

Slow Reading: Reflections on Jasmine Ulmer's "Writing Slow Ontology"

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Abstract

To cite a text is to read it. A citation asserts that I've read what I cited. But more importantly, the way we cite indicates the quality of our reading. To have the right to use a text, we must fully engage with it. When our disposition seeks error, we miss the truth of the text. It's within this spirit that I engage with Jasmine Ulmer's "Writing Slow Ontology." At bottom, slow writing deserves slow reading.

Keywords

literacy, citation, ontology

Charitable Reading

In academic writing, I often find myself interpellated as a particular kind of reader. Namely, the position that I'm given to occupy is one of a reader who reads uncharitably. To the anyone who reads, academic writing makes excuses for its own shortcomings, acknowledges that it hasn't investigated this or that thing which might've been useful, and generally apologizes for ways in which the reader may not like what's to be read. Is it that academic writers, unlike writers working within different genres, have far more insecurities? Perhaps, but these insecurities aren't ones coming from within. Academic writing goes through rigorous peer review, so it could be that the final written product reflects the articulated shortcomings, accusations of not being well-read, and the expressed dislikes of a peer reviewer, or at least anticipated ones. And really, this isn't even to mention that we've entered an era of postpublication peer review.

Is this what spoils our writing, then? Shall we blame peer reviewers? Perhaps, but that I'm hailed as a peer reviewer means that I browbeat. True, these are never the instructions given in the invitational form letters, but neither does the institution of peer review lend itself to reviews comprised only of: "This is wonderful and should be published." If we occupy the position of peer reviewer, we feel as though such a review wouldn't pass as rigorous, even when warranted. Why? Because as academics, we think that even the works we most highly value contain the potential for improvement. How many times have we, in one way or another, rewritten *Das Kapital* or *Anti-Oedipus*? In the way to truth that's art, let's say, there are the sublime works of poetry. No one, however, other than perhaps the poet's closest friend, would ask, "Shouldn't March be the cruelest month?" But not so for scholarship.

What now, then? Shall we blame an institution, or perhaps even a set of institutions? Is it something bigger than us that makes us both ostensibly insecure writers and menacing readers? Neoliberalism and the corporatization of the university may both seem too easy a target for this, and they are. But they're too easy a target only because we typically blame neoliberalism and university corporatization for everything. Surely, both are blameworthy, but not solely. We as writers and readers haven't done much by way of resisting, especially as readers. In the latter case, for instance, we often act like neoliberal consumers.

But why read more charitably in the first place? We read charitably because we overlook the truth of a text when our disposition is to seek error. To find what's true in a text is difficult, for finding the truth doesn't come with uncritical reading. Rather, what critical reading aims at is precisely this, so it's unclear why this has been so epically forgotten. Again, in the way to truth that's art, no one goes to a museum to wave one's hand at a painting and say, "You know, this patch here should've been a little more red . . . no, more crimson, actually." This isn't to find the truth in painting. To find the truth in a painting, we appreciate it for its depth. And this, of course, entails more than the other kind of hand waving, the kind asserting that this or that painting "is pretty." We must appreciate the gift of depth by returning depth in kind.

So what would it mean to read more charitably? Among other things, we'd have to read more slowly. This doesn't

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necessarily pertain, however, to reading as we typically conceive it. We'd have to read more slowly in terms of how we make citations.

To Cite a Text Is to Read It

To cite a text is to read it. At the very least, a citation asserts that I've read what I cited. But more importantly, the way we cite indicates the quality of our reading. Reading must be slow and mediated to be enjoyed, and here we think of enjoyment as *usufruct*. To have the right to use a text, we must fully engage with it. Otherwise, we partake in the mere destruction and squandering of a resource. This is especially true when in a long string of citations, we cite a text that has a philosophical richness deserving to be consumed on its own. We can't read philosophy with the immediacy, with the un-mediatedness of speed reading. It seems disrespectful to reduce such a work to a summarizing sentence, a sentence wherein it isn't even an exclusive mention. Why do we cite this way? It could be, one could say, that such a practice has utility.

It's true that during the days of the card catalog, there used to be the joy of serendipitously happening upon an insight here or there, but this wasn't at all efficient. Take books for example. What used to be indexed wasn't more than the words on the title page and the Cataloging in Publication (CIP) data. If a book were around 150,000 words, what would've been indexed would only be an almost negligible fraction. These were the days when we'd read an entire book just to be sure that it didn't contain anything useful. In the process, we became well-read. But such habits take a long time. Thus, in those days, things in the vein of literature reviews, things like the long citation strings, these did have utility. It's always less work to steal someone else's sack of goodies. But now that we can google full text, these don't serve much purpose for the reader, nor do they necessarily demonstrate that the author is particularly well-read. Too often, we encounter surnames followed by parenthetical years in contexts where they don't belong. So why partake in citing this way—in the way amounting to nothing more than tiresome name dropping—now that this particular utility is gone?

Our colleagues, real or imagined, can sometimes be menacing. For many of us, we may be worried about people on our tenure committee. We're convinced that the publications in our dossier must demonstrate our being well-read in our respective field. Furthermore, to publish in the first place, we need to make this same demonstration to reviewers who we might anticipate rejecting our article because we failed to cite this or that scholar or make mention of a particular body of work. And does that make sense? Does it make sense to assert that an argument is bad, or that the research is any less than it is, just because the author failed to give a shout-out? No, but further still, it may be that we

cite this way because it's convention, and we feel compelled to conform to others before us, compelled because that's how we assure ourselves that we're doing it right. In all these examples, these citations have yet another kind of utility, but only one that establishes our own credentials, our expertise, our position as someone who's allowed to speak. They do nothing for the reader, however. First, now that everyone can search things for themselves with ease, this sort of demonstration of expertise can be dubious. We can't forever pretend that Google doesn't exist. But second and more importantly, these long citation strings do nothing for the reader because the practice does collective damage to all our work. If we're a good reader of other people's writing, we should demonstrate our appreciation in ways other than gulping down whole bodies of work at once. Let's perhaps think about it this way: For any article with 50 citations—each of those articles citing yet another 50 articles, and so on—we're picking up thousands of years worth of work anytime we print out an article. But this would take 8,000 years to digest, not 8,000 words. No, we can better demonstrate our appreciation by engaging with works through slow reading, demonstrating our being well-read through reading well. Only the expert can fully enjoy. It's the neophyte who squanders through ignorance and an inability to appreciate. But of course, so too does a neoliberal consumer. The neoliberal consumer is voracious and speedy.

We of course shouldn't be too cynical about all citational practices. There are of course the citations marking identification or disidentification: I may cite Foucault to indicate that I'm a Foucauldian . . . or not one. Furthermore, citing certain works or scholars may serve to frame our own argument. We may cite to share interests. We may cite in the name of creating the intertextual. Also, we may cite for the most important reason: to give credit when it's due. No, my only hesitation about things like long citation strings and the preponderance of citations to which they contribute is this: We count the practice as a sufficient condition for doing good scholarship, even when it's done for reasons neither useful to the reader nor necessary. Of course, I'm not placing any blame on scholars partaking in this. An institutional practice within which we find ourselves in the middle is never our fault. Still, the way we cite needs to be rethought. We need to do a better job of incorporating other scholarship into our own work. We need to engage beyond mentioning. We need to consume what's out there differently. We mustn't simply write citations into our work, nor should we esteem ourselves because a colorful donut shows that many others have written our work into theirs. Citing isn't a writing. As I said, properly speaking, to cite a text means to read it.

With regard to this citation that is reading, we need to slow things down. Initially, "Writing Slow Ontology" by Jasmine Ulmer had been one among many citations intended for this article. It was contained in a sentence that went

along with *The Slow Professor*. However, I found myself returning to the Ulmer piece often. And when I realized that I myself wasn't walking the walk, so to speak, the decision was easy. As are her other writings, Ulmer's is a philosophically rich text. Why should I merely write it in as a citation? I should rather read it more thoroughly.

What follows are some of the fruits of my reading. I should note, however, that regarding my attempt at a slow, charitable reading, the spirit of what follows isn't that of watch and learn. The spirit is that of watch as I learn, watch as I learn from Ulmer. I think that such a thing can be valuable. Maybe we should consider making room somewhere for readings like this.

* * *

Also, Over the Nature Sounds, There was a Train

Belle Isle Soundscape

Slow Ontology: Water

See link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLiFY9tlDew> (Ulmer, 2017, p. 204)

Somewhere, there's a documentary wherein Olivier Messiaen is talking about how he composed the pieces in his *Catalogue d'oiseaux*. If memory serves, he makes the bird noises with his mouth; they cut to an actual chirping bird; and then his wife, Yvonne Loriod, plays the passage in question on the piano. It's quite something to see how the influence of nature translates into the composition. It's fascinating, and I can't find it. It must be lost in the ether of Internet.

In a subsection of "Writing Slow Ontology," the subsection titled "2 Inselruhe Avenue, Detroit, MI 48207," Ulmer does something like the same. She recorded the sounds from the location, returned home, and wrote alongside of its rhythms. Luckily for me, the link to the audio file pointed somewhere: Brush, brush, splash . . . What is that? Is that the sound of walking through tall grass in shallow water? Those plop sounds sound like they can only have been made through the toes. Shoes would've made a more splashing kind of noise. And anyway, why would one walk through the water in one's shoes? Maybe flip flops, but one would've heard the flopping. More questions flooded my mind: Can one be a part of the landscape, part of it as one moves through it? Perhaps, but only if one can be part of the open. However, would being part of the open also count as being ontological? Rather than only being beings that simply are, ontological beings are beings for which being is a concern. Beings that simply are, we call those ontic. Ontic beings of nature move in the open inasmuch as they don't represent themselves to themselves, for the open itself, as they say, is

a nowhere without the no. Without the boundary defining no, there's the boundless open, the boundless open wherein there's no self, no selves, no things as things, but only the there is, the *there is* that's without a predicate. This *there is* is the open. For ontological beings, though, we can never truly be in the open, for we represent ourselves to ourselves through negation: I am I insofar as I'm not what I'm not. We can't think of an ourselves in the first place without negation, without thinking about the what that we aren't. Because we can't properly be ontological beings without recourse to negation, we can't ontologically be in this nowhere without the no. But then again, perhaps this can be accomplished, or at least approximated—this being part of the open—through the slowness of the ontologically slow. Ah, perhaps this is Ulmer's insight. Still, however, isn't it true that, "Not even the lark sees the open"? In any case, speaking of, there was a chirping bird at the end the recording. I remembered Messiaen. Perhaps someday, someone will repost the video.

Symmetries

There's a wonderful and minimal symmetric ordering in Messiaen's work. Is that why I love it so? Messiaen, of course, developed the seven modes of limited transposition. They're limited because they're organized around musical intervals or chords that become symmetrical inversions of themselves: the tritone, the augmented triad, the diminished seventh. The modes make Messiaen's music wide because things flip over onto themselves. He achieves wider sonic spaces horizontally, without the density of more notes. That can be taken in two ways. First, it isn't the wideness of an Ustvolskaya, say, something achieved through the dense verticality of her homophony. Second, it isn't the density of adding more notes to the set as would, say, someone like Harry Partch. Partch was famous for his microtonal works. No, Messiaen's compositions are delightfully wide, yet clean and satisfying, a sharp contrast to the aforementioned other two.

There's the same wonderful and minimal symmetric ordering in Ulmer's article, and perhaps this is the result of her careful attention to rhythm. Rhythms are themselves fascinatingly symmetrical. Backwards or forwards, they retain their characteristics, their pulse. I must like Ulmer's work because I like rhythm. For me, though time isn't a being, it is a condition of being. Furthermore, time is a material condition of being, and being a material condition, it must be the case that to understand time materially means to understand the past and future as only partial representations of a time wherein past and future exist at once. We don't yet fully understand time and its materiality. If you're unconvinced, google time crystals. It's a newly observed form of matter. Matter, apparently, can have a form of temporally repetitive symmetry. Repetitions are symmetrical? Yes, I believe that they can be if you fold them through the axis of a present, but here I digress.

Symmetry: Where Ulmer's piece effectively starts, she discusses food, and where the piece ends, she ends with the poetic. While that may not seem like symmetry at first blush, it is. Food is the stuff of consumption, a consumption that fills an emptiness through a destructive act constructing one's body. Poetry is an act of *poiesis*. And what's this? It's a creation *ex nihilo*, an act of production emptying an emptiness of its emptiness, a productive act constructing one's thought. Temporal symmetries, when they're along minimal axes, are a characteristic of the slow. In the slow, the duration along which two instants mirror each other between past and future is singular, but wide.

Streaming Music

Alternative rhythms of inquiry run counter to the systematic beats of the academic *metronome*, which results in a constant churn of articles, chapters, books, and monographs across the academy. This *stream* of production responds to the privileged status that writing holds within research [emphasis added]. (Ulmer, 2017, p. 202)

And what is it that the machines that are everywhere do? They produce flows that yet other machines interrupt. And what is this academic stream of production itself but a flow? And what of this metaphor of the metronome that keeps time for this stream? It isn't for nothing that I think of Ulmer's writing as musical.

It's true that the metronome keeps musical time systematically, and if one is a musician who plays jazz, say, one can have a difficult time using the standard wind-up ticker. Its clicks are too homogeneous. It becomes confusing when one is trying to syncopate. One is better off practicing with a drummer. So can such a metronome be confusing to those of us who play according to these alternative rhythms of inquiry, those of us who are syncopated, so to speak?

And again of machines producing flows: If such a machine is a musician producing a flow of music, the machine of the metronome only serves to interrupt this flow. Metronomes are only for practice. They're never part of an actual performance. It's funny, then, how all this works. If capitalism is itself a flow, and the stream—for better or for worse—of academic production is but an undercurrent of capitalism, then really, rhythms such as the ticking of the tenure clock do nothing but to interrupt. How odd!

It Has a Pulse

cycling through rain drops,
heartbeats, and rustling leaves. (Ulmer, 2017, p. 209)

At first, the profundity of these lines eluded me. Upon a second look, I saw that they contain all types of beings. Rain drops are ontic in the way that a stone is ontic. If the

cycling is indeed the cycling of a bicycle, these are instrumental beings. Beings with heartbeats who cycle are ontological. However, if these beings with heartbeats are the beings we pass by while cycling, beings like squirrels inadvertently planting trees by hiding acorns, these are animal. Rustling leaves, too, are two types of beings, for an ambiguity is not an either/or, but quite literally a both. Here, a both of what? Rustling leaves can be attached to trees, and these imply the beings of nature that are alive and without world in the open. But rustling leaves may be the rustling leaves of autumn, the fallen leaves that rustle as we cycle through them, cycling as they themselves finish their own cycle through the seasons. In this case, rustling leaves are beings that used to be alive and without world in the open.

Furthermore, all these things have a pulse, not necessarily in the sense of a heartbeat, but a pulse nonetheless. Rain drops, heartbeats, and rustling leaves all have a rhythm, and further, like any rhythm, they cycle. Further still, represented here is the cycle of the open with regard to beings ontological. At first, we're mineral; we then become who we are; then we die and feed the trees. The open, the predicateless *there is*, it has a pulse.

Clocks

Given that much of the academic life cycle is predicated on writing, it provides a potential site of intervention for those who desire to produce research differently, reimagine impact, or *write to something other than the rhythms of the clock* [emphasis added]. (Ulmer, 2017, p. 202)

These clocks mediate my writing in much the same way [emphasis added]. By attending to the rhythms and pace of my local surroundings, whether they be a neighborhood-folk-art-installation, rural historic cemetery, or island state park, the local materiality of what I feel, touch, eat, breathe, walk, drive, think, and dream—what I see every day—finds its way into writing. (Ulmer, 2017, p. 205)

These two passages may seem to contradict each other, but they don't. They don't because there are clocks that are the clock, and then there are the other clocks that are the pulse of the beings in the world. These are the clocks to which Ulmer writes, the things she sees each day, the mundane. Literally, things mundane are things of the world. But what sort of time is the time of the world?

We can think of time in at least two ways. Either time is durational, comprised of moments between instants, or time is a succession of instants, none of which themselves have duration. Given that Ulmer is exploring a slow ontology, especially as pertains to writing, what can we make of the temporal descriptor *slow*? Is to be concerned about slow being to think about the slow in terms of durations or in terms of successive instants?

Let's start with what slow isn't. Slow isn't the immediate. Immediacy is literally that which isn't mediated. Things in a relationship of immediacy are things that touch. This might be in physical space, but it might also be in the space that's time. Again, this isn't the slow. The slow, if not immediate, must be mediated. So then, is the slow where there are several mediations, say the mediations of several instants? It would seem like this would make sense, for if the fast is closer to the immediate, then the slow would have more mediating instants, making its distance to the immediate further away. But couldn't this also be a description of the fast, for given a certain time, the fast gathers together more instants than that which proceeds slowly? This is the problem with thinking of time in terms of instants. Instants are of no duration, so you can't really line them up end to end. That's why thinking in instants leads to paradoxes. It must be the case that we always need to think in terms of duration when we think about world time. But then does this mean that the slow is what becomes or is completed only after a long duration?

This doesn't seem to be what's meant by the slow either. For instance, from the time I'm invited to submit a manuscript, I may take a year to turn it in. I may write that manuscript in a few days, however. It's just that there are long stretches of time when I might be procrastinating—and not in a productive way—between this section and the next. This we wouldn't call slow. So what then?

It must be the case that this slow isn't merely something that becomes or is completed only after a long duration. That might be true for other things, but not here. We wouldn't call this slow because this wouldn't be a slow mode of concerned being. Slow isn't itself a being, but a way of being. To be slow is to follow the pulse of the world through its pulsations, through all of its pulsations. Thus, the duration of slowness is wide and uninterrupted. In this way, slowness touches the border of the immediate, and we know that what's at the border isn't something that's only sort of this, sort of that. The borders between anything touch the most extreme points of the things they divide. Thus, the slow is mediated, not by many mediations, but by one mediation with a vast durational wideness, an uninterrupted mediation. In other words, the slow—unlike the fast—is distant from the immediate, but only because that which mediates between the immediate and the slow is wider than what mediates between the immediate and the fast. However, both the slow and fast touch the immediate. This tells us that durational time is always only spatial, and it's in this that following the pulses of world time matters—matters quite literally—for the slow. Slow ontology is a particular way of being in the world that *never* ceases being in the world. For a slow ontology, concern about being in the world never lapses. This is the reason why Ulmer writes in the way she does, attending to the rhythms of the world. The flow of being in the world mustn't be interrupted by interrupting machines, machines such as the clocks that are

clocks. One must instead be attendant to the world's pulses and never miss a beat.

Photographs

The photographs in Ulmer's piece are of interest. There are two of bridges, things built to not interrupt a flow, the flow of water. There are two of the beachfront. One shows colder weather, and the water is frozen. Here, the frozen serves as a natural bridge, for the flow of water goes uninterrupted as people skate atop. The other shows warmer weather, and there's a border rope for swimmers. The bridges are part of the built world, but they're there so as not to interrupt. The ice isn't part of the built world, but it means for those who skate that they may skate. The rope is there to interrupt something that's otherwise uninterrupted; it means that one mustn't swim beyond.

Here, there are combinations of the natural world and the built world. This combination is what makes Ulmer's own photographic art piece interesting, interesting in the literal sense of *inter esse*, that which is the between. The piece is titled, "One architectural complex, two analytical vantages: Speed and nature." This is what the pair of photographs depict. On the one side, there's a building, below which is a mural of racing cars, on the other, the same building but through vegetation. Is it that nature is inherently slow? Perhaps, but it could be that speed is what closes the open of the world. In order to disclose the world, there can't be an ontological relation of speed to the world. This isn't to say that the built—the architectural or the technological—necessarily closes us off from the world. It just depends on our relation to the built. Perhaps a poetic relation, one that creates *ex nihilo*, is a way in which the built world can disclose. To create *ex nihilo* is to create from the nothing, from the nowhere without the no, to create, as far as it is possible, from the open. In *poiesis*, the nothing isn't the void. We don't create poetry from the void. The nothing is where there's no thing, but not because there are no things. The nothing is where there is, only the *there is* isn't divided into things. The nothing is the *there is* without a predicate. Poetry creates from the open. It's in this way that art discloses, un-closes the closed that had been open. It's in this way that Ulmer's own art discloses, and isn't this the more subtle point of the piece, the interesting point, the point that's the in between of a juxtaposition? The cars depicted aren't cars, but they themselves are reflection; they themselves are art, for they themselves are a mural.

Parchment

Writers used surfaces such as stone, parchment, vellum, and papyrus to etch writing and inscribe print; surfaces were not to be wasted, and neither were the rare inks, silver, and gold that marked illuminated manuscripts. (Ulmer, 2017, p. 203)

It's interesting that a technological development following the parchment scroll was the codex, but now following the book, we yet again have a scrolling technology. Furthermore, the technologies of writing have become less and less permanent, less permanent at least in the sense of material permanence. For instance, writing on stone was permanent to the extent that to undo one's mistakes took the practice of writing letters over the letters one had chiseled. This would make what had been written illegible, illegible in the sense that it became confusing to read. This, in fact, is the literal meaning of obliteration: to put letters over letters.

While it's possible to delete digital writing with ease, its speed can do much more damage when a mistake has gone viral. We've seen this all too often, and sadly academics haven't been immune to the infection. How many careers have ostensibly been ruined? Were we forced to chisel out our first and visceral reactions, perhaps we'd have the time to think through the rationality and fairness of our initial responses. If each word were literally precious, if each letter were something pricey, this would slow our response and leave time for reflection. Though it may have been more difficult to physically efface the mistakes of writing with older technology, obliteration no longer seems possible given how quickly our mistakes can spread through the digital newsfeeds we scroll.

Parched Meant

What does it mean to read the other's work? To read the other's work is first and foremost to engage with it. And what is it to engage with the work of the other? In general, to be engaged is to become occupied, so to be engaged with the work of the other is to let that work occupy the place where one finds oneself. Thus, to read a work is to be with the work. But in what sense shall we take this with-ness? Is it the case that the work and oneself become one? Or perhaps one is merely alongside of the work? Or is it yet something else?

Though we may speak metaphorically and say we can lose ourselves in a work, this must stay a metaphor. Even for the symbolic subject, one still can't in this sense become one with the work. This can't be because the other's work is as radically unassimilable as the symbolic *other* subject. The symbolic other subject is unassimilable because the being of the symbolic subject is premised upon the fact that there must always be the other of a negation. Were one to literally—literally in the sense of symbolically, or to the letter—lose oneself in the symbolic other subject, then negation would first have to have vanished. Were this to happen, the subject and other subject wouldn't even become one, for without negation, we'd slip into a state wherein there wouldn't even be a concept of one, for to even say that there's a one requires a negation that makes the other. This would be a boundless situation of the predicateless *there is*, this would be the open. So even were we to say that the

work of another is itself equivalent to the other insofar as one finds oneself alienated in one's work, none of this can be the case. One cannot become one with anything were that one to retain its oneness.

So, too, Ulmer's use of nature as an inspiration for writing mustn't be confused for a becoming one with nature. Again, let's examine her careful wording:

The *inseparability* between nature and certain systems of writing raises the question of how we might more regularly *incorporate* aspects of nature into the writing process [emphasis added]. (Ulmer, 2017, p. 204)

Inseparability means that there's a connection, and in a connection, there are at least two things connected. There's no connection of a one because there's no betweenness in a one. In other words, what Ulmer suggests is not the forest retreat wherein we become one with nature. Becoming one with nature isn't interesting. Nor is Ulmer's *incorporation* of nature the consumption of nature as yet another product to be fetishized as authentic and bought. It isn't the hiking that just makes walking really, really expensive, the hiking replete with jargon such as *delayering*, something that means to place one's Torrentshell pullover into a Black Hole™ cinch pack, both purchased for not at all a bargain from Patagonia, Patagonia where sustainability is a marketing strategy, where exploiting public lands leads to becoming a successful, billion-dollar business. At bottom, there's no reason that *rehydration* should be best accomplished through the means of a US\$35 insulated bottle. I can get a reusable glass bottle for the price of a Perrier, which is still BS in its own way, only it has the virtue of being much cheaper. My point, as this rant becomes perhaps too specific to not have happened during that one post-college graduation road trip to the Adirondacks, is this: In what sense is capitalism that sells nature sustainability?

At any rate, Ulmer's relation to nature isn't this. It isn't, in other words, conspicuous consumption. Ulmer's incorporation of nature is the barefoot walk through the water at its edge, reminiscent of childhood—well, my childhood, anyway—puddle stomping, childhood at its freest. To philosophize and to engage with philosophy is also free, to be free, and to associate freely one thought with the next thought of relevance. We mustn't let our thoughts be constrained by anything other than the truth we follow. For instance, to let thought be constrained by the compulsion to write in more citations isn't to do philosophy. The work we follow shouldn't be a site at which we accumulate cultural capital. In Ulmer's words from the passage above, hers is a consumption that's an *incorporation*, literally a taking into the body. Into the body of writing, she takes nature. To consume this way that's a taking into isn't to consume in a way that's a becoming one with. Thus, we eliminate the correctness of thinking about reading

the work of the other as becoming one with that work, for writing and reading are on the same page, recto verso.

Furthermore, we've also eliminated the correctness of thinking about reading as being alongside of a work. If, in a general sense, writing is itself a taking into, and reading is the verso of the recto of writing, then reading must be a taking into also. Because all reading is intertextual, the essence of giving a reading is the taking of one work into the body of another, whether explicitly or implicitly. And because citation partakes in this essence or reading's taking of one work into another, this is precisely why we can assert that citation is a type of reading, that though not all reading is citation, *citation is reading*.

Partch Meant

In adopting a Slow Ontology,
we might return to nature
or perhaps take a Slow Roll through the city. (Ulmer, 2017,
p. 209)

Let's return to Ulmer's recording discussed in the first section. Over the nature sounds was the sound of a train. Just as the bird reminded me of Messiaen, the train reminded me of Harry Partch. Harry Partch spent much of his life hopping freight trains. No doubt, this influenced at least some of his work. Listen to the first part of *The Wayward*, for instance.

Trains and taking a slow roll through the city: Return to nature, but also write local landscapes, even ones that include the built, for building is dwelling, and dwelling is thinking. The open includes all beings. Nature is only birds and squirrels and acorns and trees in an ideological sense, outside of ideology, it's everything. The alongside of Ulmer's juxtapositional photographic piece is an alongside not of pure difference, only the difference of different ways of seeing.

Like Partch, we can ride on through our technology in a slow way, without the closing off of the world that comes with speed and capitalism. We can ride poetically. Slowness is being in the open, keeping time, being attendant to the rhythms, following the pulse of the world: through raindrops, heartbeats, rustling leaves . . . and bicycles! Technology needn't necessarily be the speedy. So perhaps it's possible to slow even the medium of digital text and turn this into something like parchment. The nature sounds and the train sounds overlap, and that's beautiful. I guess my point has all along been this: *Slow writing deserves slow reading*.

[August 30, 2017]

Epilogue

Dear Professor Ulmer,

This is an admittedly strange email, both for me to write and to ask you to read, but here goes:

I've recently have had more opportunity to focus on publications because I'm no longer teaching a 5/4 load like I have for the past almost decade.

Overall, I've been interested in the concept of reading, authorship, and scholarly identity. One of the things I lament in academe is how we read too quickly and just mine things for citations. Furthermore, since the 1950s—when New Criticism undid the aesthetic literary criticism that had come before it—we've killed the author: Foucault's author function, Barthes's death of the author, Booth's implied author, and so on.

For me, though, authors are indeed people, but the rules of particular academic discourses make us disavow that. Right now I'm finishing up a book manuscript about reading autoethnography that addresses this. I figured I'd have to address it because my project is in part to look at texts as aesthetic literary criticism used to. And though I agree with feminist and postcolonial criticisms of canon and such, we didn't have to get rid of the idea of canon or great authors, just open it up to be more inclusive.

So in short, my goal is to produce a body of work about authors I like, and to treat authors as people, just like old school literary criticism once did. I think this is necessary at this moment. I think we might start to rethink scholars as people, not as a mere subjectivity, and I think that we need to think people as people in our work in general.

So why am I writing this to you? I wrote an article that sets a lot of this up using your work as a starting point. I felt hypocritical not sharing it with you because I wasn't sure that I was reading your work correctly, and by my own philosophy, I think I should treat you, the author, as a person, so why shouldn't I ask you?

Ultimately, I had decided not to, justifying that decision with a certain line of thinking regarding peer review, but when you wrote me today, I felt guilty again, so I rethought because you'll be one of the authors whose work I'll be exploring in depth.

A better possible solution is for me to ask you if you'd be willing to read this. I'm not certain why this hadn't occurred to me. It seems obvious now . . .

Respectfully,

James

[Email correspondence, November 28, 2017]

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Author's Note

James Salvo is now affiliated with University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL, USA.

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