Abstracts

Reading pictures means first digesting the words that inhabit or surround them: words in pictures, words framing pictures by way of titles or wall captions, and words of the texts to which pictures allude. But while pictures almost always come to us embedded in language, they are not the same as texts. Even though many elements of pictures may be construed as signs, a pictorial sign is not the same as a verbal sign or a textualized image, nor is it anything like a noun or verb, as Louis Marin proposed. To read pictures, we must reckon with these differences as well as with their subsemiotic attributes—their marks. We must be willing to read whatever remains illegible in a textual sense, whatever in a painting resists being verbalized or turned into a sign. In so doing, we challenge and stretch our conception of what it means to read anything at all. (JAWH)

This article argues that Machiavelli's description of reading Dante and Ovid, in his letter to Francesco Vettori of 10 December 1513, illuminates some of the most surprising and scandalous sections of *The Prince*. Beginning with Machiavelli's quotation of *Paradiso* 5 in the letter to Vettori, this study investigates how Machiavelli uses the literary works of Dante and Ovid to craft several of his most distinctive arguments on the problem of vows, value of violence, and legitimacy of deception. It argues that the reading of these literary works constitutes a crucial, but often overlooked, component of intellectual history. (ME)

By giving a brief history of emotivism in close reading, this article offers a new context for understanding the contemporary uneasiness about close reading and about the proliferating array of alternative kinds of reading it has prompted. Emotivism refers to the subcurrent of linguistic thought that shaped the institutional formation of New Critical closeness by distinguishing propositional from emotive meaning. Instead of amending our closeness to texts by dispensing with critique, or focusing on surfaces and description to the exclusion of textual depth, either of which might inadvertently encourage new kinds of emotivism, this article suggests we bear in mind—as the conversation goes on—the mid-century counteremotivist critics, such as Kenneth Burke, who advocated a kind of reading attuned to the interactive processes held in apparent stasis by literary form. (TW)

This essay approaches the cultures of reading anthropologically, drawing on my ethnographic research with the Henry Williamson Society to excavate the ways readers enthusiastically commit to the minor characters of Williamson's novels. It places Alex Woloch's literary analysis of minor characterization in dialogue with the anthropological theory of "distributed agency" developed by Alfred Gell in order to examine the idea of the reader as someone who "gives" and may in turn "receive" attention. The essay asks whether it might be more helpful to conceive of readers' activities as a form of reading without "culture"—whether plurality, if it must be invoked, might better be located in the dynamism of the reading person. (AR)

Drawing first on an annotated copy of the poetry of Felicia Hemans that my students discovered in the stacks of the University of Virginia's library, this essay goes on to examine the marks made by female readers in three nineteenth-century copies of Hemans's poetry to reveal the dynamics of sentiment in author-reader networks of Romantic and Victorian poetry. Seeing Hemans through the eyes of individual female readers surfaces a lost world in which poetry was valued as a collaborative, intimate language of the heart. Specific historical copies allow us best to apprehend this world, but, in the wake of wide-scale digitization, nineteenth-century books are simultaneously newly visible and newly at risk. This essay makes the case for retaining them and for integrating them into our accounts of nineteenth-century literary history. (AMS)

Entering Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, one still passes through the "catalog room," an antechamber filled with rows of card drawers. Inaugurated in 1930 by the librarian Dorothy Porter, this catalog of the "Negro Collection" served for much of the twentieth century as one of the only portals to African American print culture. This article reconstructs the creation of that catalog in order to chart the relation between infrastructure and racial imaginaries of reading. Porter contravened the routine misfiling of blackness in prevailing information systems by rewriting Dewey decimals, creating new taxonomies for black print, and fielding research inquiries from across the African diaspora. She built public access to books "by and about the Negro" at a moment when most black readers were barred from libraries. In so doing, she fueled a broader sense of what a black archive—or what Porter called a "literary museum"—might afford. (LEH)

The idea of writing for the future often seems like a selfish act: a claim for personal immortality. Yet writing with future readers in mind also requires imagining the needs of a world radically different from our own. This paper examines *Future Library*, an artwork in which authors contribute writing that will not be read until 2114, and the fiction of David Mitchell, one of the contributing authors. In these works, writing for the future is political, not because it represents the future but because it simultaneously demands intervention in the present and opens itself to the new and to unexpected future uses. (MB)