishized commodities” (49). In hardcore, pain and suffering is a *promise* fulfilled by the drawing of blood; thus, blood *exceeds* its narrative function in this style, also serving an aesthetic function. As Chow and Laine posit, though, “there is something pornographic about this surplus: the understanding (and desire) that the ‘real act’ is being performed” (49). It’s telling, then, that this style of wrestling and a popular genre pornography share the same qualifier: *hardcore*. In Linda Williams’ work on pornography, she claims that the genre of hardcore is about overcoming the problem of the invisible female orgasm: “Hard core desires assurance that it is witnessing not the voluntary performance of feminine pleasure but its involuntary confession” (50). In hardcore wrestling, however, it’s the involuntary confession of suffering, not pleasure, that the audience is witnessing. Further, Williams observes that the blurred boundaries between truth and fiction, “the woman’s ability to fake the orgasm that the man can never fake...seems to be at the root of all the genre’s attempt to

solicit what it can never be sure of: the out-of-control confession of pleasure, a hard-core ‘frenzy of the visible’” (50). I argue that we see this structure of the “‘frenzy of the visible’” at work in hardcore wrestling; fans wish to witness the involuntary shedding of blood in order to visually affirm the “out-of-control confession” of suffering — suffering whose authenticity, in the context of professional wrestling, one can “never be sure of.” Just as hardcore pornography aims to get at the hidden truth of female sexuality through the female orgasm, hardcore wrestling aims to get at the hidden truth of human suffering through bloodshed: through a controlled environment where simulation and actualization entangle.

Since real blood is expected, even demanded, in the hardcore style, wrestlers rely on props to creatively ground the drawing of blood within the narrative context. As noted hardcore wrestler Raven, acknowledges, “It’s still a match, it still needs to have a climax and still needs to have a beginning, middle and end just like a three act play” (Levy). Most matches involve three or five people (a pair of competitors [single or tag teams] and a referee) who work together to create that match’s particular narrative. However, Raven calls attention to the fact that in hardcore wrestling, meaning-making is not limited to the three or five (or however many) participants in the match; the *weaponry* become additional participants, adding to the narrative creativity and storytelling possibilities (Levy). Thus, there is an additional excess in hardcore wrestling — the narrative relies on excessive material agents (props) to produce meaning; the wrestler’s body is not enough, but certainly necessary, to produce the spectacle.

At first glance, it would appear within the framework of hardcore wrestling that LeRae’s crimson mask is to some degree expected, or at least unsurprising. Given that she is competing in a hardcore match, it is safe to assume at least one of the competitors will bleed in some capacity.

However, it is essential to note that women are by-and-large absent from the American tradition of hardcore wrestling. To see LeRae compete in a hardcore match, especially an intergender one, in 2014 is noteworthy enough; for her to be the one to don the crimson mask, to excessively shed blood for the story and the spectacle, is unexpected, shocking, and oddly gratifying (given the troubled history of American women's wrestling I will overview next section). When understood within the ecology of hardcore wrestling, then, LeRae's crimson mask is simultaneously an unsurprising yet unexpected performance of pain and suffering.

Women's Wrestling

Perhaps more than any other style, genre, or ecology of professional wrestling, women's wrestling, and particularly American women's wrestling, has a troubled and complicated history. Any overview I provide here will be necessarily brief and incomplete, for it is too complex (and in many ways too poorly documented) for the confines of this particular argument. Important, though, is the longstanding tradition of mistreatment, trivialization, and overt sexualization of female talent in the American canon of professional wrestling. It's vital we keep our eyes on how being, knowing, and acting complexly entangle, here, as LeRae's crimson mask emerges from and is situated within this complicated and outright sexist history of women's wrestling yet also foreshadows the ways in which her and other female wrestlers would soon be able to more frequently and prominently enact their (individual and collective) agency as professional athletes in their own right. Tracing such transformations in attitudes toward and portrayals of female wrestlers provides insights into the ways in which rhetoric can emerge, shift, circulate, amplify,

and transform within complex and ambiguous entanglements, particularly ones with harmful or complicated histories.

Generally speaking, up until *too* recently, women have most often been used as eye candy for male spectators, filler content to provide fans with opportunities for bathroom breaks, or merely as props within a larger (male-centered) narrative. After all, as Mazer articulates, “professional wrestling is an athletic performance practice that is constructed around the display of the male body” (“Real” 4) and “what is presented, affirmed, and critiqued is nothing so much as the idea of masculinity itself” (“Real” 5). She continues that, in the case of women’s wrestling, “what women reveal in their bodily displays and performances is that no matter how closely their actions converge on those of men, they are not and can never be men” (“Real” 5). This specter of the body-that-is-not-masculine has habitually haunted women’s contests. Traditionally speaking, “the taunts, rude gestures, and sexual insults of the (largely male) spectators are obscene attacks on the women’s female nature...the women wrestlers themselves frequently exploit and even parody their femaleness” (Mazer, “Doggie” 118). Thus, historically speaking, women’s wrestling has been primarily understood as a side-show within the larger spectacle, a vehicle for emphasizing the (hetero)sexual construction of the masculine ego.

This doesn’t mean that women haven’t occupied prominent positions in wrestling narratives. There have been a number of women who’ve acquired fame and notoriety within the canon of professional wrestling, but many through being valets or managers. Only a handful of women have historically been recognized for their *in-ring* talent, creativity, psychology⁷, and

⁷ In professional wrestling, “ring psychology” refers to the art of in-ring storytelling. This includes not only a technical knowledge of the moves/maneuvers but also how to string them together to tell an intelligible story and prompt deliberate reactions from the crowd.

contributions to the field. And of those relative few who have made a name for themselves as competitors, many still struggled against being cast in roles as over-sexualized objects. For example, starting in the 1940s, Mae Young made a name for herself as the premier women's wrestler in the world and continued to make appearances on wrestling events up until her death in 2014. In the 1990s and early aughts, wrestlers like Lita and Chyna insisted upon being seen as equal competitors to men — Lita being one of the first two women to ever main event Monday Night Raw without men participating in the match and Chyna, billed as the 9th wonder of the world, winning the prestigious Intercontinental Championship, the *only* woman to have done so in the title's nearly 40-year history. Yet, despite being lauded by peers (male and female alike) across generations for their toughness, grit, and ability, all three of these women also worked for the WWE within the company's hyper-sexualized Attitude Era, competing in overtly sexualizing and often humiliating matches like bikini matches, strip matches, and mud wrestling matches, as well as nonsensical and puzzling storylines, like when a 77-year-old Mae Young gave birth to a large, disembodied hand. So even when raising the bar for women's wrestling athletically, female competitors have traditionally been beholden to sexism, ridicule, abuse, and scorn in American professional wrestling.

In 2014, the year of LeRae's crimson mask, if women wanted to become viable competitors, they trained and worked mostly on independent wrestling circuits in places like Australia, the UK, Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. (Japan being a notable exception, for reasons I outline in a later section). Of the two mainstream, American, internationally televised wrestling promotions at the time, WWE and TNA (Total Nonstop Action), the female competitors of TNA (referred to as *Knockouts*) were given more time and opportunities to compete compared to

women in WWE (referred to as *Divas* since 1999), who not only were given limited opportunities (in both number and length of matches), but were also limited in the wrestling moves they were allowed to perform. That is, the WWE banned women from performing many of the moves their male counterparts performed. Additionally, throughout the 2000s and early '10s, many (not all) of these “divas” weren't wrestlers by trade; rather, many were fitness models, hired for their appearance, who were taught some basic wrestling maneuvers. In terms of mainstream wrestling promotions and platforms in 2014, then, there was very little space for women who wanted time and opportunity to build a reputation as a professional wrestler.

However, mainstream women's wrestling began to undergo a *radical* transformation not too long after LeRae donned the crimson mask. Thus, in order to talk about the significance of her act in the context of women's wrestling, I must take a moment to briefly reflect on what has developed in the years since. In 2015, the hashtag #GiveDivasAChance began trending on Twitter minutes after the only women's match on a three hour long episode of Monday Night Raw lasted about 30 seconds. In an outpouring of support, fans took to social media to advocate for these female athletes who, despite their years of training and dedication to their craft, were simply not being given a platform to demonstrate their capabilities. Twitter user @fadedsideeffect communicated general feelings of frustration, “#GiveDivasAChance because I'm sick of female talent being overshadowed in a male dominated industry,” while @the_mosayat more specifically called for “#GiveDivasAChance not just by giving them more time, but also by writing good stories for them that portray them as competitive badasses.” Other users called attention to the athletes portraying the on-screen characters, making comments such as: “They put their lives and bodies on the line for the fans...but the best they can get is 30

seconds? #GiveDivasAChance” (@FearlessBellas) and “Imaging training so hard for ten years, leaving your family & friends, moving overseas and being booked in a 30 sec match.

#GiveDivasAChance” (@WWE Rampaiger). Twitter users were even quick to point out both the popularity of such opinions and the willingness of fans to be so vocal, as noted by @WPack911, “#GiveDivasAChance has made me the most proud of both the WWE Universe and Twitter I have ever been. Make a difference one tweet at a time!” and @xadoringpaige, “#GiveDivasAChance will go down in history. What was that about the divas not having any fans and people don't care? Exactly shut up!” #GiveDivasAChance makes it clear—a large enough segment of wrestling fans in 2015 vocally wished to see female wrestlers given equal opportunity to perform and succeed as male wrestlers.

Additionally, wrestlers of all genders contributed to the conversation. For example, LeRae’s partner in The World’s Cutest Tag Team, Joey Ryan, tweeted, “If you #GiveDivasAChance, maybe they won't just be Divas & out wrestle everybody else on a show. I've seen it happen,” then posted a tribute video to LaRae (@JoeyRyanOnline). Lita, who was inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame in 2014, wrote, “These women want more than rushed 3 minute matches. #GiveDivasAChance” (@LitaHOF2014), and when responding to a fan inquiry about the hashtag, Mickie James commented, “Love it!!! But then I always aim 2 be #BetterThanTheBoys” (@MickieJames). Perhaps Velvet Sky sums it up best, though, when she wrote, “#GiveDivasAChance is trending. I think the wrestling world has spoken, & it's nice to see so many people getting behind the ladies” (@VelVelHoller). So given all of this outpouring of support and advocacy for female performers, what was WWE’s response to the twitter trend? In addition to, slowly, giving the divas expanded time and opportunities (still relatively few

compared to the men), later on in the year, three highly regarded female wrestlers from WWE's developmental (training) system, NXT, joined the main roster in what was (kayfabe/storyline) dubbed the beginning of the "divas's revolution." By the end of 2015, change, it appears, had been set in motion in the mainstream.

While the WWE and other mainstream wrestling promotions began to offer these expanded opportunities and platforms to female wrestlers, on the independent scene, Princess Kimber Lee won the grand championship for the Philadelphia-based promotion Chikara,⁸ becoming the first woman ever to hold the top title of a non-female centered American wrestling promotion.⁹ In an interview with *Rolling Stone*, Kimber Lee comments on both the surprise and the importance of this feat: "I was like, 'Whoa, really, *me?* You trust me with that?' Knowing the weight behind that decision, I was shocked and I don't think it really hit me that I was winning the title until I was actually in the ring winning it" (Oster). She continues, noting the responsibilities of being a champion: "There's a lot of weight that comes with it. I have to prove that I deserve to be that first woman and that I deserve to be a woman that represents a whole company" (Oster). This is a massive moment in the history of not only women's wrestling, but professional wrestling as a whole, and the fact that it happened on the independent scene is no small detail, a fact that doesn't go over Kimber Lee's head: "There's all this talk about the 'Divas Revolution' – but something like this is the *real* Divas Revolution. Sure, some things are

⁸ Chikara, founded in 2002, is one of the bigger independent wrestling promotions and training schools currently operating in the U.S.

⁹ There are two instances from Canada prior to this: LuFisto won North Shore Pro Wrestling's championship in 2012, and Nicole Matthews won Elite Canadian Championship Wrestling's top prize for the first time in 2014, holding it again a few times since.

changing at WWE...but it's still not what I would like it to be. Places like Chikara are really making a revolution for you" (Oster). And so, one year after LeRae dons the crimson mask, female wrestlers are not only beginning to experience greater opportunities, they are also beginning to receive greater accolades as well.

The momentum continues on the main stage, where the progression of discourse surrounding women in wrestling resembles a larger public shift in the reception and support of women's sports and female athletes. In 2016, the WWE kairotically replaces the Diva's championship with the Women's championship, announcing that their women will no longer be referred to as divas. Instead, they would be called the same as their male wrestlers: *superstars*.¹⁰ And in Lucha Underground, which enjoys national syndication on a bilingual cable network as well as Netflix distribution, Luchadora Sexy Star won the top championship prize, the Lucha Underground Championship (though, only for one day). In 2017, audiences got to watch the first ever all-women's wrestling tournament in the WWE, The Mae Young Classic, in which LeRae was a competitor (she made it to the quarter-finals in a field of 32 competitors). The company also began the Mixed Match Challenge, a mini-tournament for mixed tag teams: teams consisting of one male and one female superstar each. In a mixed tag match, wrestlers can only wrestle an opponent of the same gender, so if the male competitor tags in his female partner, then the female of the other team must also enter the match. Thus, while *not* intergender wrestling, it does make male and female competitors equal partners in the context of the match.

2018 brought fans the first women's Royal Rumble match in the WWE's history. The Royal Rumble has been an annual January tradition since 1988, and though the match typically

¹⁰ WWE, oddly enough, prefers to stay away from the term *wrestling*, calling what they do *sports entertainment* instead, hence why they refer to their wrestlers as superstars in the first place.

features 30 competitors each year, only *three* women had *ever* competed in this match up to that point. Three decades later, WWE presented two rumble matches for the first time ever at this event—a men's rumble and a women's rumble, the latter of which main-evented the show.

Ronda Rousey, UFC star and Olympic medalist in Judo, also joined the WWE in 2018, which added a bona-fide global female athletic superstar to the mix in the women's division.

Additionally, 2018 year saw the WWE's first-ever all-women's PPV event, Evolution, and continuing the progress from the previous year, the second annual Mae Young Classic and second annual Mixed Match Challenge. So far in 2019, not only has LeRae made her WWE main roster debut in January during the Royal Rumble PPV event in the women's rumble match, another female competitor, Nia Jax, entered the men's rumble match by beating up the final entrant and taking his spot (becoming now the *fourth* women ever to compete in a men's royal rumble match). In February, the WWE crowned their inaugural women's tag team champions, and in April, for the first time in history, a women's match main evented WrestleMania, another monumental occurrence in professional wrestling history, especially for women—one that was quite literally unimaginable when LeRae donned the crimson mask less than five years prior.

Within half a decade, women in professional wrestling went from being predominantly featured as divas who were there to satisfy the male gaze to principal agents of their own stories featured prominently on the card. It cannot be overlooked that LeRae is the focal point of the match in question, here; the entire narrative is built upon her ability to endure whatever the dastardly Young Bucks throw at her in order to become a champion. The purpose of the match, then, is to throw a spotlight on Candice and reward her for her hard work and dedication as a professional wrestler. The crimson mask acts to deliberately amplify this spotlight, to not only

get but *keep* people talking about this match, as it is a rarity among female wrestlers. Afraid that she was going to get a “father lecture” about the moment, LeRae recalled a conversation with respected wrestling veteran AJ Styles that occurred about a month after the match in 2014: “‘I just wanna ask you something...when is the last time you heard of a girl bleeding?’ And I was like...‘I don’t know.’ He was like, ‘Exactly. Because it doesn’t happen... You did something, and you did it for a reason...and I just want you to know that I think it’s great’” (u/nine25). As Styles points out here, to be effective (and not just gratuitous), the crimson mask must serve a purpose. Not only does LeRae’s mask escalate the *narrative* drama of the match, her *willingness* to bleed at all communicates to the audience the authentic toughness and grit of the *real* woman behind the character of Candice LeRae, a point which she’s acutely aware of: “I don’t know too many men that would be willing to get kicked in the head with a shoe of thumbtacks. I legitimately got kicked in the head with a shoe of thumbtacks and you know what I did? I finished [the match]” (Highspots). LeRae’s bloody face not only symbolizes how tough LeRae is personally, though; it also demonstrates that women are both willing to do and capable of doing the labor required of a professional wrestler. Further, it mirrors the lengths through which women continue to fight, to struggle, to suffer, to be viewed and treated as equal to men in all avenues of personal and professional life. Thus, when understood within the soon-to-be-dramatically-changing ecology of women’s wrestling, LeRae’s crimson mask is a demand for respect and visibility *not just* as an individual competitor but for her entire gender, a declarative statement regarding the competence, passion, willingness, and vitality of female professional wrestlers.

Intergender Wrestling

The fact that Candice LeRae, a *female* wrestler, dons the crimson mask in 2014 is a noteworthy occurrence in and of itself. But that it happens in the context of an *intergender* match, a match where women and men compete against and alongside each other, makes it controversial not only to general publics but also among wrestling audiences—a point LeRae acknowledges: “I think we all knew going into [the match] that it was not (pause) it wasn’t going to be something that was welcome with open arms” (Highspots). As someone who built her reputation on intergender wrestling, LeRae is not shy about discussing its controversial status: “It’s still kind of frowned upon, but that’s because so many people take it out of context, and so many people don’t understand how to go about doing it properly” (Johnson). There are two key elements here she identifies: context and psychology. By context, LeRae is referring to the specter of *actual* domestic violence; by psychology, she means some people find it “unbelievable” that a woman could beat (up) a man who is, typically, larger in stature than she. However, wrestlers, men and women alike, train together, as Heather Bandenburg, wrestler and author of the forthcoming book *Unladylike: A Grrl’s Guide to Wrestling*, illuminates: “I think that most wrestlers would agree with me that even when you’re training, you’re training intergender; that’s just how you train. It’s only really when you get to the big leagues that you kind of get split off...” (“Episode 17”). Bandenburg’s observation is crucial; when it comes to *training*, at least on the independent scene (again, where most wrestlers learn the craft), wrestling is intergender. It’s only in the *presentation* of wrestling—in matches put on for public entertainment—that the gender of the wrestler becomes potentially controversial in either context or psychology. I aim to show how, for different reasons, both of these positions are deeply rooted

in professional wrestling's history of sexism and also neglect to keep in mind the central ethos of kayfabe.

First, some individuals believe intergender wrestling carries with it a stigma of violence against women. People can and should rightfully be uncomfortable at the thought/image of a man "beating up" a woman; however, as LeRae notes, this perspective, while coming from a good place, takes the action out of context. Wrestler Mia Yim, a survivor of domestic abuse herself, cautions about fallaciously equating intergender wrestling and domestic violence: "One is consensual. The other is not. Point blank period" (@MiaYim). Contextually, within the world of professional wrestling, competitors voluntarily and *consensually* engage in bodily labor to perform a fictional narrative of suffering. The real people performing the labor of professional wrestling, regardless of gender, are *choosing* to be there; they *want* to participate in this mode of storytelling, and they're *working together* to keep each other safe the whole time. Which means that this critique, though well intentioned, is built upon a fundamental misunderstanding of both the medium/genre/art-form that is professional wrestling *and* domestic violence—*the violence in wrestling is pretend and happens with the consent of all involved, while domestic violence is real and happens to someone without their consent*. A wrestling match is not an actual fight but a story *about* a fight performed by trained athletes, and to not allow female athletes the *actual* opportunities to compete for *fictional* championships (an important way wrestlers are rewarded for their hard work and success) only continues to enact the systematic injustices of patriarchy. As wrestler Sara Del Ray succinctly puts it, "I'm not trying to be anything except for an athlete...I wanna be tough, and I wanna fight" (Ring of Honor), and in the world of professional

wrestling, to be a top athlete one must compete against and alongside the men who have historically occupied those positions.

Allow me to linger here for a minute on this complex, difficult, and substantial entanglement of *pretend violence between consenting men and women* and *authentic violence perpetrated against women by men*. As I touched upon previously, the treatment and portrayal of women as sexualized objects within the industry complicates perceptions and uptakes of intergender wrestling. Women in wrestling have *without a doubt* suffered authentic abuse at the hands of men in positions of power. For example, Vince McMahon, the owner of the WWE, once forced Lita to be part of a *live sex celebration* (the segment's advertised name) on an episode of RAW with her then-boyfriend (and fellow wrestler) Edge. Lita recalls feeling "absolutely mortified" by the segment: "I called all of my friends and my mom and I was like, 'please do not watch tomorrow. Whatever you do, do not watch'" (Jericho). If performing a strip tease and a simulation of sex acts against her will in front of not only a live audience of thousands but also a televised audience of millions such wasn't demeaning enough, Lita notes, "[Vince] wanted me naked," resulting in her, at one point, sitting on a bed with only a blanket for cover (Jericho). And these abuses don't just happen in mainstream wrestling circuits; they can happen at any level of the business. Emily Read, co-owner of the "feminist-punk-rock wrestling promotion" Pro Wrestling EVE, describes a training experience early on in her career where other male trainees were able to perpetrate abuses against her and other women at the school:

With certain moves, you have to put your hand all the way through between someone's legs and up on to like their stomach area. You're reaching under, and hands *can* slip. And everybody knows what that feels like if you've grabbed someone by accident in the

wrong area—that’s a *definite feel*. A guy doing that to me and shoving his fingers up into me...so my bottoms went up inside me. I had like grazes from it, internal grazing which is horrible. That’s not a slip...That’s sexual assault. Someone, like, grabbing your chest, you can feel the difference between someone just groping you and someone’s hand slipping. And it was just constantly getting groped. (Bird)

Wrestling is a physically intimate sport. It *requires* trust: trust that performers will take care of each other’s bodies and keep each other safe from actual harm as best as possible. The actions described by Read above not only constitute sexual assault, they are also a clear violation of the basic trust and respect required to perform the labor of professional wrestling. Further, like many in the #metoo movement have expressed, women fear retaliation for reporting these abuses when they happen, which is all the more alienating an industry where women have historically been marginalized. Read notes, “women are also still being told they will lose bookings if they tell anyone,” and though she now knows that “if I would have said something to the trainers, they would have been horrified and they would have stepped in immediately,” at the time, she felt reporting the abuse would interfere with her training and her future ability to wrestle (Bird). And Lita had the following exchange with Chris Jericho when talking about the live sex celebration on his podcast:

Chris Jericho: When Vince gets that idea in his mind...

Lita: You’re done. Unless you walk out of the building, you’re done.

Chris Jericho: That’s right. And that goes whether it’s “I want you to lose to so-and-so,” “I want you to be naked on the stage,” “I want you to have a live sex cele-”; whatever it is, you’ve got to make the best of it. (Jericho)

While this exchange is more indicative of McMahon's general abuses of power and inability to compromise on his vision of the product, it makes clear the repercussions if Lita would have refused to do the segment as he wanted it done: she would have lost her job.

When the *illusion* of violence collides with *actual* violence in such a palpable way, it becomes all the more difficult to fathom finding joy, excitement, and dramatic potential in intergender wrestling. For some audience members, when faced with the difficulty of the lingering entanglement of simulated and actual violence, it's easier to simply push back against intergender wrestling's existence—to shun it, call it exploitive or demeaning, or dismiss it as cruelty. Wouldn't such contests *sanction* this violence, *condone* these assaults on women? Well, it all comes back to kayfabe and, more importantly, Barthes observation about wrestling being a spectacle of suffering and justice, an illusory fight between good and evil. In a sport predicated on dramatizing suffering, on telling stories centered around communal assumptions of justice, the specter of real, authentic violence against women provides fertile ground for women to reclaim power over their own images and narratives and emerge victorious. Further, the actual plight of women in the industry mirrors the way women in general have, for so many generations and in myriad ways, struggled/suffered at the hands of men, which makes wrestling an ideal forum for safely relaying *narratives about* that struggle/suffering to wider audiences, particularly female audiences, giving them an opportunity to not only support powerful, strong women but to also witness their own stories and struggles represented in the ring. That is, wrestling provides a "safe space" for women to emerge victorious in *simulated* struggles against men, providing an opportunity for mass cathartic release regarding *actualized* injustices of sexism and violence against women. Or in the words of Joey Ryan, "Like all wrestling when done well, Intergender

wrestling is about creating heroes, not victims” (@JoeyRyanOnline). This notion of eschewing victimhood runs deep. As shown in figure 3, wrestler Shotzi Blackheart recently released two new t-shirts in support of intergender wrestling: the top, an emphatic statement against victimhood and the bottom, a sign of general support for intergender wrestling. And storied Canadian wrestler LuFisto observes, “A combat environment has nothing to do with domestic violence. Women who step in the ring are not victims; they are fighters who have the right to be seen as an equal to any opponent that stands in front of them. As powerful women, it is their choice to do so” (Ashly). Intergender wrestling, then, affords women the space and occasion to be viewed as heroes, or, as suggested in Kimber Lee’s self-branding, a princess who saves herself. In a post women’s march, post #metoo era, professional wrestling, built on stories of struggle and suffering, provides a unique space to *celebrate* women—to portray them as strong, tough, admirable, and heroic—as well as for audiences to publicly vocalize their support of such portrayals.

Second, and what LeRae finds personally “insulting,” is that some individuals don’t find it *believable* that a woman could compete against a man and survive, let alone win, in the first place (Highspots). That is, these individuals don’t see intergender contests as problematic on the grounds of violence against women, they simply don’t think a woman could actually win such a fight. However, as Joey Ryan observes, “to write [intergender wrestling] off as unrealistic or say it shouldn’t be included promotes inequality by *insinuating women can’t even pretend to be equals in a make believe world*” (@JoeyRyanOnline) [emphasis mine]. That is, people who make this claim are conveniently forgetting kayfabe: that wrestling action is fictional in the first place and that “believability” only matters in how wrestlers frame and perform the narrative.



Fig. 3. Two shirts by @shotziblackheart. “Just got these shirts in! If you preordered they will ship out tomorrow!” *Instagram*, 18 Feb 2019, [instagram.com/p/Bt_FiqDhQjm/](https://www.instagram.com/p/Bt_FiqDhQjm/)

Unsurprisingly, Ryan has been an outspoken advocate for intergender wrestling, continually pointing out on social media the inherent sexism in the “unbelievable” or “unrealistic” line of argumentation. For example, he writes, “When people talk ‘unrealistic’ in wrestling, I never see age brought up. Some are quick to compare it to combat sports and it’s rare in those to see 40 somethings beat 20 somethings but it’s a regular occurrence in pro wrestling. Age, size & gender stories can all be told” (@JoeyRyanOnline). As Ryan alludes to in his tweet, wrestling already has established narratives, frames, and styles where smaller bodies compete and obtain victories

against larger bodies, so to claim intergender wrestling is “unbelievable” is a sexist viewpoint *solely* based in the gender of the body.

As female wrestlers discuss, what matters in an intergender match, like all other wrestling matches, is the psychology of the match itself: the story and the way it’s being told to the audience. The 5’2” LaRae elaborates: “I wouldn’t dare think I can go in the ring with some 6-foot tall, super muscular dude...[and] be able to hit that guy as hard as he can hit me”; instead, “I use my momentum, and I use things that I know make sense” (Johnson). As LeRae highlights here, stories told between smaller and larger bodies cohere around a stylistic matchup: in this hypothetical instance, speed/momentum (smaller body) vs strength/muscle (larger body). Princess Kimber Lee echoes these sentiments: “our approach just has to be a little bit different. Am I going to be able to stand up to a man and realistically go punch-for-punch with him? Absolutely not. But, if you approach it the right way, a woman absolutely could beat somebody bigger than her” (Oster). And, as I mentioned previously, since winning and losing are not markers of success in professional wrestling, women don’t always need to *win* to tell a compelling and dynamic story. Hallie Grossman, staff writer for ESPN, documents wrestlers Deonna Purrazzo and Matt Riddle preparing the story of their match, the first intergender contest for each of the wrestlers: “Purrazzo will be the early aggressor, needling Riddle to fight. Riddle, the former UFC fighter, will be hesitant at first, knowing the power imbalance, until she frustrates him so much he swings back and outmuscles her.” So, those who claim intergender wrestling is unbelievable or unrealistic are, ultimately, projecting sexist beliefs onto a fictional product.

As I said before, LaRae is not shy about voicing her opinion on the above misaligned critiques: “It’s stupid. [chuckles] I’m like so bitter about this. Not bitter, just...I think that people need to have an open mind when they watch any wrestling” (Johnson). Rather than an open mind, I think people need to be *mindful* of the fact that, *like all wrestling action*, LeRae’s *apparent* suffering is only illusory, serving a narrative function in telling a *story* about her suffering and, more importantly, her *reclamation of power* through a victory over social injustices—*she* secures the championship for her and her partner. Further, the blood itself heightens the impact of her victory in this moment by adding an additional layer of rhetorical complexity to the narrative—*she* bleeds, not her male counterparts, on the way to obtaining a victory, escalating the tension of this fictional moment *because of* the specter of actual violence (in all forms) against women. Thus, when understood within the ecology of intergender wrestling, LeRae’s crimson mask can be seen as rebellious and aggressive — a transgression aimed at making the viewer uncomfortable *precisely because* she is a bloodied, battered woman fighting (fictionally *and* authentically) to be seen and, more importantly, valued in competition against and alongside men.

Within each singular ecology of independent, hardcore, women’s, and intergender wrestling, Candice LeRae’s crimson mask appears, for the most part, relatively easy to grasp. However, this moment isn’t the first time in LeRae’s career she has donned the crimson mask. About one year prior, LeRae bled in another no disqualification match versus Hudson Envy in what was promoted as a feud-ending battle. Though there was narrative (end of a feud) and stylistic (hardcore) reasons to don the mask, I believe this moment received little attention collectively from wrestling fans because it was: 1) a women’s match; 2) a lesser-known

promotion that doesn't have the same notoriety and distribution as PWG; and 3) did not involve a championship opportunity. I argue that it's the confluence and intersection of the particular elements of the match in question here that makes LeRae's crimson mask *kairotic*, integral to not only LeRae's career but also to the forward momentum of women's wrestling as a whole. Joey Ryan even recalls a post-match conversation with The Young Bucks afterward where they said, "It feels like tonight we did something special" (u/nine25). Thus, when we put these four ecologies into conversation with one another, when their histories and traditions intra-act, the complexity, richness, and uniqueness of LeRae's act emerges, as I'll detail next.

Entangled Ecologies, Entangled Agencies

While women within mainstream American wrestling, and, in particular, the WWE, have faced immense challenges in attempting to overcome or counteract their traditional gendered reception/presentation, women's wrestling on other circuits have been given more respect, attention, and care and thus offer a counter-narrative for understanding LeRae's crimson mask. The emergence of a globalized wrestling audience (particularly since the rise of the internet and digital communities) has led to more opportunities for women to seriously compete and audiences to recognize and value such matches. Both non-American wrestling fans as well as American independent wrestling fans not only take female competitors more seriously, many *want* to see women respected as legitimate competitors, which offers the possibility for new and unexplored narrative possibilities within the canon of professional wrestling. Further, since these are fans who seek out wrestling content, they are less likely to take the action out of context or misappropriate the narrative. They understand the troubled history of women's wrestling and

intergender wrestling and want to participate in ways that legitimize female competitors. Thus, the independent wrestling scene becomes a primary place where female wrestlers resist being categorized as sexualized object used to further male narratives by training alongside male competitors and competing against them in intergender competition.

The entanglement of hardcore and independent wrestling also contributes to LaRae's ability to rupture the traditional iconography of the crimson mask. Since many independent shows are small, untelevised, and unregulated, the platform allows for more "creativity" in the exploration of different narrative possibilities. Given these conditions, it's no surprise hardcore wrestling found its earliest home in America on the independent scene. As Smith observes, "Since the 1990s, indy promotions have had a reputation for 'extreme' performances that are more violent and spectacle-like than the 'family friendly' entertainment of earlier eras" (160). However, as Chow and Laine note, hardcore wrestling originated in Japan in the 1980s (48), a country that has its own deep, complex tradition and canon within the world of professional wrestling. Of particular interest within this tradition is a type of wrestling known as *Joshi Puroresu*, the predominant style of women's wrestling in Japan. It's imperative to note that female wrestlers are respected as legitimate fighters in Japan; the sexual objectification and narrative marginalization that saturates American wrestling is largely absent. Thus, Joshi matches are characterized by their use of Japanese strong style — a style of wrestling where strikes, kicks, and submission holds are not "pulled" in the same way as they are elsewhere; this means that competitors, to *some* degree, legitimately strike or grapple with one another during the match. Additionally, Joshi wrestlers will employ the hardcore style from time to time when the narrative tension between two wrestlers needs to be escalated. During the 1990s, while hardcore

wrestling was first seeping into the American independent scene, Joshi wrestlers like Manami Toyota, Bull Nakano, Aja Kong, and Megumi Kudo were putting on iconic matches, some of which were hardcore matches, that received international critical acclaim. Thus, the tradition of hardcore within independent wrestling combined with the precedent for *female* hardcore matches established in Japan in the 1990s provide LaRae an entry point in which she can use the rhetorical force of the crimson mask to acquire subjectivity in a way few women have before in American wrestling.

LaRae dons the crimson mask during a hardcore, intergender match for the tag team championship title of PWG, an American independent promotion, one she feels “blessed” to have worked for because “enough of the guys there respect me enough that they want to help me grow” (u/nine25). Under such conditions, LeRae’s crimson mask becomes a warranted, desired act of rebellion, as well as a badge of pride, respect, and gratitude. The real blood LeRae sheds functions as a grotesque mirror, reflecting back to a large subset of fans their earnest desire to see a hard-working and dedicated female wrestler such as herself treated as a viable, valuable competitor. This is further reaffirmed through the narrative being told in the ring — it is LeRae who sacrifices herself, taking a kick in the face from a shoe covered in thumbtacks to protect her teammate; LeRae who, though bleeding from the head, delivers the final offensive maneuver of the match; and LeRae who ultimately gets the pinfall victory over her male competitors, winning the tag team championship for herself and her male partner. In terms of the narrative action, it is LeRae, a woman, who emerges as *the* vital agent in the outcome of the match. Further, in order to be positioned as such, a powerful agent within this match in the first place, LaRae must already possess the respect of her fellow competitors (or they wouldn’t allow her such a

prominent role in the match), the crowd (or they wouldn't have erupted in cheers as the final events unfolded), and the promotion (or they wouldn't have put her in this match and chosen her to win the championship). And since the crowd, the promotion, and her fellow competitors have been so supportive, LeRae's crimson mask also functions as an act of gratitude — *I am willing and able to bleed for you because you have supported me.*

As with the generalized function of the crimson mask, the narrative is reinforced, legitimized, through the shedding of blood. However, LeRae's mask simultaneously ruptures and exceeds this function, for her actual body of labor (pun intended) as a serious wrestler is reinforced and legitimized through this bloodshed. Thus, as opposed to being the mark of a victim, LeRae's bloody face marks her as a victor, within both the narrative confines of the match and also within the framework of American women's professional wrestling at large. It's also proven to be quite profitable for her, becoming an integral part of her branding. For instance, of the 33 t-shirts available on her Pro Wrestling Tees page, 12 invoke an iconography of blood in general, while 5 of those directly feature her bloody face (an example of which can be seen in figure 4). LeRae bleeds, she suffers, to sell her story not just as a personal struggle within the narrative confines of the match, but also to represent and advocate for any woman in America who is willing to fight, to bleed, to suffer in order to render herself visible, to make herself matter. LeRae, then, invokes the vitality and rhetorical force of her blood to transform the possibilities of feminine agency in a male-dominated industry, moving from an outdated notion of woman-as-narrative-prop to storyteller in her own right.

As thorough as I've tried to be here, this is only a small piece of the picture, and many nuances and details have been under-explored or even omitted for the sake of time, space, and

this argument's current
 emplacement within a
 larger text on ethico-onto-
 epistemological rhetoric.
 More work could be done
 on the rhetorics of
 professional wrestling as a
 whole and particularly on
 the radical feminist
 potential of both women's
 and intergender wrestling.
 However, within this act,
 I've argued that the



Fig. 4. An example of LeRae's merchandise. *Pro Wrestling Tees*. 21 April 2019, www.prowrestlingtees.com/wrestler-t-shirts/candice-lerae.html.

foundational ambiguity of wrestling's central ethos of *kayfabe* combined with the vital iconography of *the crimson mask* gives LeRae space and occasion to render herself visible, viable, and victorious in a match that sits at the intersection of four different, unique, and interacting wrestling ecologies. In tracing the specific way in which these six commonplaces entangle within LeRae's act, I'm able to capture shifting attitudes toward the vitality of women in professional wrestling and position that shift as a reflection of changing attitudes in general toward women in American society. In doing this analysis, I've demonstrated how *matterings* can capture the dynamic emergence and circulation of rhetoric in ambiguous and difficult entanglements. While applied to wrestling here, such an approach might benefit rhetoricians who

study other ambiguous entanglements or work with ethico-onto-epistemological rhetorics in order to help better parse out 1) *what* agents are central to shaping the entanglement in question (capturing ontological considerations), 2) *how* those agents entangle in particular, specific, and unique ways (ethical considerations), and 3) *why* that particular entanglement is significant or noteworthy (epistemological considerations). I offer *mattering*, then, as a method for viewing, tracing, and comprehending entanglements *as whole entangled states*: not an accumulation of agents and agencies, but rather a holistic transformation of *all* agents and agencies considered as a single, intra-active unit.

Entr'acte II: Choose Your Own Entanglement

In act I, I argue that scholars of rhetoric and composition must continue to cultivate additional means of delivering ethico-onto-epistemological scholarship and pedagogy that function differently from our traditional academic methods and genres if we seek to adequately prepare individuals for encountering and responding to the ambiguities and complexities of 21st century existence. Drawing upon work from a number of academic disciplines, I use a metaphor of *entanglement* to envision the fundamental intra-action of being, knowing, and doing, and I advocate for a quantum rhetorical framework of *dwelling* (which helps us focus on how beings/things exist in the world on their own terms, a more forbearing coming-to-knowledge) and *mattering* (which focuses on how beings/things make meaning intra-actively, a more active shaping-of-knowledge) that allows scholars of rhetoric and composition to flexibly view, comprehend, and enact the various ontological and epistemological elements always-already at play in all communicative acts. As I argue in act I, dwelling and mattering offer two different-yet-entangled ways of seeing, measuring, and comprehending entangled phenomena that are capable of capturing the dynamic, emergent, ambivalent, and difficult qualities of ethico-onto-epistemological rhetoric. In order to emphasize the ways in which being, knowing, and doing complexly entangle in *everyday* ethical orientations, act IV asks my readers to *dwell* within myriad possibilities for action by performing acts of *mattering* over and over again, experiencing for themselves the ambiguity of ethical orientations and sharpening their capacities for *ethical action*.

Act IV, then, takes up one rather large, ambiguous, and necessary question: *How does one approach ethics/act ethically in complex, more-than-human entanglements?* Since this requires

focusing on ethics, actions, and their accompanying logics, I thought it would be both interesting and useful to perform a rhetorician's variant of a *gedanken*, a thought experiment, to simultaneously dramatize both the decision-making processes that lead to various actions and also the impacts of said actions. Further, I wanted my reader to be able to *experience* these processes, to *make* decisions of varying ethical weight and impact, rather than only read about them. To enact these goals in act IV, I've created an artifact that relies upon the form, style, and mechanics of a choose-your-own-adventure (CYOA) novel in order to deliver a narrative experience told in second person perspective, offering multiple paths for action and outcomes originating from a shared initial premise. Every decision a reader makes branches off into a series of further decisions until the end of that path of the story, and each time through the narrative, the reader travels a different path to see what other decisions, actions, insights, and impacts emerge from the scenario (more on the specific details later). Similar to act II, the scope of the argument only emerges through repeated yet differentiated readings. Precisely because I can present multiple conflicting, contradictory, and ambiguous paths for action directly to the reader within the same space, the CYOA genre lends itself well to explorations of rhetorical entanglements by allowing scholars to highlight the complex ethics that guide everyday decision-making and acting. By placing a spotlight on the act of negotiating ethics in real time, of tracing the movements between thought <—> action <—> impact, I'm able to demonstrate how ethics are situated within the specificities of the entanglement in question and how individuals can only turn to other similar sets of entanglements as guides (never rulebooks or hard-and-fast dictums) for navigating and making sense of the particular entanglements in which they find themselves.

Thus, act IV explores the various ethical orientations one can take within the ambiguous and complex more-than-human entanglements that characterize contemporary existence.

So how, then, do we define, envision, and enact ethics in these more-than-human entanglements? How exactly should we consider, negotiate, and balance the wants, needs, and desires of the various agents within a given entanglement? When there are myriad actions one could perform and any action is likely to be both harmful and beneficial, how does one determine what it means to act ethically? In *Vibrant Matter*, Jane Bennett argues that distributive agency “reinvokes the need to detach ethics from moralism and to produce guides to action appropriate to a world of vital, crosscutting forces” (38). Bennett’s claim here influences my work in act IV in two key ways. First, she argues that distributive agency highlights our need to “detach ethics from moralism.” Moralistic configurations of ethics, which apply a priori standards to a given situation, operate with little regard to the *specificity* of the entanglement. Instead of viewing someone/something’s actions and behaviors as inherently entangled with who they are and what they know or understand to be true (an ethico-onto-epistemological orientation), moralistic orientations divorce ethics from context. Operating through a prescriptive lens, they seek to define a universally applicable guideline for appropriate (i.e. ethical) behavior or action and apply those predetermined standards to all agents, paying little, if any, attention to the particularities of the situation in question. Moralism, then, is inherently inadequate for more-than-human ethical configurations since it fails to account for the specific and nuanced ways in which agents uniquely entangle in any given case.

Rather, more-than-human ethical orientations require human beings to attune and attend to myriad other beings and things in a given entanglement and be capable of doing so

spontaneously, variably, and *specifically* in response to the wants and needs of both the agents within the entanglement as well as the entangled state as a whole. They require tending to not only *what* actions or behaviors are being performed (the main focus of moralism) but also to *who* is performing them and *why*, *how* they're being performed, *for what reasons*, and *to what impact*, among other situationally attendant considerations. More-than-human ethical orientations, then, transform into something more akin to *response-ability*: that is, the capacity for enplaced, nuanced attunement and responsiveness. In *Deleuze and Guattari's Immanent Ethics*, Tamsin Lorraine observes how a Deleuze–Guattarian conception of ethics, which she dubs *immanent ethics*, is useful for discussing and framing such capacities. Lorraine writes that “Deleuze and Guattari’s work suggests that it is through open-ended attunement with the multiple forces of our life that we can unfold, rather than attempt to dictate or control, the responses that will best serve the evolving capacities of the interdependent life-forms of the communities to which we belong” (1). That is, in a sentiment that echoes Rickert’s work in *Ambient Rhetoric*, responsiveness emerges, unfolds, through our shifting attunement to various forces within a given entanglement. Further, she explains how “immanent ethics calls on us to attend to the situations of our lives in all their textured specificity and to open ourselves up to responses that go beyond a repertoire of comfortably familiar, automatic reactions and instead access creative solutions to what are always unique problems.” (1) Through Lorraine’s work here, we can comprehend the complexity of Deleuze-Guattarian ethics. Not only are the necessary capacities of an ethics of response-ability always evolving and shifting, but such an ethics must also attend to the “textured specificity” of the entanglement and the agents therein. Ethics as immanent response-ability, then, requires individuals to embrace the ambiguous,

unfamiliar, and creative solutions that real-world, everyday ethical orientations require, a position I have taken to heart in act IV by utilizing the CYOA genre to explore how being, knowing, and acting entangle within more-than-human ethical orientations.

Second, Bennett notes how distributive agency calls upon a need for appropriate “guides to action.” I offer act IV as a prototype for one possible way of producing such a guide to action grounded in real-world, everyday ethical decision making based on *dwelling with(in)* different possibilities for action in order to discover how they *matter differently* based on small agential changes. In order to demonstrate how the CYOA genre can benefit scholars of rhetoric, composition, philosophy, and other disciplines interested in questions of ethics, I explore a real-world, everyday, publicly accessible case that both emphasizes the ambiguity and complexity of rhetorical entanglements and also has tangible stakes that resonate across communities, locations, times, and experiences: *unexpectedly stumbling upon a dog locked in a car on a hot day with the owner nowhere in sight*. While this particular scenario may have a fairly limited number of agents and relatively low stakes, it performs three essential functions which help me model ethical decision making dispositions that could be developed and applied to more complex cases:

- 1) I can establish parameters around the central question of this chapter, which asks us to consider how we cultivate ethical orientations to and within complex, more-than-human entanglements, by focusing on a recurring case with no easy or definitive answer, only decisions/actions that are more or less ethical than others depending on the specificities of the entanglement. That is, it’s a regularly occurring case that unfolds in a variety of locations with differing cultural and legal parameters that

influence how people decide to act in any given instance of this case; for as long as people continue to leave animals trapped in vehicles unattended, this will continue to be an ethical question that communities must tangibly grapple with.

- 2) I can use the *everyday* ethical decision making explored via this case to invite a general public audience into the conversation surrounding more-than-human ethical orientations. It's a mundane case, and that's exactly the point — publics may become more invested in questions of more-than-human ethical orientations when they understand the ways in which such ethics tangibly play out in everyday life.
- 3) While I see scholarly and pedagogical potential in this approach generally for tackling more complex entanglements than the one I present (a point I'll return to momentarily), it allows me to play with and advocate for this experimental approach to scholarly production in a *manageable* way given the scope of this dissertation project. This particular case allows me to organically, by the nature of the scenario itself, limit both the possible actions one might take and also the potential consequences for said actions within the narrative. In other words, the limited number of agents and relatively low stakes helps keep this particular *gedanken* manageable within the context of the larger dissertation project of which it is a part.

And so, act IV serves as a guide to action, centralizing questions and concerns of more-than-human ethical orientations by exploring how they manifest within the confines of a particular case where human, animal, and material agents (and their various needs, wants, and desires) entangle within everyday actions.

In general, I see tremendous scholarly potential in using the form and mechanics of the CYOA genre to enact arguments and function as guides to action within more-than-human entanglements. Specifically, the CYOA structure has the potential to employ what Ian Bogost defines as *procedural rhetoric*: the “practice of using processes persuasively” (3). While Bogost applies this concept to computational processes and the arguments created through those processes (via an exploration of video games), he notes how, generally, “procedural rhetorics facilitate dialectical interrogation of process-based claims about how real-world processes do, could, or should work” (57). Instead of *explaining* a process, its functions, and the impacts of such to a reader/user, “the user [is] put in charge of implementing it himself” (Bogost 32); it’s through this interactivity with and experience of the process itself that a reader/user’s perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs surrounding the process and the argument(s) made through it can be questioned and perhaps even changed. Though lower-tech than the processes Bogost is concerned with, I argue that the CYOA genre, which unfolds its narrative procedurally, could prove beneficial to scholars of rhetoric and composition looking to examine processes-centered objects of inquiry or make process-centered arguments.

While I offer a relatively simple case to explore an everyday more-than-human ethical orientation and demonstrate how CYOA can be a productive methodology, I can imagine scholars taking up more pressing, nuanced, and/or high-stakes cases using this approach, as it allows for the development of a complex and dynamic argument (such as the ethicality of various positions/actions within an ambiguous set of recurring entanglements) in a manner that can be *experienced* by readers via their choices as they proceed through the presented situation/narrative. Say, for instance, one was interested in exploring the intersection of race and policing.

That person could design a CYOA narrative around a particular piece of legislation (proposed or existent), tracing how it might or does impact various local communities differently depending on their race or according to various intersectional considerations of gender, class, etc. Such a narrative could be used to educate both citizens and city officials about the institutionalized injustice of certain laws. Or perhaps it's a narrative that unfolds from the police officer's perspective, tracing the way implicit biases inform the on-the-spot decision making—a supplement to other training an officer may or may not receive. Maybe the narrative follows a day in the life of a young black male, tracing the way his everyday decision making is informed by a near-constant threat of over-policing. This could be used to teach others empathy and give perspective on how race shapes the way individuals are (or aren't) allowed to look, act, or behave in public spaces. In each of these scenarios, a specific, pointed argument about race and policing can be made and enacted via the choices a reader has available to them and the impact of those choices within the narrative. However, because the reader *experiences* the argument as it unfolds rather than reads about it after it's been crafted (as with traditional scholarship), it slows down their thinking about the issue-at-hand, breaking down the progression of the argument into small segments, each segment a consequence of a previous action that will inform a future possibility. Thus, scholars can articulate arguments about complex, intra-active entanglements in a manner that productively engages the complexity and simulates a kind of dwelling and study of how things come to matter (and matter inequitably) within a case. It can provide a way to dwell and listen, too, before staking a claim, so to speak, in a complex issue. Through procedural rhetoric, then, the CYOA genre offers scholars of rhetoric, composition, and other disciplines a

rigorous way of producing and accessing scholarly texts and conversations that can enliven arguments differently than our traditional print genres and methods allow.

Additionally, there are a number of pedagogical possibilities in taking up the CYOA genre to perform creative and critical labor in the classroom. Specifically, this genre has the potential to actively develop in individuals more-than-human ethical capacities for responsiveness, attunement, and dealing with ambiguity. A text like the one I've created in act IV would ask students to perform a different kind of critical reading than more traditional, expository texts grappling with theory, which, in turn, creates a different type of critical discussion in the classroom. When a text is *about* theory, a portion of discussion time must be dedicated to comprehension: of key terms/concepts, of central arguments or theoretical positions, etc. A discussion surrounding a text like act IV, though, performs this theory and would instead need to foreground personal reactions to various storylines and the various feelings of experiencing the text as a gateway into a critical conversation surrounding the central topic/theme of the text. Since many entangled possibilities for action unfold within the same textual space, this conversation is inherently less about comprehension of an idea, argument, or position (though that is happening, too) and more about *exploration* and *discovery* of relevant ideas, arguments, and positions. Thus, the focus isn't on reading a text correctly, as is often the pressure students put upon themselves when reading texts *about* theory; rather, it's fundamentally about students' *experiences* of reading a text, what it does them, how it makes them think, feel, and behave. Through experiencing a work of theoretical scholarship via the CYOA genre and unpacking it in the classroom, students, then, have an opportunity to actively develop their capacities for attunement, responsiveness, and coping with ambiguity.

This leads to another pedagogical benefit of the CYOA genre: it facilitates both dwelling and mattering simultaneously, asking students and other readers to actively develop and embody these ethico-onto-epistemological methods/orientations/capacities. In order for the narrative to proceed, the reader must enact their agency; that is, the story unfolds based on the reader's decisions of what actions to take. The reader, then, *matters* in the CYOA genre: both in importance as a necessary agent for the story's unfolding (*someone* has to decide which path to take) and in method through tracing the unique and nuanced impact of those various decisions within the narrative. However, to perform this mattering, the reader must also spend an extended period of time *dwelling* within the text and its various pathways for action. That is, the reader slowly comes-to-knowledge about what may or may not be considered ethical action by attuning to the shades of difference, the nuances, across these various iterations of the same premise, which can only occur through repeated exposure to and experience of the narrative. Mattering and dwelling, then, work together within the CYOA genre to help cultivate in the reader an instinctual sense of what may or may not be ethical action within a given more-than-human entanglement (in this case, encountering a dog trapped in a hot car) that could serve as an internal guide to action for a potential actualized encounter with the entanglement.

Additionally, not only can students experience and unpack scholarly texts in this genre in order to develop critical reading or thinking skills or ethical orientations, they can also be tasked with *creating* such narratives in order to develop tangible writing and communication skills, shifting the focus of inquiry to the *process* of composing itself. As Jody Shipka notes, by focusing on process in the composition classroom, "the complex and highly distributed processes involved with the production, reception, circulation, and valuation of texts [becomes] more

visible” (38). In asking students to design a textual experience that persuades through process, students not only come to better understand their own composing processes, they also attune to how those processes themselves are not stable but, rather, shift to meet the needs of the task-at-hand, requiring students to actively navigate ambiguous contexts. Thus, no matter how students grapple with CYOA texts, they provide opportunities to cultivate the capacities for attunement, responsiveness, and dealing with/responding to ambiguity through either the experience or implementation of procedural rhetoric.

Finally, I also find this approach useful for those of us in the humanities interested in public scholarship. While traditional scholarly texts (monographs, articles, edited collections) provide a wealth of knowledge about and approaches to more-than-human ethics, the insights tend to be delivered in ways that appear/feel unapproachable or inaccessible to individuals without the proper training (i.e., those who haven’t been through a bachelor’s degree in the humanities). While we might take up everyday, accessible cases in our work, the genres and methods we use to communicate that work often act as gatekeepers, preventing the general public from direct access to our insights, be it through dense and specialized language, paywalls, or other such barriers. In act IV, though, I aim to demonstrate how this genre can be beneficial for reaching broader publics, as both the case itself (a dog trapped in hot car) *and* the method for exploring it (CYOA) are highly approachable and accessible to general audiences. CYOA texts are playful, fun, allow for a great deal of freedom and independence, and can be delivered through print *or* digital experiences, making this a potentially productive genre for public education, activism, or community outreach efforts, to name a few. Ultimately, in utilizing the form and mechanics of a popular genre like CYOA, scholars can not only approach scholarship

and pedagogy differently, we can differently approach how we interface with various publics as well.

Act IV: The Dog Days of Summer

Over 20 endings to discover!

The Dog Days of Summer

By Jacqui Pratt



The Dog Days of Summer

...leaving Bennett to propose that, “the ethical responsibility of an individual human now resides in one’s response to the assemblages in which one find oneself participating” (37). This notion of ethics as response-ability to an assemblage, then, cannot be a generalizing moral (or even legal) doctrine with clear, black-and-white guidelines. Rather, what’s ethical, what’s *right*, can only be determined by attuning to the complex, sometimes competing, entanglement of needs, behaviors, intentions, wants, desires, effects, etc. of the various human *and* non-human agents of a given assemblage. In a more-than-human ethics of response-ability, then, the question becomes *who am I within this assemblage, and how can I respond to other cohabiting agents?*

You stare at the screen a moment longer, reflecting on your morning’s work, squinting at the display in an effort to combat the glare from the early afternoon sun. *Not too shabby*, you think. Perhaps you will get this article finished by the end of the week after all.

As much as you love being a professor, this part of the job can be excruciating at times. Not to mention quite stationary, which is exactly why you decided to take a walk to your favorite nearby coffee shop earlier this morning to write: a change of environment to get the mind and body moving. And to escape the sweatbox your place has become in the midst of this relentless August heat. Whatever your justification, you consider the morning a success.

You check the time — 12:45 pm. Feeling the lingering high of accomplishment, you close your computer, excited for a guilt-free (and much needed) afternoon of water, chlorine, and conversation, courtesy of your friend Bianca and her pool pass. Backpack in tow, you walk out into the scorching summer afternoon. This is the fourth day in a row the temperature’s hovered in the mid-upper 90s. Thankfully, it’s not *too muggy*, though the nights have been staying quite warm. You’re grateful you only have a ten minute walk ahead of you.

As you’re walking down the street, mulling over the various ways you can praise Bianca once you see her (my hero! my goddess! my queen! my savior!), you notice a dog, maybe some kind of Labrador or Shepard mix, sitting upright and panting hard in the passenger seat of a parked vehicle—a grey Honda civic that, aside from a baseball-sized ding above the rear passenger wheel well, appears in fairly good condition.. You inspect the

scene a bit closer and notice an excessive amount of drool on the window ledge. The dog responds to your interest, whimpering and lightly pawing at the window.

You try the front passenger-side door-handle. Locked. You try the other handles on the vehicle. All locked. There's no sign from the owner on any of the windows, and the car doesn't appear to be running, as there's no key in the ignition or any keyless ignition switch in sight.

WHAT DO YOU DO?

NOTHING. The dog seemed alright enough, and you're sure the owner will be back in a moment. You decide to keep walking and meet up with Bianca for a refreshing swim. (Turn to page 24)

INFORM LOCAL BUSINESSES. The owner has got to be close by; you just need to find them and let them know what's happening. (Turn to page 3)

NOTIFY LOCAL POLICE. Someone needs to get this dog out of the car soon before it suffers heatstroke! (Turn to page 4)

BREAK INTO THE CAR. This dog needs help, and there's little time to waste waiting for someone else to get here; meanwhile, you're perfectly capable of smashing a window yourself. (Turn to page 5)

You take down information about the vehicle (grey Honda civic, license plate ALN2-47P) and begin going to all of the surrounding businesses, distributing this information in search of the owner. After nearly twenty minutes of walking up and down the block, you're tired, sweaty, and thirsty, with no sign of the owner yet.

You check on the dog. It's laying on its side, now, breathing even heavier than before. It's not moving, save a slow crane of its neck and shift of its eyes, now glazed over, to acknowledge your presence. The dog is in rough shape.

WHAT DO YOU DO?

LEAVE. You've notified local businesses; the owner is bound to come back momentarily. Plus, you're now running late to meet up with Bianca. **(Turn to page 26)**

WAIT FOR THE OWNER. You want to give this person a piece of your mind, leaving that poor animal locked up in the middle of this heat wave... **(Turn to page 6)**

NOTIFY LOCAL POLICE. This dog is clearly distressed, and someone needs to rescue it ASAP. **(Turn to page 7)**

BREAK INTO THE CAR. This dog needs help fast. You can call for additional help after, if need be. **(Turn to page 8)**

Not sure exactly who to call and concerned for the dog's safety, you dial 9-1-1.

"9-1-1, what's your emergency."

"Hi, I've got a dog locked inside of an unattended vehicle, and I'm worried about it overheating. It's panting hard, and there's drool everywhere."

"Is the animal responsive?"

"Yeah. It's sitting up and whimpering and pawing at the window, but it looks a little lethargic."

"Ok. And where are you located?"

"Uh... the 600 block of Main Street. It's a grey Honda civic, license plate ALN2-47P."

"Are you able to stay with the vehicle? An officer will want to get a more detailed witness statement from you once they arrive."

"Yeah. I can stay."

"Great. Thank you for your call. We'll have someone there in thirty, thirty-five minutes."

"Thank you." *Click.*

You sit on the curb in the shadow of the vehicle while you wait for help to arrive. You text Bianca: *Hey. Called the cops on some idiot who left their dog locked in the car. Gonna be a little late, FYI.*

Every now and then you look up at the dog to make sure its condition isn't worsening.

After about ten minutes, you can no longer see the dog from where you're sitting. You get up to peer in the window and see it laying on its side, now, breathing even heavier than before. It's not moving, save a slow crane of its neck and shift of its eyes, now glazed over, to acknowledge your presence. The dog is in rough shape, and it might be another twenty-five minutes until help arrives. You decide it's best to...

WAIT FOR HELP. They're already on their way; it can't be too much longer. **(Turn to page 9)**

BREAK INTO THE CAR. This dog is clearly distressed, and someone needs to rescue it ASAP. **(Turn to page 10)**

You scan the nearby area for a sharp rock that's big enough to hold in your fist. After a moment of searching, you find one near a bench close by. You toss your backpack on the hood of the vehicle and root around for the extra shirt you brought along for after your swim. You wrap your hand in the shirt and clench the rock in your fist, pointy end sticking out an inch or so past your pinky. You walk over to the driver's side of the vehicle to avoid shattering glass directly on top of the dog and take a swing at the window, aiming for the edge just above the locking mechanism on the door. THUD. You swing again. THUD. You take a few deep, determined breaths, and take a third swing at the window with all the force you can muster.

CREESSSSHHHHH!

The glass shatters. You drop the rock, and unlock the passenger door with your still-wrapped hand. You grab your backpack off the hood, toss your shirt inside, and throw it on your back as you go to open the now-unlocked door.

You say to the dog, petting behind its ears, "Hey buddy. We're gonna go move into the shade over there and wait for your owner, ok?" You point to the closest shaded area you see, a small alcove between two buildings. The dog hops out of the car, still panting hard and drooling everywhere. The two of you slowly walk over to the alcove, your hand gently on its collar for both guidance and support. Once the dog is laying down in the shade, you decide to...

NOTIFY LOCAL POLICE. While you can stay with the dog a while, you have no clue how long it will be before the owner comes. And at this point, it's probably best to leave it to the professionals. **(Turn to page 12)**

WAIT FOR THE OWNER. You're not going to just abandon this dog. Plus, you want to meet this jerk to give him a piece of your mind. **(Turn to page 14)**

You text Bianca: *Hey. Sorry I'm late. Waiting for some idiot who left their dog locked in their car. Could be a bit. Just head to the pool, and I'll meet up with ya there.*

You settle onto a bench in eyeshot of the vehicle. Five minutes pass. Ten. Twenty. Still no owner. Your shirt has grown heavy with sweat, and you can feel the afternoon sun burning the skin on your cheeks, nose, and shoulders.

You finish the last swig from your water bottle and get up to check on the dog. It's still laying on its side, only now with vomit dripping off of the seat and pooling onto the floor. Fuck. This can't be good.

Clearly, you can't keep waiting. You decide to...

NOTIFY LOCAL POLICE. You're in over your head and need to get professionals to the scene immediately. **(Turn to page 15)**

BREAK INTO THE CAR. This dog needs help *now*; there's no time to wait for someone else to get here. **(Turn to page 16)**

Not sure exactly who to call and concerned for the dog's life, you dial 9-1-1.

"9-1-1, what's your emergency."

"There's a dog locked in a car. I think it might be suffering heat stroke. It's breathing heavily, and its eyes are glazed over, and it isn't really moving...."

"Where are you located?"

"Uh... the 600 block of Main Street. It's a grey Honda civic, license plate ALN2-47P."

"Are you able to stay with the vehicle? An officer will want to get a more detailed statement from you once they arrive."

"Yeah. I can stay."

"Great. Thank you for your call. We'll have someone there within twenty, twenty-five minutes."

"Thank you." *Click.*

You sit on the curb in the shadow of the vehicle while you wait for help to arrive and quickly guzzle about half of your water bottle. You pace yourself on the rest, not knowing how long it'll be until someone gets here. You text Bianca: *Hey. Sorry I'm late. Called the cops on some idiot who left their dog locked in their car. Could be a little bit. Just head to the pool, and I'll meet up with ya there.*

Every now and then you check on the dog to make sure its condition isn't worsening.

After about ten minutes, the dog begins to stir ever-so-slightly, only to vomit lazily on the floor of the vehicle. Fuck. This isn't good. And it might be another fifteen minutes until help arrives! You look at the suffering animal and decide it's best to...

WAIT FOR HELP. You're in over your head; this is best left to the professionals. **(Turn to page 18)**

BREAK INTO THE CAR. This dog needs help *now*; there's no time to wait. **(Turn to page 19)**

You scan the nearby area for a sharp rock that's big enough to hold in your fist. After a moment of frantic searching, you find one near a bench close by. You toss your backpack on the hood of the vehicle and root around for the extra shirt you brought along for after your swim. You wrap your hand in the shirt and clench the rock in your fist, pointy end sticking out an inch or so past your pinky. You walk over to the driver's side of the vehicle to avoid shattering glass directly on top of the dog and take a swing at the window, aiming for the edge just above the locking mechanism on the door. THUD. You swing again. THUD. You take a few deep, determined breaths, and take a third swing at the window with all the force you can muster.

CREESSSSHHHHH!

The glass shatters. You drop the rock, and unlock the passenger door with your still-wrapped hand. You grab your backpack off the hood, toss your shirt inside, and throw it on your back as you go to open the now-unlocked door.

You say to the dog, "Hey buddy. Think you can get up and walk with me over there?" You point to the closest shaded area you see, a small alcove between two buildings. The dog manages to get its legs underneath it and get itself out of the vehicle, though wobbly the whole time. The two of you slowly walk over to the alcove, your hand gently on its collar for both guidance and support. Once the dog is laying down again in the shade, you decide to...

WAIT FOR THE OWNER. You're not going to just abandon this dog. Plus, you want to meet this jerk to give them a piece of your mind. **(Turn to page 14)**

NOTIFY LOCAL POLICE. While you can stay with the dog a while, you have no clue how long it will be before the owner comes. And at this point, it's probably best to leave it to the professionals. **(Turn to page 21)**

You settle back onto the curb. Five minutes pass. Ten. Fifteen. Still no help. Your shirt has grown heavy with sweat, and you can feel the afternoon sun burning the skin on your cheeks and nose and shoulders.

You finish the last swig from your water bottle and get up to check on the dog. It's still laying on its side, only now with vomit dripping off of the seat and pooling onto the floor. Fuck. This can't be good. You decide to...

KEEP WAITING FOR HELP. You're in over your head; this is best left to the professionals. **(Turn to page 18)**

BREAK INTO THE CAR. This dog needs help *now*; there's no time to wait. **(Turn to page 19)**

You scan the nearby area for a sharp rock that's big enough to hold in your fist. After a moment of frantic searching, you find one near a bench close by. You toss your backpack on the hood of the vehicle and root around for the extra shirt you brought along for after your swim. You wrap your hand in the shirt and clench the rock in your fist, pointy end sticking out an inch or so past your pinky. You walk over to the driver's side of the vehicle to avoid shattering glass directly on top of the dog and take a swing at the window, aiming for the edge just above the locking mechanism on the door. THUD. You swing again. THUD. You take a few deep, determined breaths, and take a third swing at the window with all the force you can muster.

CREESSSSHHHHH!

The glass shatters. You drop the rock, and unlock the passenger door with your still-wrapped hand. You grab your backpack off the hood, toss your shirt inside, and throw it on your back as you go to open the now-unlocked door.

You say to the dog, "Hey buddy. Think you can get up and walk with me over there?" You point to the closest shaded area you see, a small alcove between two buildings. The dog manages to get its legs underneath it and get itself out of the vehicle, though wobbly the whole time. The two of you slowly walk over to the alcove, your hand gently on its collar for both guidance and support.

As the dog is laying down again in the shade, a local shop owner comes by with a bowl and a few bottles of water. "Saw what you did, breaking that dog out. Thought these might come in handy. You call the cops?" You nod in response. "Good. This should help while you wait. How long they say?"

"Thirty, thirty-five minutes. But that was, like, fifteen minutes ago. And thanks for these," You shake a bottle of water for emphasis before you uncap it and fill bowl. The dog begins to drink instantly.

"No problem. If I don't see anyone arrive in that time, I'll come back out and check on the two of you."

"Thanks again."

"It's the right thing to do." And with that, the shop owner leaves you and the dog alone. You're sweaty and hot, but you're happy to have some water and this shade while you wait. You take a few swigs of water yourself, then empty the rest of the bottle on the dog's paws, face, and neck in an attempt to cool it down.

Nearly twenty-five minutes later, an officer finally arrives. She approaches you: "You report an animal trapped inside of an unattended vehicle?"

"Yes, officer" you reply. "This is the one. It was breathing heavily, and its eyes were glazed over, and it wasn't really moving, and I didn't know how long you would be, so I broke the window to free it, and--"

"Ok, ok. Slow down. I need to get some logistical information from you first, then you can tell me everything. Do you have any identification on you?"

"Uhh, yeah. Hold on. I just need to get it out of my backpack..." After a moment of searching, you hand the officer your...

MINNESOTA driver's license. (Turn to page 42)

NEW JERSEY driver's license. (Turn to page 39)

OREGON driver's license. (Turn to page 40)

TEXAS driver's license. (Turn to page 41)

Not sure exactly who to call, you dial 9-1-1.

"9-1-1, what's your emergency."

"Hi, I just removed a dog that was trapped inside a locked and unattended vehicle. I was worried about it overheating. It's still panting hard, and there's drool everywhere."

"Is the animal responsive?"

"Yeah. But it's definitely a little lethargic."

"Ok. And where are you located?"

"Uh... the 600 block of Main Street."

"Are you able to stay with the animal? An officer will want to get a more detailed statement from you once they arrive."

"Yeah. I can stay."

"Great. Thank you for your call. We'll have someone there in thirty, thirty-five minutes."

"Thank you." *Click.*

You sit next to the dog and text Bianca: *Hey. Called the cops on some idiot who left their dog locked in the car. Gonna be a little late, FYI.*

You rummage around your backpack for your water bottle. You take a few swigs of water, pour a light trickle out so the dog can lap it up, then empty about half of what's left on the its paws, face, and neck in an attempt to cool it down.

Nearly thirty-five minutes later, an officer finally arrives. She approaches you: "Are you the individual who removed a trapped dog from an unattended vehicle?"

"Yes, officer" you reply. "This is the dog."

"Great. I need to get some logistical information from you first, then you can tell me everything. Do you have any identification on you?"

"Uhh, yeah. Hold on. I just need to get it out of my backpack..." After a moment of searching, you hand the officer your...

MINNESOTA driver's license. (Turn to page 38)

NEW JERSEY driver's license. (Turn to page 39)

OREGON driver's license. (Turn to page 43)

TEXAS driver's license. (Turn to page 41)

You settle in next to the dog and text Bianca: *Hey. Waiting on some idiot who left their dog locked in their car. Don't worry; I got the dog out. Gonna be a little late, though. Dunno how long this will take...*

You rummage around your backpack for your water bottle. You take a few swigs of water, pour a light trickle out so the dog can lap it up, then empty about half of what's left on the its paws, face, and neck in an attempt to cool it down.

Five minutes pass. Ten. Twenty. Forty-five. Seventy minutes. The dog drinks what's left of the water.

You hear the owner before you see him: "What the *fuck*? My fucking car!" Of course he's more concerned about the car than the dog, you think to yourself.

The dog perks up at the sound of its owner's voice—it's much peppier having had a chance to recover in the shade—and lets out an excited bark. You follow the dog out of the alcove, confronting the owner, "Your dog was overheating, and it needed air and shade and water immediately. It might have died if I didn't get it out."

"Who the *fuck* do you think you are? My dog, my car, my business."

"Your dog was in danger."

"My dog was fine. But if you're gonna insist on making this your business... I'm calling the cops!"

WHAT DO YOU DO?

PLEAD YOUR CASE. No need to get the authorities involved... (Turn to page 28)

ENCOURAGE THE CALL. You stand by your assertion the animal's life was in danger; maybe the authorities *should* weigh in on this... (Turn to page 23)

Not sure exactly who to call and concerned for the dog's life, you dial 9-1-1.

"9-1-1, what's your emergency."

"There's a dog locked in a car. I think it's suffering heat stroke. There's vomit on the seat and the floor and it's breathing heavily and not really moving..."

"Where are you located?"

"Uh... the 600 block of Main Street. It's a grey Honda civic, license plate ALN2-47P."

"Are you able to stay with the vehicle? An officer will want to get a more detailed witness statement from you once they arrive."

"Yeah. I can stay."

"Great. Thank you for your call. We'll have someone there within ten, fifteen minutes."

"Thank you." *Click.*

You sit on the curb in the shadow of the vehicle while you wait for help to arrive, overheating yourself, now, and out of water. Every now and then you check on the dog to make sure its condition isn't worsening.

Nearly fifteen minutes later, an officer finally arrives. She approaches you: "You report an animal trapped inside of an unattended vehicle?"

"Yes, officer," you reply. "This is the one."

"Great. I need to get some logistical information from you first, then you can tell me everything. Do you have any identification on you?"

"Uhh, yeah. Hold on. I just need to get it out of my backpack..." After a moment of searching, you hand the officer your...

MINNESOTA driver's license. (Turn to page 29)

NEW JERSEY driver's license. (Turn to page 30)

OREGON driver's license. (Turn to page 31)

TEXAS driver's license. (Turn to page 32)

You scan the nearby area for a sharp rock that's big enough to hold in your fist. After a moment of frantic searching, you find one near the bench where you were just sitting. You toss your backpack on the hood of the vehicle and root around for the extra shirt you brought along for after your swim. You wrap your hand in the shirt and clench the rock in your fist, pointy end sticking out an inch or so past your pinky. You walk over to the driver's side of the vehicle to avoid shattering glass directly on top of the dog and take a swing at the window, aiming for the edge just above the locking mechanism on the door. THUD. You swing again. THUD. You take a few deep, determined breaths, and take a third swing at the window with all the force you can muster.

CRESSSSHHHHH!

The glass shatters. You drop the rock, and unlock the passenger door with your still-wrapped hand. You run back to the other side of the car and open it. You use your wrapped hand to clear away any vomit from the dog and the seat, then throw the shirt onto the pile of glass on the driver's seat.

A concerned shop owner you spoke to earlier comes outside to help after hearing the car window break. You point to the closest shaded area you see and ask, "Can you help me move it into the shade? That alcove over there, maybe?"

"Sure thing." The shop owner lifts the dog out of the car, and the two of you gently and carefully carry it into the shade.

You run back to grab your backpack and get your swim towel out of it. "Can you soak this in water?" you ask the shop owner. "I want to try and cool him down as quickly as possible."

"Sure thing. Have you notified the cops or the fire department or anyone?"

"Not yet, no. I was waiting for the owner, and then I saw the vomit and this was the first thing I thought to do..."

"I'd give 'em a call now if I were you. Or else, I'm calling it in."

You nod. "Right. Thanks. I'll call." As soon as the shop owner leaves, you dial 9-1-1.

"9-1-1, what's your emergency."

"I just broke into a locked vehicle to remove a dog. It was vomiting and breathing heavily and not really moving, and I felt like its life was in danger. I didn't know what else to do."

"Where are you located?"

"Uh... the 600 block of Main Street."

"Alright. Please stay with the animal. An officer will need to get a more detailed statement from you once they arrive. We'll have someone there within ten, fifteen minutes. Thank you for your call."

"Thank you." *Click.*

As you're getting off the phone, the shop owner returns not only with your now-drenched towel, but a bowl and a few bottles of water as well. "Here. This should do while you wait. How long they say?"

"Ten, fifteen minutes." You lay the towel on top of the dog and put the bowl close by, filling it with water.

"Ok. If I don't see anyone arrive in that time, I'll come back out and check on the two of you."

"Thanks for all the help."

"It's the right thing to do." And with that, the shop owner leaves you and the dog alone. You're drenched in sweat, but you're happy to have some water and this shade while you wait.

Nearly fifteen minutes later, an officer finally arrives. She approaches you: "Are you the individual who broke into an unattended vehicle to free a trapped animal?"

"Yes, officer" you reply. "This is the dog."

"Great. I need to get some logistical information from you first, then you can tell me everything. Do you have any identification on you?"

"Uhh, yeah. Hold on. I just need to get it out of my backpack..." After a moment of searching, you hand the officer your...

MINNESOTA driver's license. (Turn to page 33)

NEW JERSEY driver's license. (Turn to page 34)

OREGON driver's license. (Turn to page 35)

TEXAS driver's license. (Turn to page 36)

Nearly fifteen minutes later, an officer finally arrives. Before she can approach you, you yell out, "It's vomiting! It's getting worse! Please help!"

She responds, approaching you: "Ok, ok. We'll get to that in one moment. First, I need to get some logistical information from you, then we can address the animal. Do you have any identification on you?"

"Uhh, yeah. Hold on. I just need to get it out of my backpack..." After a moment of frantic searching, you hand the officer your...

MINNESOTA driver's license. (Turn to page 29)

NEW JERSEY driver's license. (Turn to page 30)

OREGON driver's license. (Turn to page 31)

TEXAS driver's license. (Turn to page 32)

You scan the nearby area for a sharp rock that's big enough to hold in your fist. After a moment of frantic searching, you find one close to a nearby bench. You toss your backpack on the hood of the vehicle and root around for the extra shirt you brought along for after your swim. You wrap your hand in the shirt and clench the rock in your fist, pointy end sticking out an inch or so past your pinky. You walk over to the driver's side of the vehicle to avoid shattering glass directly on top of the dog and take a swing at the window, aiming for the edge just above the locking mechanism on the door. THUD. You swing again. THUD. You take a few deep, determined breaths, and take a third swing at the window with all the force you can muster.

CREESSSSHHHHH!

The glass shatters. You drop the rock, and unlock the passenger door with your still-wrapped hand. You run back to the other side of the car and open it. You use your wrapped hand to clear away any vomit from the dog and the seat, then throw the shirt onto the pile of glass on the driver's seat.

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"Sure thing." The shop owner lifts the dog out of the car, and the two of you gently and carefully carry it into the shade.

You run back to grab your backpack and get your swim towel out of it. "Can you soak this in water?" you ask the shop owner. "I want to try and cool him down while I wait for help to arrive."

"Absolutely. You already call it in?" You nod in reply. "Good. I'll be right back."

The shop owner is gone a minute or two, and returns not only with your now-drenched towel, but a bowl and a few bottles of water as well. "Here. This should do while you wait for help. I've got to get back to work, but if I don't see anyone show up in twenty minutes or so, I'll come back out and check on the two of you."

"Thanks for all the help. I really appreciate it." You lay the towel on top of the dog, and put the bowl close by, filling it with water.

"It's the right thing to do." And with that, the shop owner leaves you and the dog alone. You're drenched in sweat, but you're happy to have some water and this shade while you wait.

Nearly fifteen minutes later, an officer finally arrives. She approaches you: "You report an animal trapped inside of an unattended vehicle?"

"Yes, officer" you reply. "This is the one. It started vomiting, and I didn't know how long you would be, so broke the window to free it, and—"

"Ok, ok. Slow down. I need to get some logistical information from you first, then you can tell me everything. Do you have any identification on you?"

"Uhh, yeah. Hold on. I just need to get it out of my backpack..." After a moment of searching, you hand the officer your...

MINNESOTA driver's license. (Turn to page 37)

NEW JERSEY driver's license. (Turn to page 34)

OREGON driver's license. (Turn to page 35)

TEXAS driver's license. (Turn to page 36)

Not sure exactly who to call, you dial 9-1-1.

"9-1-1, what's your emergency."

"I just broke into a locked vehicle to remove a dog. I felt like its life was in danger. I didn't know what else to do. It was breathing heavily, and its eyes were glazed over, and it wasn't really moving. It got itself out of the car on its own power, but it was wobbly and unsteady."

"Where are you located?"

"Uh... the 600 block of Main Street."

"Alright. Please stay with the animal. An officer will need to get a more detailed witness statement from you once they arrive. We'll have someone there within twenty, thirty minutes. Thank you for your call."

"Thank you." *Click.*

As you're getting off the phone, a local shop owner comes by with a bowl and a few bottles of water.

"Saw what you did, breaking that dog out. Thought these might come in handy. You call the cops?" You nod in response. "Good. This should help while you wait. How long they say?"

"Twenty, thirty minutes. And thanks for these," You shake the bottle of water for emphasis before you uncap it and fill bowl. The dog begins to drink instantly.

"No problem. If I don't see anyone arrive in that time, I'll come back out and check on the two of you."

"Thanks again."

"It's the right thing to do." And with that, the shop owner leaves you and the dog alone. You're sweaty and hot, but you're happy to have some water and this shade while you wait. You take a few swigs of water yourself, then empty the rest of the bottle on the dog's paws, face, and neck in an attempt to cool it down.

Nearly twenty-five minutes later, an officer finally arrives. She approaches you: "Are you the individual who broke into an unattended vehicle to free a trapped animal?"

"Yes, officer" you reply. "This is the one."

"Great. I need to get some logistical information from you first, then you can tell me everything. Do you have any identification on you?"

"Uhh, yeah. Hold on. I just need to get it out of my backpack..." After a moment of searching, you hand the officer your...

MINNESOTA driver's license. (Turn to page 38)

NEW JERSEY driver's license. (Turn to page 39)

OREGON driver's license. (Turn to page 40)

TEXAS driver's license. (Turn to page 41)

"Fine," you respond. "Call the cops. I'd love to get their take on this situation."

Caught off guard by your self-assuredness, he hesitates a moment before making the call.

...

It's an awkward thirty-five minutes before an officer arrives. "Look at my window!" the owner shouts before letting the cop speak.

The officer responds, "We'll have plenty of time to recount what happened. I need to get some logistical information from the two of you first, then you'll each get your turn to tell me everything. Now, before anything else — identifications. Both of you."

"Uhh, yeah. Hold on. I just need to get it out of my backpack..." After a moment of searching, you hand the officer your...

MINNESOTA driver's license. (Turn to page 44)

NEW JERSEY driver's license. (Turn to page 45)

OREGON driver's license. (Turn to page 46)

TEXAS driver's license. (Turn to page 47)

After a long day of writing, swimming, chatting, and relaxing with Bianca, you're happy to be home. And hungry. You're definitely hungry. You toss your backpack gently on the couch and turn on the evening news for some background noise as you raid your kitchen for something quick, easy, and filling.

You're cobbling together a meal from various tupperware containers when something from the news broadcast catches your attention:

"...leaving a dog to perish in the vehicle this afternoon. For more on the story, we go to Pam Donahue."

You look up from your leftovers, a chill creeping in first in your hands and feet, then traveling quickly across your limbs to your gut. The reporter is standing in front of the vehicle you passed earlier, with a few police and rescue team members lingering in the background.

"Thanks, Kenny. I'm here on the 600 block of Main Street where, tragically, a dog has died of heat stroke this afternoon. Local police received a call around 2:30pm from concerned citizen, Myra Hawk, who found the dog unresponsive."

"I knocked pretty hard on the window. It was just laying there, not moving. I...I didn't know what to do, but I had to try something..."

"Police immediately sent emergency responders to the scene to try and resuscitate the animal, but to no avail."

"If we had received the call an hour or two earlier, we might have been able to save its life. Unfortunately, there was nothing else we could do this time."

"This sad story serves as your annual reminder to never leave a pet or child inside a parked vehicle on a hot day. Even on a comfortable, 70-degree day, temperature inside your vehicle can reach over 115 degrees in about an hour. Responders noted the interior of the car today was over 140 degrees by the time they arrived on the scene. Police are still looking for the owner of the vehicle, a Mr..."

The broadcast once again fades into the background as you consider the implications of everything you've just heard. The dog died. You could have done something, anything, to intervene and prevent that from happening. Instead, you chose to do nothing, and the dog died.

Your relaxing afternoon gives way to a guilt-racked evening, crushed by the ethical weight of your decisions. The dog died. You might not have caused it,

but you certainly didn't stop it from happening. The dog died. The dog *died*.
And you're going to have to live with that knowledge the rest of your life.

The End

After a long day of writing, swimming, chatting, and relaxing with Bianca, you're happy to be home. And hungry. You're definitely hungry. You toss your backpack gently on the couch and turn on the evening news for some background noise as you raid your kitchen for something quick, easy, and filling.

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The broadcast once again fades into the background as you consider the implications of everything you've just heard. The dog died. You could have done more. You could have called the police. You could have rescued the dog yourself. Instead, you put in a cursory search and left the scene because you were hot and wanted to swim. And the dog died.

Your relaxing afternoon gives way to a guilt-racked evening, crushed by the ethical weight of your decisions. The dog died. You might not have caused it,

but you certainly didn't do enough to stop it from happening. The dog died. The dog *died*. And you're going to have to live with that knowledge the rest of your life.

The End

You interject, thinking quickly “If you want to call the cops, fine, I’ll cooperate. But hear me out, first. It *really* might not be in your best interest to do that.”

You’ve caught his attention. After a moment, he responds, “Go on.”

“Right after I took your dog over to that alcove—”

“His name is Zeus.”

“Zeus!” The dog perks up as you call him. “Good name.”

“Thanks,” his owner mutters.

You inhale and continue: “Anyway. Once I got Zeus settled in the shade, I text my friend saying I was going to be late to meet up with her. That was well over an hour ago. In this heat, that’s long enough for your dog to have died. That’s animal cruelty, my friend. And I have evidence of how long you’ve been gone. So, you call the cops on me, you’re also calling the cops on yourself. You drive off, no one ever knows. Your choice...”

The man thinks for a moment; he looks at his car window, then at Zeus, then back to his car window, then finally at you. He opens the passenger door. “Zeus, in the car.” Zeus obeys. “You’re lucky it’s hot and I don’t wanna be out here for who-knows-how-long arguing with you and the police.” He promptly turns away from you, gets in his car, and drives off.

You chuckle to yourself at the irony of his dramatic exit line, relieved he was *actually* as selfish as your instinct felt he would be. You saved the dog’s life, sacrificing some water and a little time in the process. You would have *gladly* faced any fines that came your way, and you’re a bit worried that Zeus’ owner may put him in danger again in the future, but you can’t help but feel a little pop of schadenfreude knowing the owner’s going to have to literally pay for leaving Zeus trapped in the first place. *Mmmmmmm*, you think to yourself. *Sometimes karma can be so delicious*. Feeling buzzed off your good deed, you call Bianca to apologize for being so late and recount your mid-day heroics on the way to her place, beyond ready to cool off in the pool.

The End

As the officer is writing down whatever information she needs, a fire and rescue team arrive. The dog begins twitching and shaking as the trained professionals break into the vehicle to remove it. It's difficult to watch. You're getting upset, so the officer takes you away from the scene and asks for your statement. You recount the events leading up to this moment.

She responds, "Thanks for calling this in. You *may* have saved that dog's life. It's too early to tell. Hell, even if it lives, it might have suffered serious permanent damage to its internal organs. It's a good thing we got it out when we did. If this *ever* happens again, don't be afraid to call us sooner. The state of Minnesota has a rescue plan in place for emergencies like these."

You thank the officer for the information, and she walks back to the other police and rescue responders. You're glad you stuck around to help, but feel guilty you didn't act sooner. For now, you cling to the hope that you did enough to keep the animal alive, though you worry you might not have acted quick enough for it to make a full recovery. Exhausted, sweaty, and feeling a bit guilty, you decide to skip the pool today, opting for a pint of ice cream at home instead.

The End

As the officer is writing down whatever information she needs, the dog begins twitching and shaking. It's difficult to watch. You're getting upset, so the officer takes you away from the scene and asks for your statement. You recount the events leading up to this moment.

She responds, "Thanks for calling this in. There's not much we can do, other than charge the owner with animal cruelty, give them a fine and/or jail time. I'll take down the information, wait for the owner to return, and proceed from there."

"But what about the dog?" you ask, genuinely concerned.

"Legally, we can't do anything. Even though it's illegal to leave an animal unattended in a vehicle under inhumane conditions in the state of New Jersey, there's no rescue provision in place. Dogs are considered property, here; same as cars. We can take possession of the dog once the vehicle is opened and we arrest the owner, but we can't break into the vehicle."

"Oh..."

"I'm sorry. You did all you could, really. Getting in contact with the owner is our only way of getting to the dog."

You thank the officer for the information, and she walks back to her car. You feel rather awful right now. You're happy you made the call and cling to the hope that maybe, just maybe, it's enough to keep the dog alive. Though, given your last images of it, twitching and shaking, and the fact the owner still hasn't come back, you're not sure it will be. Exhausted, sweaty, and guilt-ridden, you decide to skip the pool today, opting to go home and reflect instead.

The End

As the officer is writing down whatever information she needs, emergency responders arrive. The dog begins twitching and shaking as the trained professionals break into the vehicle to remove it. It's difficult to watch. You're getting upset, so the officer takes you away from the scene and asks for your statement. You recount the events leading up to this moment.

She responds, "Thanks for calling this in. You *may* have saved that dog's life. It's too early to tell. Hell, even if it lives, it might have suffered serious permanent damage to its internal organs. It's a good thing we got it out when we did. If this even happens again, don't be afraid to call us sooner."

"Will do."

"Also, if you feel comfortable breaking into the car and caring for the animal until we arrive, Oregon state law would protect you from any civil or criminal liability, as long as you notify us shortly before or after doing it. The sooner you can get it to shade and begin cooling it down, the better its chances of a full recovery."

You thank the officer for the information, and she walks back to the other police and emergency responders. You didn't know you had so much authority to act under the law, here. You're glad you stuck around to help but feel quite guilty you didn't do more sooner. For now, you cling to the hope that you did enough to keep the animal alive, though you worry you might not have acted quick enough for it to make a full recovery. Exhausted, sweaty, and guilt-ridden, you decide to skip the pool today, opting to go home and reflect instead.

The End

As the officer is writing down whatever information she needs, the dog begins twitching and shaking. It's difficult to watch. You're getting upset, so the officer takes you away from the scene and asks for your statement. You recount the events leading up to this moment.

She responds, "Thanks for calling this in. There's not much we can do, other than maybe charge the owner with animal cruelty. I'll take down the information, wait for the owner to return, and proceed from there."

"But what about the dog?" you ask, genuinely concerned.

"Legally, it's a grey area. There's no *specific* law in place here in Texas that makes it unlawful to keep unattended animals locked in vehicles in inhumane conditions, nor any rescue plans in place."

"Oh..."

"I'm sorry. You did all you could, really. Getting in contact with the owner is our best way of getting to the dog."

You thank the officer for the information, and she walks back to her car. You feel rather awful right now. You're happy you made the call and cling to the hope that maybe, just maybe, it's enough to keep the dog alive. Though, given your last images of it, twitching and shaking, you're not sure it will be. Exhausted, sweaty, and guilt-ridden, you decide to skip the pool today, opting to go home and reflect instead.

The End

As the officer is writing down whatever information she needs, a fire and rescue team arrive to the scene. The officer pulls you aside to give the responders room to work and asks for your statement. You recount the events leading up to this moment.

She responds, "You saved that dog's life, at least for now."

"For now?"

"Well, it's too soon to tell if it's suffered permanent damage to its internal organs. It's a good thing you got it out when you did, though. I'm not going to cite you for destruction of property because, clearly, you were doing what you thought was right and the dog was indeed in danger. But next time, call us right away, ok? The state of Minnesota has protocol in place to handle emergencies like this."

"Ok."

"This doesn't mean you're off the hook, either. If the owner wants to sue for damages, they can take you to court. Then, it's all up to the judge."

You thank the officer, and she walks back to the other police and rescue responders. You're glad you stuck around to help and the dog will live, but you're feeling a bit guilty you didn't call or break the window, sooner. Plus, you might have some legal fees in your future. Exhausted and distracted, you decide to skip the pool this afternoon; you just don't have it in you at the moment. A date with your couch and a pint of ice cream is in your future, instead.

The End

After the officer writes down whatever information she needs, she asks you to recount the events leading up to this moment. After, she responds, "Well, you probably saved that dog's life, at least for now."

"For now?"

"Well, it's too soon to tell if it's suffered permanent damage to its internal organs, but you prevented it from getting any worse."

"Thank goodness."

"I'm glad you feel that way because, unfortunately, I'm going to have to write you a citation for criminal mischief for the broken window. Even though it's illegal to leave an animal unattended in a vehicle under inhumane conditions in the state of New Jersey, there's no rescue provision in place. Dogs are considered property, here. We can't even legally break into the vehicle to save them."

"What can you do, then?"

"Well, there's not much we can do, other than charge the owner with animal cruelty, give them a fine and/or jail time. I'll take down the information, wait with the dog for the owner to return, and proceed from there."

"Oh..."

"Look, if you ask me personally, you did the right thing. We'll let the judge decide what to do. You may get off light since there's a Good Samaritan bill pending in state legislature. Depends on the judge. Next time, just call us immediately, ok?"

"Ok."

"Also, if the owner wants to sue for damages, they can. So, there may be a few court dates in your future. I hope things work out for you."

You thank the officer for letting you go with the citation and leave her with the dog. You're glad you stuck around to help and the dog will likely live, but you're feeling a bit guilty you didn't just break the window sooner, especially since you might have fines and legal fees in your future anyway. Exhausted and anxious, you decide to skip the pool this afternoon; you just don't have it in you at the moment. A date with your couch and a pint of ice cream is in your future, instead.

The End

As the officer is writing down whatever information she needs, emergency responders arrive to the scene. The officer pulls you aside to give the responders room to work and asks for your statement. You recount the events leading up to this moment.

She responds, "You saved that dog's life, at least for now."

"For now?"

"Well, it's too soon to tell if it's suffered permanent damage to its internal organs. It's a good thing you got it out when you did, though. If this ever happens again, don't be afraid to act sooner. Oregon state law protects you from any civil or criminal liability if the animal is in danger and you need to break into the vehicle. Just make sure you call it in either right before or right after you do."

You thank the officer for the information, and she walks back to the other police and emergency responders. You didn't know you had so much authority to act under the law, here. You're glad you stuck around to help and the dog will live, but you're feeling a bit guilty you didn't act sooner. Exhausted and slightly guilt-struck, you decide to skip the pool this afternoon; you just don't have it in you at the moment. A date with your couch and a pint of ice cream is in your future.

The End

After the officer writes down whatever information she needs, she asks you to recount the events leading up to this moment. After, she responds, "Well, you probably saved that dog's life, at least for now."

"For now?"

"Well, it's too soon to tell if it's suffered permanent damage to its internal organs, but you prevented it from getting any worse."

"Thank goodness."

"I'm glad you feel that way because, unfortunately, I'm going to have to write you a citation for criminal mischief for the broken window. There's no law that prohibits leaving an animal trapped in an unattended vehicle here in Texas, and no rescue plan or protections in place. Dogs are considered property. Perhaps he'll be charged under the state's general animal cruelty laws."

"Oh..."

"Look, if you ask me personally, you did the right thing. We'll let the judge decide what to do, though. Next time...call us immediately, ok?"

"Ok."

"Also, if the owner wants to sue for damages, they can. So, there may be a few court dates in your future. Hope things work out for you."

You thank the officer for letting you go with the citation, and leave her with the dog. You're glad you stuck around to help and the dog will likely live, but you're feeling a bit guilty you didn't just break the window sooner, especially since you might have fines and legal fees in your future anyway. Exhausted and anxious, you decide to skip the pool this afternoon; you just don't have it in you at the moment. A date with your couch and a pint of ice cream is in your future, instead.

The End

As the officer is writing down whatever information she needs, a fire and rescue team arrive to the scene. The officer pulls you aside to give the responders room to work and asks for your statement. You recount the events leading up to this moment.

She responds, "You saved that dog's life, at least for now."

"For now?"

"Well, it's too soon to tell if it's suffered permanent damage to its internal organs. It's a good thing you got it out when you did, though. I'm not going to cite you for destruction of property because, clearly, you were doing what you thought was right and the dog was indeed in danger. But next time, leave the heroics to the professionals. The state of Minnesota has a rescue plan in place for emergencies such as these."

"Ok."

"This doesn't mean you're off the hook, either. If the owner wants to sue for damages, they can take you to court. Then, it's all up to the judge."

You thank the officer, and she walks back to the other police and rescue responders. You're glad you stuck around to help and the dog will live, but you're feeling a bit guilty you didn't call or break the window sooner. Plus, you might have some legal fees in your future. Exhausted and distracted, you decide to skip the pool this afternoon; you just don't have it in you at the moment. A date with your couch and a pint of ice cream is in your future, instead.

The End

As the officer is writing down whatever information she needs, a fire and rescue team arrive at the scene. The officer pulls you aside to give the responders room to tend to the dog and asks for your statement. You recount the events leading up to this moment.

She responds, "It's a good thing you got it out when you did, before it started vomiting or seizing or suffered any permanent damage; should recover just fine in few hours."

"Thank goodness."

"However, that doesn't mean you're off the hook. Look, I'm not going to cite you for destruction of property because, clearly, you were doing what you thought was right and the dog was indeed in danger. But next time, call us right away, ok? The state of Minnesota has protocol in place to handle emergencies such as these."

"Ok."

"Also, if the owner wants to sue for damages, they can take you to court. Then, it's all up to the judge. So, this may not be over for you."

You thank the officer, and she walks back to the other police and rescue responders. You're glad you saved the dog's life, but you're *also* a little anxious about some potential legal fees in your future. Feeling buzzed off your good deed and simultaneously in need of a distraction, you call Bianca to apologize for being so late and recount your mid-day heroics on the way to an afternoon of swimming, sunshine, and satisfaction.

The End

After the officer writes down some information, she asks you to recount the events leading up to this moment. After, she responds, "You got it out before it started vomiting or seizing or suffered any permanent damage; should recover just fine in few hours."

"Thank goodness."

"I'm glad you feel that way because, unfortunately, I'm going to have to write you a citation for criminal mischief for the broken window. Even though it's illegal to leave an animal unattended in a vehicle under inhumane conditions in the state of New Jersey, there's no rescue provision in place. Dogs are considered property, here. We can't even legally break into the vehicle to save them."

"What can you do, then?"

"Well, there's not much we can do, other than charge the owner with animal cruelty, give them a fine and/or jail time. I'll take down the information, wait with the dog for the owner to return, and proceed from there."

"Oh..."

"Look, if you ask me personally, you did the right thing. We'll let the judge decide what to do. You may get off light since there's a Good Samaritan bill pending in state legislature. Depends on the judge."

"Ok."

"Also, if the owner wants to sue for damages, they can. So, there may be a few court dates in your future. Hope things work out for you."

You thank the officer for letting you go with the citation, and leave her with the dog. You're glad you saved the dog's life, especially knowing the police wouldn't have done anything, but you're *also* a bit anxious about your legal and financial future. Ultimately, feeling buzzed off your good deed and simultaneously in need of a distraction, you call Bianca to apologize for being so late and recount your mid-day heroics on the way to an afternoon of swimming, sunshine, and satisfaction.

The End

As the officer is writing down whatever information she needs, emergency responders arrive to the scene. The officer pulls you aside to give the responders room to tend to the dog and asks for your statement. You recount the events leading up to this moment.

She responds, "You saved that dog's life. It's a good thing you got it out when you did, before it started vomiting or seizing or suffered any permanent damage; should recover just fine in few hours. Just so you know, Oregon state law protects you from any civil or criminal liability if the animal is in danger and you need to break into the vehicle, as long as you call it in either right before or right after you do."

You thank the officer for the information, and she walks back to the other police and emergency responders. You didn't know you had so much authority to act under the law, here. You're glad you broke the window to save the dog's life, and even feel a little empowered to act sooner next time. Feeling buzzed off your good deed, you call Bianca to apologize for being so late and recount your mid-day heroics on the way to an afternoon of swimming, sunshine, and satisfaction.

The End

After the officer writes down whatever information she needs, she asks you to recount the events leading up to this moment. After, she responds, "You got it out before it started vomiting or seizing or suffered any permanent damage; should recover just fine in few hours."

"Thank goodness."

"I'm glad you feel that way because, unfortunately, I'm going to have to write you a citation for criminal mischief for the broken window. There's no law that prohibits leaving an animal trapped in an unattended vehicle here in Texas, and no rescue plan or protections in place. Dogs are considered property. Perhaps he'll be charged under the state's general animal cruelty laws."

"Oh..."

"Look, if you ask me personally, you did the right thing. But I'm gonna let the judge decide what to do."

"Ok."

"Also, if the owner wants to sue for damages, they can. So, there may be a few court dates in your future. Hope things work out for you."

You thank the officer for letting you go with the citation, and leave her with the dog. You're glad you saved the dog's life, especially knowing that Texas has no law protecting the animal in such situations, but you're *also* a bit anxious about your legal and financial future. Ultimately, feeling buzzed off your good deed and simultaneously in need of a distraction, you call Bianca to apologize for being so late and recount your mid-day heroics on the way to an afternoon of swimming, sunshine, and satisfaction.

The End

As the officer is writing down whatever information she needs, a fire and rescue team arrive at the scene. The officer pulls you aside to give the responders room to tend to the dog and asks for your statement. You recount the events leading up to this moment.

She responds, "You saved that dog's life. It's a good thing you got it out when you did, before it started vomiting or seizing or suffered any permanent damage; should recover just fine in few hours. But next time, leave the heroics to the professionals; they were already en route. The state of Minnesota has a rescue plan in place for emergencies such as these."

"Ok."

"Look, I'm not going to cite you for destruction of property because, clearly, you were doing what you thought was right and the dog was indeed in danger. *However*, that doesn't mean you're off the hook. If the owner wants to sue for damages, they can take you to court. Then, it's all up to the judge. So, this may not be over for you."

You thank the officer, and she walks back to the other police and rescue responders. You're glad you saved the dog's life, but you're *also* a little anxious about some potential legal fees in your future. Feeling buzzed off your good deed and simultaneously in need of a distraction, you call Bianca to apologize for being so late and recount your mid-day heroics on the way to an afternoon of swimming, sunshine, and satisfaction.

The End

As the officer is writing down whatever information she needs, emergency responders arrive to the scene. The officer pulls you aside to give the responders room to check on the dog and asks for your statement. You recount the events leading up to this moment.

She responds, "You likely saved that dog's life. I'm not sure if you're aware of this or not, but Oregon state law protects you from any civil or criminal liability when you needed to break into the vehicle to remove an animal in danger, as long as you call it in either right before or right after you do."

You thank the officer for the information, and she walks back to the other police and emergency responders. You didn't know you had so much authority to act under the law, here. You're happy you acted so quickly to help that sweet dog. Feeling buzzed off your good deed, you call Bianca to apologize for being so late and recount your mid-day heroics on the way to an afternoon of swimming, sunshine, and satisfaction.

The End

You each take a turn telling the officer your side of the story, and you offer up your text to Bianca as evidence of *just* how long this man *would have* left his dog trapped in the hot vehicle had you not acted as you did.

She responds to your statement, "You probably saved that dog's life. But next time, call us right away, ok? The state of Minnesota has protocol in place to handle emergencies such as these."

"Ok."

"Look, I'm not going to cite you for destruction of property because, clearly, you were doing what you thought was right and the dog was indeed in danger. But if this gentleman decides to try his luck in court for the damages to that window, you may be hearing from someone shortly. It'll be up to a judge at that point."

"So, am I good to go for now, officer?"

"For now, yeah. But you might not be in the clear, altogether. Got it?"

"Ok. Thank you officer. Have a good one."

"You as well. Now, as for you young man..."

The officer's voice trails off into the background as you walk away from the scene. You saved the dog's life and only had to sacrifice some water and a little time. Well, and maybe some money in the future for damages. But who knows, if it came down to it, perhaps you'll have a sympathetic judge given the circumstances. Feeling buzzed off your good deed, you call Bianca to apologize for being so late and recount your mid-day heroics on the way to an afternoon of swimming, sunshine, and satisfaction.

The End

You each take a turn telling the officer your side of the story, and you offer up your text to Bianca as evidence for *just* how long this man *would have* left his dog trapped in the hot vehicle had you not acted as you did.

She responds to your statement, "You likely saved that dog's life, but unfortunately, I'm going to have to write you a citation for criminal mischief for the broken window. Even though it's illegal to leave an animal unattended in a vehicle under inhumane conditions in the state of New Jersey, an offense punishable by a fine and/or jail time," she looks hard at the dog's owner when she says this, "there's no rescue provision in place. Dogs are considered property, here. We can't even legally break into the vehicle to save them."

"Oh..."

"Look, if you ask me personally, you did the right thing. I'll let the judge decide what to do. You may get off light since there's a Good Samaritan bill pending in state legislature. Depends on the judge."

"Ok."

"Also, if this gentlemen wants to sue for damages, he can try his luck in court, too. So, there may be a few legal woes in your future. Hope things work out for you."

"So, am I good to go for now, officer?"

"For now, yeah. But you might not be in the clear. Just call it in next time, ok?"

"Ok. Thank you officer. Have a good one."

"You as well. Now, as for you young man..."

The officer's voice trails off into the background as you walk away from the scene. You saved the dog's life and only had to sacrifice some water and a little time. Well, and maybe some money (or worse) in the future. But who knows, perhaps you'll have a sympathetic judge given the circumstances. Feeling buzzed off your good deed, you call Bianca to apologize for being so late and recount your mid-day heroics on the way to an afternoon of swimming, sunshine, and satisfaction.

The End

You each take a turn telling the officer your side of the story, and you offer up your text to Bianca as evidence for *just* how long this man *would have* left his dog trapped in the hot vehicle had you not acted as you did.

She responds to your statement, "You probably saved that dog's life. But next time, notify authorities for your own protection. Oregon state law protects you from any civil or criminal liability if the animal is in danger and you need to break into the vehicle, as long as you call it in either right before or right after you do, ok?"

"Ok"

"Now, I'm not going to arrest you for being a Good Samaritan. But if this gentleman decides to try his luck in court for the damages to that window, you may be hearing from someone shortly. It'll be up to a judge at that point."

"So, am I good to go for now, officer?"

"For now, yeah. But you might not be in the clear altogether. Call it in next time, ok? For your own protection."

"Ok. Thank you officer. Have a good one."

"You as well. Now, as for you young man..."

The officer's voice trails off into the background as you walk away from the scene. You saved the dog's life and only had to sacrifice some water and a little time. Well, and maybe some money in the future for damages. But who knows, if it came down to it, perhaps you'll have a sympathetic judge given the circumstances. Feeling buzzed off your good deed, you call Bianca to apologize for being so late and recount your mid-day heroics on the way to an afternoon of swimming, sunshine, and satisfaction.

The End

You each take a turn telling the officer your side of the story, and you offer up your text to Bianca as evidence for *just* how long this man *would have* left his dog trapped in the hot vehicle had you not acted as you did.

She responds to your statement, "You likely saved that dog's life, but unfortunately, I'm going to have to write you a citation for criminal mischief for the broken window. There's no law that prohibits leaving an animal trapped in an unattended vehicle here in Texas, and no rescue plan or protections in place. Dogs are considered property. Perhaps he'll be charged under the state's general animal cruelty laws."

"Oh..."

"Look, if you ask me personally, you did the right thing. I'll let the judge decide what to do. Also, if this gentlemen wants to sue for damages, he can try his luck in court. So, there may be a few legal woes in your future. Hope things work out for you."

"So, am I good to go for now, officer?"

"For now, yeah. But you might not be in the clear, altogether. Just call it in next time, ok?"

"Ok. Thank you officer. Have a good one."

"You as well. Now, as for you young man..."

The officer's voice trails off into the background as you walk away from the scene. You saved the dog's life and only had to sacrifice some water and a little time. Well, and maybe some money (or worse) in the future. But who knows, perhaps you'll have a sympathetic judge given the circumstances. Feeling buzzed off your good deed, you call Bianca to apologize for being so late and recount your mid-day heroics on the way to an afternoon of swimming, sunshine, and satisfaction.

The End

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Act V:

[Fade Out] Entanglements upon Entanglements upon Entanglements upon En...

“Causality is like a drama. It is no wonder that *drama* simply means ‘things that are done’ or ‘doing’ (Greek), just as *opera* means ‘works’; and opera and drama both have ‘acts.’”

-Timothy Morton, *Realist Magic*

Personal Entanglements

This dissertation project is a drama of entanglements. Before I can wrap up this drama, bring you to its resolution, I present three vignettes to illuminate the entangled threads of how the personal and professional congeal, how life outside the academy and life within it, entangle in interesting, unpredictable, and serendipitous ways.

Acting on Instinct

I’m not sure act II would exist without going to the spa with a comic I’d bought on a whim a few months prior. I was at a crossroads; my original plans for act II just weren’t coming together—I had wanted to create an interactive auditory piece involving tuning to various radio frequencies (and the respective broadcasts) to have my readers experience attunement, dwelling, and rhetorical be-ing, but coordinating time with people to record various parts was proving difficult—and I knew I needed to abandon ship and figure out another approach. Fortunately, the timing of this revelation came a day or two prior to a spa day I had planned with my partner, so I took some light reading material along—an anthology of short comics by queer artists/writers based on the figures in the major arcana of the Tarot that had been sitting unopened for months (waiting for me to finish my dissertation)—to read while I relax. I was two or three comics deep into this anthology when a thought occurred to me: huh, maybe I could use the Tarot to think

through rhetoric, and specifically “the rhetorical tradition.” And as I dwelled with this idea for a few days, it quickly began to take form, shaping itself into what would eventually become act II.

I’m also not sure this chapter would exist without having stumbled into a metaphysical shop a year or two prior and being drawn to a particular Tarot deck, Kim Krans *The Wild Unknowns*, so much so I left the shop and came back a few hours later to buy it because I couldn’t get it out of my mind. I wasn’t particularly looking for a Tarot deck, at the time. I’d been interested in Tarot since I was a kid, and it was an art form I knew I wanted to learn more about eventually but also knew I wouldn’t have time in the near future. But, I bought the deck anyway because something in my gut told me I needed to have it. And it sat near my bedside, mostly unused, until I began working on act II; all of a sudden, Krans’ deck and guidebook became an invaluable resource as I made a last minute major overhaul to my dissertation. And to think, I almost never bought it.

Kairotic Becomings

I watched professional wrestling on and off, with varying degrees of intensity, when I was growing up, falling out of it sometime in high school. But in 2011, I started watching again, and I was instantly hooked. WWE, independent events, old matches on recommendations from friends—I fell in *love* with professional wrestling. So, part of act III comes out of having spent years thinking about, dwelling with, professional wrestling as a fan. That being said, a sizable portion of evidence I use in act III occurred/emerged as I was writing my dissertation. Tweets I cite, interviews that I quote, events to which I refer: this topic *kairotically unfolded* as I was writing, and what’s truly exciting is it’s *still emerging, still unfolding*. While act III may have

been about one act performed at a singular moment in time, Candice LeRae's crimson mask, the ending of LeRae's story, and the story of women in professional wrestling, is unfolding and yet unknown. Act III, then, might have taken any number of shapes if events and conversations had unfolded differently.

However, I know for *certain* act III would look different if I didn't also front a punk band that plays songs about professional wrestling. I've been playing music virtually my whole life and have written countless songs in my time (literally countless—there are songs with no written or audio records, moments of ephemeral composition lost to time), but of all the music I've written, my [wrestling songs](#) are among my favorite. I think it's because I've crafted them to appeal simultaneously to both wrestling and non-wrestling audiences, a choice that directly contributed to my dissertation. Some of the evidence I use in act III, including both epigraphs from female wrestlers, came from interviews done on podcasts that came into my orbit while I was writing and revising *only* because my band's music was being featured in the episodes. These podcasts were produced by individuals I'd never met who found my band either by being wrestling fans or punks (or perhaps both), and because my band offered creative content that helped enhance *their* creative content, I've now got additional research that helps me better articulate the complex argument I'm attempting to capture. In short, *because of my band* I've been able to present my research to you, the reader, as such. I take that as a win.

From Campfire to Campus

I've been wanting to write a piece of scholarship that was structured/iterated as a CYOA piece for a while now. I can't recall how long ago my partner and I started this tradition, but

when we go camping, we typically take a couple CYOA novels to read out loud together by the campfire. Someone will narrate, the other person will choose a path, and we'll go through the book a number of times with the crack and pop and hiss of the fire, perhaps some rustling leaves, adding ambiance to the scene. Campfire stories are nothing new; this is just one way we like to enjoy/perform them together. Then, after one random camping trip I got it in my brain that it would be fun and challenging to create a piece of scholarship that functions like a CYOA novel, but for years nothing sparked. The inspiration to take the idea further just wasn't there.

Until I began thinking about my dissertation. That early stage, fresh off exams, staring your prospectus in the face kind of thinking. I had these ideas about mattering and dwelling and ethics that I just couldn't get out of my head, and I felt rather impelled to follow that train of thought wherever it led me. And where it led me, rather quickly, was back to this CYOA idea that I'd been dwelling with for a while. Yes. That's it. I could take a complex ethical situation and lean into the complexity by offering multiple possibilities for action with various endings depending on the choices that are made. Perfect. I finally found a way to use this idea that not only made sense, but that also enhanced these other ideas I wanted to work with. Of everything that's presented to you here, act IV is, in many ways, the least changed or altered from its original inception. As soon as the ideas clicked, they *clicked*, you know? Funny how that happens.

If being, knowing, and acting are complexly entangled phenomena, then we must approach our scholarship and pedagogy—and by extension our collective and individual ways of being in the world— from such a perspective, too. I established in act I that entangled, ethico-

onto-epistemological orientations and actions are always partly ecological. The above three vignettes demonstrate how inspiration comes from being enmeshed in one's environments, with many factors coming together as energy flows, objects, chance, as well as personal volitions and attunements brush up against one another—make contact—in specific, unpredictable, and shifting ways. In order to deliver rhetorical scholarship and pedagogy that can capture the dynamic, emergent, ambiguous qualities of entanglements, we must, from the initial moments of invention onward, discover ways to attune to *the specificities of the entanglement we are working with/in*, these particular places of contact, in order to produce artifacts of scholarship and pedagogy that can best communicate those specificities. And when doing scholarship, attuning to the specificities of entanglements also includes tending to the specific and particular ways in which *we* are entangled with/in what we produce—the ways our personal beings, knowledges, and experiences impact what we create.

These vignettes highlight the ways in which I've been *dwelling*, in some form or another, with central aspects of this dissertation since before I ever knew what this project would be. And I don't think my experience is unique; I think as academics, our personal and professional lives are *deeply* entangled. I believe we spend so much of our lives (our time, our resources, our energy) dwelling with the materials, tools, theories, practices, and episteme of our fields that we can't help but view the world, make it *matter*, through these orientations we've spent years—decades, even—cultivating. And yet, what brings us to our fields, what energizes our work, what sparks our “research brains” in the first place—at least, in my experience, so maybe I'm the odd one out, here—have been personal affairs: what we encounter in our everyday lives, what we find personally interesting or energizing or worth investing in. No wonder academics, generally,

tend to stake so much of our identities on/in our work; the personal and the professional are always-already entangled.

Artistry, Carpentry, and the Possibilities of Entanglement

Perhaps I'm biased, but having known and spent substantial time dwelling among many artists of a variety of media, I don't think I'm saying anything radical here when I claim that artists view, understand, and experience the world—make it matter—*differently* than most individuals. This is perhaps evidenced most in the propensity towards and application of lateral thinking skills. Lateral thinking, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, is “a way of thinking which seeks the solution to intractable problems through unconventional or seemingly illogical methods.” However, critical thinking, “the objective, systematic, and rational analysis and evaluation of factual evidence in order to form a judgement on a subject, issue, etc.” (“critical”), has been the predominate orientation toward problem solving traditionally sought after and taught by rhetorical and composition scholars. When I say that scholars of both rhetoric and composition need to cultivate new orientations, new habits, new dispositions, new ways of being in the world, of knowing it, of relating to it, of acting within it, I think artists and artistry offer a way forward. I believe that by developing scholarship and pedagogy that fosters an orientation of artistry and lateral thinking skills in addition to critical thinking skills, we can begin to craft creative and innovative solutions for the increasingly complex, messy, ambiguous, and volatile problems of the 21st century.

To explain, let me return to carpentry—a piece of this entangled puzzle I introduced in act I. I said earlier that this dissertation is a work of what Ian Bogost terms philosophical

carpentry, an artifact that performs/embodies its theory/philosophy rather than explicates it. Bogost defines *creativity* as “construction, the assembly of something new out of known parts” (111), and that “to do carpentry is to make anything, but to make it in earnest, with one’s own hands” (93). Carpentry, then, made in earnest with one’s own hands, is a deeply *personal* endeavor. The maker, creating something new from known parts, is *part* of the entanglement of material and theory and motivation that eventually becomes the artifact. Who that individual is, what they know and observe, how they act and behave all influence the object that is being produced; the creator cannot be removed from the entanglement. As I’ve demonstrated with the three vignettes with which I open this act, an approach of carpentry has allowed me to tend to the entangled aspects of my personal and professional life as a fundamental part of this larger work on rhetorical entanglements which examines, utilizes, synthesizes, and creates theory from an ethico-onto-epistemological orientation which considers being, knowing, and acting to, itself, be a singular, complexly entangled phenomenon. Carpentry, then, not only accounts for the ways in which scholars entangle with the scholarship they produce, it asks us to use such entanglement as a generative space of possibility that helps us to engage in practices of mattering that make personal connections between and among extant knowledges to craft some *thing* new.

If creativity is the assembly of something new out of known parts, then maybe it’s time we reframe the act of knowledge generation/production in and of itself (within the academy or otherwise) as a *creative, artistic* endeavor—as carpentry, as making. In fact, I would argue that this is what Timothy Morton was suggesting when he said, as I mention in act I, that causality (*how* things entangle) is an aesthetic phenomenon. Morton claims that “art is a tuning” (22), and that the “trouble with tuning” is that “it’s not about correct or incorrect interpretation, though

surely some interpretations *are* better than others, since there are real objects” (22); rather, Morton argues that “when you tune you are making another object. Tuning is the birth of another object: a tune, a reading, an interpretation” (23), and that “when you tune, real things happen. You are affecting causality. You are establishing a link with at least one other actually existing entity” (23). Tuning, then, is an act of creative-connection, particularly when understood from Bogost’s notion of creativity as assembling something new from the known. This notion of tuning as a creative, connective act that births another known or encountered object is useful in conjunction with Rickert’s notion of *attunement* as well as Barad’s quantum intra-actions. If Rickert’s attunement is the always-already-ongoing shifting attempts at achieving harmony or balance or synchronicity (or discord—it doesn’t always have to be harmonious) within an entanglement, and Morton’s tuning establishes creative connections with other existing entities, then Barad’s intra-action highlights the ways in which these acts of (at)tuning happen co-constitutively—how agents creatively shape one another in responsive, dynamic, and complex ways. New knowledge is created out of extant ideas, notions, concepts, methods, frames when various agents intra-act in specific, particular ways, again highlighting how being, knowing, and acting as a single, entangled, emergent process.

Which leads me to this further point of consideration: there has long been a rallying cry that “the arts” need to be put back in education and civic life. I believe it’s not just “the arts,” though—we need *artistry*: creative skill and aptitude. Sadly, many individuals have been made to believe that they’re not creative or that creativity is some magical, naturally occurring talent that’s off limits to regular folks. I argue, though, that by focusing on incorporating *artistry* into our scholarship and pedagogy, *the capacity of making something new from the known*, scholars

of rhetoric and composition can help tangibly craft in students and citizens the responsive, ethico-onto-epistemological orientations I argue are necessary to cope with complex, difficult, messy, and ambiguous 21st century problems. This notion of artistry aligns with work being done to conceptualize composition as *making*, particularly Ann Shivers-McNair's work on makerspaces, "where collaboration, creativity, tinkering, and entrepreneurship are valued and made possible" (Shivers-McNair 26). A focus on artistry, on making, on creativity in rhetoric and composition means a focus on cultivating an orientation towards seeing the possibility of connection, of evaluating what resources, what pieces, are at your disposal, and constructing/making/creating in response to the connections one makes.

Which brings me, at last, to the *delivering* part of this dissertation's title. Morton identifies delivery as both "a physical object and its sensual medium" (84). I want to make a bold claim, here: artists (makers, creators, composers) are *delivery* specialists with expertise in creating some *thing* (a physical object) that affects and moves other people (in a sensual medium) that communicates deep truths and communal experiences and circulating energies in ways that resonate deeply across backgrounds and experiences and perspectives. While artistry involves cultivating skills related to invention, it's really the focus on *delivering* "the molten core of a thing" (Morton 86) that I want to call upon when I say that academic knowledge production could benefit from bringing *artistry* back into our scholarly and pedagogical practices. Delivery—as the physical, material, aesthetic form or embodiment of rhetoric that's intended for others to receive or experience—is where contact happens, is where pieces of knowledge are made available for others to use, assemble, and create anew, is where, as Morton observes, "the causal properties of the object reside" (35). As such, I argue that delivery and invention (as well as the

other canons of rhetoric) themselves are an inherently entangled phenomenon, a fact Morton picks up on when he says that “*being* an object is a matter of all the different parts of rhetoric happening at one and the same time” (85). I would argue that this isn’t just exclusive to objects; being *in general* involves experiencing all parts of rhetoric at the same time—as fundamentally entangled. And since, as I’ve established throughout this dissertation, an ethico-onto-epistemological orientation towards rhetoric understands being, knowing, and acting as fundamentally entangled, if *being* involves experiencing all canons of rhetoric at once, so do our experiences of *knowing* and *acting*—it’s entanglements upon entanglements upon entanglements. The canons of rhetoric, then, can be understood as five intra-acting elements or dimensions of a singular, entangled process of rhetorical emergence.

By focusing on *delivering* rhetorical entanglements through an approach of carpentry throughout this dissertation project, I’ve been able to explore the messy, complex, non-linear, sometimes incoherent, often ambiguous, and almost certainly difficult ways in which rhetoric emerges from a dense, situationally unique intra-active entanglement of particular agents. In addition to advocating for an ethico-onto-epistemological orientation to rhetoric and composition in order to expand our own available means of crafting and delivering scholarship and pedagogy, I’ve also advocated for *mattering* and *dwelling* as two general approaches or orientations to observing, capturing, analyzing, working with, and, ultimately, delivering this singular, entangled phenomenon of being, knowing, and acting. These two approaches can be used independently or in conjunction with one another as the particularities of the rhetorical entanglement in question demand, which acts II-IV of my dissertation demonstrate further. Act II takes up the orientation/approach of dwelling by making it a fundamental part of the experience I deliver, one where I

ask my reader/user to *dwell* within a set of Tarot cards, *attuning* to the various insights and wisdoms contained therein. In performing these actions (of dwelling and attunement), the reader both comes to know/discover various conceptualizations of what rhetoric is (that is, rhetoric's *being*) as well as specific ways in which rhetorical theory can be utilized to approach, think through, and address various problems, issues, or questions one may have. After focusing on dwelling in act II, act III centers an approach/orientation of mattering, demonstrating how an agent (myself in crafting the chapter; LeRae in donning the crimson mask) can make/create/shape knowledge/meaning in complex, intra-active ways. By examining the shifting *agency* of women in professional wrestling, an art form steeped in *ambiguity*, I trace the ways in which LeRae's *action* both emerges from and dynamically feeds back into a soon-to-be communal assumption of women's vitality in professional spheres. Act IV demonstrates what is possible when both mattering and dwelling are performed simultaneously: in this case, in the service of cultivating a more-than-human orientation towards ethical action based in response-ability. By asking my reader/user to *dwell* within a single narrative arc with many possibilities for action and *matter* by choosing their own ways forward through the narrative, I demonstrate the ways in which myriad agents entangle in everyday acts of ethical decision making. Finally, here in act V, I've made the argument that scholars themselves are a piece of the equation in any piece of scholarship or pedagogy we produce, that we can use our specific attunements, our personal ways of being and knowing and acting, to forge connections among extant material to create something new. In short, the ways that we dwell (both in and out of the academy) profoundly influence what we see as mattering (to our fields and to society), and acknowledging such can help us cultivate a capacity for artistry within our scholarship and pedagogy and more responsive

and communal orientations toward all manner of beings and things with which we're entangled in everyday life.

Trying to conclude this dissertation is much like trying to begin it—because the entangled threads refuse to stay put, because they weave in and out of one another, it's hard to know when and where and how to *stop* looking. Given this, allow me to end by overviewing what a capacity of artistry means for ethico-onto-epistemological rhetorical and composition theory. Specifically, artistry offers a chance to cultivate orientations of or capacities for possibility, play, collaboration, resourcefulness, and empathy. What I offer here is a *too brief* overview of these five orientations/capacities developed through artistry, which can and should be further developed in future scholarship. However, I hope that by ending with a glimpse of what artistry tangibly offers, we can continue developing productive and ethical ways of being, knowing, and acting within the complex, messy, ambiguous, difficult, unpredictable and more-than-human entanglements that define 21st century existence.

Possibility

Artistry orients individuals toward possibility. An orientation of possibility means viewing and understanding rhetorical entanglements as generative spaces filled with all manner of fertile connections, associations, and options. In a world where rhetoric dynamically emerges from the intra-actions of diverse agents, engaging possibility means recognizing what resources are presently available and remaining open to being surprised by what transpires as one progresses through a project, inquiry, or idea. In short, an orientation of artistry means learning to follow the possibilities where they lead. This orientation seems particularly useful for discussing, teaching,

or, theorizing *kairos* as an opening (in space/time) that must be created or cultivated (not simply capitalized upon) and a notion of rhetorical *invention* that brings the focus back to discovery.

That is, creating or inventing is an act that's rooted in discovering what agents, resources, ideologies, energies, etc. presently surround and inform a given situation/entanglement and how they can possibly be utilized to do/create/make something else. An orientation of possibility, then, revels in what *can* happen, remaining open to all manner of opportunities that may emerge.

Play

Artistry involves play; it orients individuals toward experimentation, toward trial and error, toward "I don't know, let's try it and see what happens." An orientation of playfulness not only sees the possibilities one is surrounded by but also seeks to discover what actually happens when various connections or associations are made. Whether those connections are productive or lead to nowhere is, often, besides the point; it's the act of playing with the connections that's truly valuable. An orientation of play is particularly useful in the composition classroom, where we can place an emphasis on *trying* an assignment to see what's discovered along the way, taking stock of both successes and failures in order to carry those discoveries forward on future work. This takes pressure off of students being expected have a perfect or polished final product; rather, it becomes about the journey to get to that final product, whatever the state. An orientation of play, then, gives permission to try and, more importantly, to fail.

Collaboration

Developing a capacity for artistry means orienting one's self toward collaboration. Musicians in a band rely on and play off of one another to create music. Sitcom writers toss ideas out at one another to see what sticks. Comic books involve not only writers and illustrators but inkers and letterers and cover artists and editors and publishers and a whole host of others that work together to bring the story to life. Films involve entire production crews to do the same. I think you get the idea. Despite what myths may still be propagated, artists do not work in isolation. They work together to help create the works enjoyed by audiences. Bringing artistry back to our scholarship and pedagogy means bringing a renewed focus on collaboration. This, in turn, helps cultivate the responsive capacities necessary for attunement and ethical action in more-than-human entanglements. An orientation towards collaboration, then, prepares individuals to work cooperatively instead of competitively, a necessary task for cultivating a sustainable 21st century existence.

Resourcefulness

Artists tend to be a resourceful bunch. Developing a capacity for artistry orients individuals toward seeing and understanding the resources at one's disposal for creating something new out of the known. Artists routinely grapple with tangible available means for production (materials, money, time, space, people, tools, techniques, etc.), which makes them quick and adept at surveying situations and solving problems (often in surprising or innovative ways). Cultivating a capacity for resourcefulness means foregrounding an orientation where the act and objects of production are deeply and complexly entangled with whatever resources are presently available

at the time of production. Bringing such resourcefulness into our classrooms can help create new orientations towards research, finding and evaluating sources, working with evidence, and other traditional acts related to the production of scholarly discourse as well as can help students creatively approach assigned tasks based on the resources they have at their disposal. An orientation of resourcefulness, then, allows the available means in a given context to inform, shape, and mold the production and creation of objects/acts of scholarship, pedagogy, and rhetorical discourse.

Empathy

Artistry can lead to the development of empathetic orientations towards others, human and non-human alike. Acts of creation can be incredibly personal endeavors, and it requires vulnerability to put your work out into the world to be interpreted and critiqued as others see fit. It's this vulnerable state I want to zero in on, here. Any artist who seeks to grow and improve must let their guard down and remain open to listening. This vulnerable disposition enables individuals *to change and be changed by* those that they encounter. Artists are consistently engaged in acts of giving and receiving interpretation and critique, repeatedly entering such vulnerable states. This vulnerability coupled with an orientation towards collaboration can mean that, over time, artists become more understanding and empathetic (or, conversely, grow more isolated, but this is a complex conversation for another space). In cultivating the capacity for artistry in our scholarship and pedagogy, we would also be crafting new orientations toward acts of interpretation and critique that honor the vulnerability of the moment and seek to position these processes as acts of collaboration themselves: that the entire endeavor of criticism can be

reimagined as working together for the betterment of the project/inquiry/assignment/act/object that's being created. An orientation of empathy, then, offers a chance to re-imagine scholarship and pedagogy as fundamentally cooperative endeavors.

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