

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Zachary E. Pajak for the degree of Master of Arts in English presented on September 10, 2012

Title: Picture This, Imagine That: The Literary and Pedagogic Force of Ekphrastic Principles

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My thesis is comprised of two articles, titled “Interpreting Britomart’s Encounters with Art: The Cyclic Nature of Ekphrasis in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* III,” and “Picture This, Imagine That: Teaching Visual Literacy in the Disciplines.” The purpose of my first article is to argue that Edmund Spenser uses ekphrasis in his epic poem *The Faerie Queene* to draw comparisons between the regenerative natures of both art and life. I support my argument by examining three ekphrastic instances experienced by Britomart, the central knight figure of Book III of the poem: a magic mirror forged by Merlin, a tapestry telling the story of Venus and Adonis, and a statue of Hermaphrodite recollected by the narrator. Through close reading and the assistance of Murrary Krieger’s ekphrastic principle of “stillness,” I support that all three visual art objects underline and associate with the themes of cyclic regeneration in Britomart’s quest, and ultimately reveal Britomart to be an exemplary reader of art for readers to emulate. The purpose of my second article is to develop an economically, technologically, and theoretically accessible framework for teaching visual literacy in the disciplines. To accomplish my goal, I extrapolate from Classical rhetoric’s pedagogic use of ekphrasis as the first systematized method for teaching

visual conceptualization, and adapt and extend it to suit the present needs of students in the 21st-Century classroom. To communicate the urgency of the need for students to enrich proficiency at visual literacy, I provide a literature review that narrates the growing need expressed by visual literacy scholars, composition theorists, visualization theorists and specialists, and the library community for an overarching visual literacy framework that provides scaffolding and common language for students. To demonstrate the framework's usability, I apply it to three disciplinary visuals: a World War 1-era poster by the American Red Cross, a museum installation exhibit for communicating marine science to the public, and the Alpha Helix model created by Linus Pauling. I also offer suggestions for classroom practices and activities for using the framework across K-12 through university-level teaching.

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Picture This, Imagine That: The Literary and Pedagogic Force of Ekphrastic Principles

by

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Zachary E. Pajak, Author

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction.....	1
Interpreting Britomart's Encounters with Art: The Cyclic Nature of Ekphrasis in Spenser's <i>Faerie Queene</i> III.....	7
Bibliography.....	38
Picture This, Imagine That: Teaching Visual Literacy in the Disciplines.....	40
Bibliography.....	82

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. “Help Her for the Duration of the War”	66
2. “Help Her for the Duration of the War” with inserted arrows	66
3. “ <i>Current</i> ” <i>Events</i> exhibit	70
4. The “ <i>Current</i> ” <i>Events</i> main interface	82
5. The “ <i>Current</i> ” <i>Events</i> pop-up menu	72
6. Original 1948 <i>Sketch of Alpha Helix</i>	75
7. The three-dimensional alpha-helix model	76

Introduction

My Master of Arts in English thesis is comprised of two articles, titled “Interpreting Britomart’s Encounters with Art: The Cyclic Nature of Ekphrasis in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* III,” and “Picture This, Imagine That: Teaching Visual Literacy in the Disciplines.” The focal point of each article is the concept *ekphrasis*, a term coined in the Classical era of rhetoric and that first appeared in the *Progymnasmata*, a series of exercises to help students improve their skills at oration. As scholar Ruth Webb explains, when the Classical era’s oration instructor Quintilian instructed that ekphrasis “place[s] a subject before the eyes” (qtd in Webb 48), he emphasized to his students that ekphrasis is a “type of composition [with] a fully rhetorical role,” and serves primarily “as an aid to persuasion” (Webb 48). Over time, the definition of ekphrasis has progressively narrowed to mean the verbal description of visual art, specifically in literary studies. In both my articles, I understand ekphrasis as the pedagogical and rhetorical aid to persuasion taught in the Classical era, namely as a pedagogy to assist those practicing visual literacy to improve critical and higher order thinking when interpreting, creating, and appreciating the visual as a form of meaning making. Both articles also discuss how ekphrasis as a past pedagogy may be drawn upon to attend to present needs, generate a positive effect on the future, and create economically accessible means of teaching visual literacy.

During my years as an MA graduate student in English at Oregon State University, I began intensively researching visual literacy and composing a paper on it for WR 511: The Teaching of Writing, taught by Doctor Vicki Tolar Burton. The

paper, titled “Reimagining Visual Literacy: Helping Students of All Backgrounds Compose to Connect in our Visual World,” encourages a willingness on the part of instructors to engage visual literacy in the writing classroom, namely in ways that allow students and instructors with limited access to technology to benefit from visual literacy and the teaching of it. I expanded my research on the relationship between words and visuals by enrolling in Doctor Rebecca Olson’s ENG 570: *Is a Picture Worth 1,000 Words?* Doctor Olson’s course focused on and introduced me to the concept of ekphrasis, further developing my knowledge and research on the relationship between words and visuals and how the two inform and enrich each other. For Doctor Olson’s class, I composed the paper “Weaving Art to Sustain Ourselves in Cyclic Time: Art as a Means of Survival and Examination in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*.” In the paper, I argued that the ekphrastic instances of Spenser’s epic poem enable the character Britomart and ourselves as readers to closely understand, come to peace with, and live in deeper accordance with the eternality of life and the challenges and complexities of love. Although the papers written for Doctor Tolar Burton’s and Doctor Olson’s classes each stand as the primary catalysts and foundations for the following thesis articles, the earlier papers’ arguments and discussions have evolved, broadened and developed with further intensive research, inquiry, and analysis in the two articles.

In “Interpreting Britomart’s Encounters with Art: The Cyclic Nature of Ekphrasis in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* III,” I argue that 16th-century English poet Edmund Spenser’s particular use of ekphrasis in Book III of his epic poem helps

readers productively challenge and complicate the modern definition of ekphrasis, and also helps them learn to read art as a regenerative form of meaning making. Book III's central knight Britomart cross-dresses as a male knight and represents Chastity as she ventures forth on her quest to find and marry her true love Arthegall, with whom she will create the ancestral line that leads to the birth of Queen Elizabeth I. While Britomart encounters numerous visual art objects along her quest, I examine three particular ekphrastic instances, including a magic mirror forged by Merlin, a tapestry depicting the story of Venus and Adonis, and a statue of Hermaphrodite recollected by the narrator. Although the first and third of these instances do not describe art like more traditional Spenserian ekphrases, I support that all three instances show how Spenser creates an ekphrastic pattern to reveal a previously overlooked comment on and approach to viewing visual art: life and art share a reciprocally regenerative nature that ultimately helps readers learn to read art well. Specifically, this regenerative nature functions as a form of making sense of one's present and inspiring the future.

As detailed and explored in the article, the three moments of ekphrasis function as regenerative forms of meaning making in that they cyclically draw from past art to give shape to present art and influence the artwork's observer's future. Although many critics view Britomart as a static symbol who passively observes the visual art she frequently encounters along her quest, I argue that Britomart stands as a human figure of psychological depth with exemplary reading abilities; indeed, by way of Spenser's ekphrasis, we become able to emulate Britomart's model reading and consequently learn to understand art as a cyclic form of sense-making. Many critics

also view Spenser's ekphrastic descriptions of visual art as negatively associated with what they argue are nature's hypnotic and disorienting effects on the mind, thereby claiming that Spenser views visual art as a suspicious entity to be cautious of.

Although I agree that certain instances of Spenser's poem link art and nature to communicate art's fleeting and hypnotic qualities, I also identify evidence revealing that he draws affinities between art and nature to help readers recognize art's eternity and cyclical persistence through time. Moreover, I argue that Spenser's ekphrases underline the themes of cyclical regeneration inherent to Britomart's quest, and associate such cyclical regeneration with the cyclic quality of visual art that draws from the past to influence the future.

In my article "Picture This, Imagine That: Teaching Visual Literacy in the Disciplines," I draw from the past to help the present need for providing a new visual literacy pedagogy in and beyond the Writing Across the Curriculum community, and hopefully inspire potential future pedagogies for improving students' critical and higher order thinking when teaching visual literacy in the disciplines. Specifically, I reach back to the Classical era's pedagogical use of ekphrasis and modernize and extend it for the 21st-Century classroom, where there exists an urgent need for students to learn to read, interpret, create, understand, and appreciate disciplinary visuals. As discussed in my article's literature review that narrates the growing need for a new overarching and accessible visual literacy pedagogy, visual literacy scholars, composition theorists, visualization specialists and theorists, and the library community have all expressed the need for a framework that provides common

language and scaffolded assistance when helping students practice and apply visual literacy. My article is a response to this call, and proposes a visual literacy framework based on the first systematized use of ekphrasis for teaching visual conceptualization, and that functions with theoretical, technological, and economical accessibility for students and teachers of all socioeconomic backgrounds and learning spaces.

To demonstrate the framework's usability, flexibility, versatility, and accessibility, I apply it to three disciplinary visuals: a World War 1-era poster by the American Red Cross, a museum installation exhibit created by ecologist Emily Lemagie for teaching marine science issues to children and adults, and the revolutionary Alpha Helix model created by chemist Linus Pauling. As demonstrated by applying the visual literacy framework to each disciplinary visual, the framework opens possibilities to instructors across the curriculum for improving students' proficiency in visual literacy, and provides strong foundation and common language for teaching visual literacy from K-12 to university-level teaching. The visual literacy framework also shows how visuals are composed to communicate effective rhetorical purposes and not float freely or be used as decoration. Furthermore, using the framework helps students recognize that they do not need to possess artistic skill or expert knowledge of technological and digital forms of communicating. Finally, the article offers suggestions and ideas for classroom practices and activities for helping students enrich proficiency at visual literacy by way of the framework, and supports extrapolating from Classical roots to address students' present needs as they learn to compose and craft meaning in their present and future lives.

As Spenser uses ekphrasis to help readers learn to read art well, I set out to use ekphrasis to help students improve higher order and critical thinking in learning visual literacy. Also, while Spenser draws from the past to instruct readers that visual art may serve as a cyclic mode of meaning making, I attempt to draw from past practices of ekphrasis to help students' present need to understand the visual as an effective form of meaning making. In both articles, I also hope to demonstrate how ekphrasis, both in Spenser's era as well as the 21st Century, provides an economically accessible means by which students may learn to interpret and create visuals. As discussed in my article on Britomart's ekphrastic instances, Spenser's ekphrases gave readers of his time visual art otherwise unattainable to them, either due to Post-Reformation Protestantism's destruction of visual artwork or lower-class living conditions that did not economically allow access to visual art. While Spenser widens the demographic of those who may experience and learn from visual phenomena by way of ekphrasis, I hope to employ ekphrasis in a way that makes the literal and figurative carrying of the visual into the classroom space more widely accessible. In short, in both articles, I aim to uncover the accessible, pedagogic force of ekphrastic principles to help students and readers learn visual literacy as a means of navigating and making sense of their present and future lives.

Interpreting Britomart's Encounters with Art: The Cyclic Nature of Ekphrasis in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* III

Introduction

In 1583, when the 16th-century English poet Edmund Spenser announced his vision to write his allegorical poem *The Faerie Queene* (published in two installments, 1590 and 1596), he stated that he would “represent all the moral virtues” of both Queen Elizabeth I and King Arthur, “assigning to every virtue a knight in whose actions and chivalry the operations of that virtue are to be expressed, and the vices and unruly appetites that oppose themselves to be beaten down” (789).¹ *The Faerie Queene* is comprised of six books that each feature one of these knights. Book III features the female knight Britomart, who represents Chastity. Cross-dressed as a male knight and on a quest to find and marry her true love Arthegall—with whom she will create the ancestral line leading to Elizabeth I—Britomart recurrently encounters visual artworks encoded with elements and challenges to her virtue of Chastity. In this article, I argue that the artworks also associate with and underline her quest's themes of cyclic regeneration.

For readers, the poet's description of the visual art Britomart encounters are moments of *ekphrasis*, a trope first defined by ancient rhetoricians as “a speech which brings the subject matter [or, more precisely, ‘the thing shown’] before the eyes” (qtd in Webb 53). The term has progressively narrowed over time to mean the verbal

¹ Spenser made this declaration in his letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, who had agreed to bring the poem to the attention of Elizabeth I, Spenser's central audience.

description of visual art, namely in literary studies.² In this article, however, I discuss how Spenser's poem helps readers productively challenge and complicate the narrowed definition of the trope, and I set out to accomplish this by examining three particular ekphrastic instances in Book III: Merlin's magic mirror, a tapestry of Venus and Adonis, and the narrator's recollected image of a statue of Hermaphrodite. Analysis of the three visual phenomena—the first and third of which are not often discussed within the context of ekphrasis—shows how Spenser creates an ekphrastic pattern, one that reveals a previously overlooked comment on and approach to visual art: namely, that life and art share a reciprocally regenerative nature that ultimately helps readers learn to read art well.

Kelly A. Quinn similarly argues that ekphrasis may provide a means by which readers learn to read art well. Quinn argues that Shakespeare, Samuel Daniel, and Michael Drayton use ekphrasis in their poetry to achieve what I argue may be Spenser's motivations for using ekphrasis: "Daniel, Shakespeare, and Drayton allow the works of art they describe to stand for art generally, but more particularly for works of literary art. Their characters are models of the reader, and their ekphrases are a means of presenting, examining, and critiquing the reader at work" (20). Thus, ekphrasis enables the reader to have a secondhand visual experience dependent on the narrative action of the poem, which in turn helps the reader contemplate the significance of the art—both the art represented within the poem as well as the poem

² Other helpful definitions of ekphrasis appear in James A.W. Heffernan's *Museum of Words* (1-8), Murray Krieger's *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (1-3), and Ruth Webb's *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (1-11).

itself—for their own lives.³ In Britomart’s quest, Spenser employs ekphrasis to help readers attain the “virtuous and gentle discipline” he hopes his poem will facilitate. In his letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, he discusses how a narrative’s hero may help a reader learn to become a moral and noble human being (790). In the letter, he explains the general educational purpose and pedagogical objectives of the poem: “the general end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline” (790). Throughout the letter Spenser reiterates the value of learning to navigate life by emulating what one reads in literary art, and how such emulation provides a more deepening and enriching education than being sermonized or lectured to. For example, he affirms, “So much more profitable and gracious is doctrine by ensample, then by rule,” and states that it is most beneficial to emulate the “image of a brave knight” as depicted in such works of art as *The Iliad* and the stories of King Arthur (791).

Within Spenser’s poem, Britomart exemplifies the figure of a brave knight, and by way of the poet’s ekphrases as Britomart observes art, readers learn how to become a “noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline” (790). In other words, by picturing in the mind’s eye and then interpreting the art Britomart encounters, readers experience the ideal approach to reading that Spenser describes. Britomart is thus not only the “image of a brave knight” that Spenser describes as worth emulating, but also a figure through which readers learn to read art well. Indeed, she internalizes “doctrine by ensample, [rather] then by rule,” most obviously by going against

³ Quinn opens her article referencing Britomart as an exception to her argument.

patriarchal rule when she disguises and models herself after the “image of a brave knight” to fulfill her quest. Like Lauren Silberman, who argues that Spenser’s readers are “challenged to imitate Britomart in fashioning a self in virtuous and gentle discipline ... [and] challenged to moralize art, to engage the text in a process of sense-making,” I argue that readers learn to read art by way of the ekphrastic descriptions of the art Britomart engages (“The Hermaphrodite” 222).

The ekphrastic instances I describe take on especial relevance and importance for Book III because the other knights of the poem do not encounter visual art as frequently as Britomart. Also distinctive to Book III is that images, and images that reference the past specifically, both instigate and close the featured knight’s journey. As John B. Bender notes, Britomart’s quest stands out among all the knights’ journeys as strikingly unique in that it “actually begins with a surprising image, not with a sudden feeling or a dramatic encounter [and] ends with the destruction of dangerous illusions forged by a vicious artist” (176). The opening “surprising image” comes in the form of an artfully-wrought magic mirror created by Merlin, which—as examined later—directly references Homer’s *The Iliad* and sends Britomart on her quest. Bender concludes that the “vicious artist’s” tapestries in the Hall of Busirane then serve as the ending visual, but I argue that a subsequent visual in the 1590 edition—the narrator’s recollection of a statue of Hermaphrodite, “Which that rich Romane of white marble wrought” (3.12.46.2-3)—actually ends the book’s account of the quest. This last image is significant, for its description, like that of the magic mirror, refers to an artifact from the past in order to make sense of the present and

influence the future. As I will explain, Spenser associates such cyclicity of art with the cyclic quality of nature. Even the moments involving the mirror and the imagined Hermaphrodite statue—which do not describe art like a more traditional instance of Spenserian ekphrasis—speak to the cyclical nature of art in a way that is very much in line with other Spenserian ekphrases. This ekphrastic pattern by which art is depicted as regenerative suggests that the poet’s use of visual imagery comments on and encourages an approach to visual art as a cyclic entity. Namely, visual art serves a cyclic entity to associate with our own cyclic lives and thereby use as a means of sense-making. Because ekphrasis throughout the poem helps readers understand how art cyclically draws from the past to make sense of the present and shape the future, Spenser seems to indicate that to understand the cyclic nature of art is to live in deeper accord with and reach greater understanding of the cyclic nature of life.

Scholars have extensively discussed the relationship between Spenser’s depiction of art and cyclic nature; Judith Dundas provides a particularly helpful summary of their often shared view that Spenser uses visuals of nature to communicate the illusive “transcendence of art” (184) in her analysis of Book II’s hedonistic island dreamscape of illusions, called the Bower of Bliss. Dundas details how the Bower visually manifests the effects of art on its viewer:

[T]he Bower of Bliss . . . [communicates] the illusionistic effects in both art and nature, including the ivory waves of the gate to the Bower of Bliss and the real waves of the River Thames. [Sir Guyon’s] uncertainty [toward the Bower] is simply reason’s response to the fluidity of the imaginative experience. (186)

While I agree with Dundas’s claim that Spenser uses images of nature to communicate the illusionistic—in a negative sense—effects of visual art, I would add that elsewhere

in the poem Spenser also emphasizes the cyclicity of nature in order to communicate the positive eternity of visual art. Whereas Dundas sees Spenser as linking art and nature in order to emphasize art's fleeting qualities, I also see evidence that he draws the same comparison in order to help readers recognize its cyclical persistence. Again, Spenser, through Britomart, teaches that art is cyclic in the sense that it is everlasting, drawing inspiration from the past to understand the present and affect the future.

Dundas also claims that Spenser's use of visuals to conjure the illusionary effects of art emblemizes the "loosening of rigid categories, such as those which separate the visible from the invisible, or painting from poetry We are made to understand that there are always two parties to an illusion: the artist and his audience. The storyteller can only do so much to make us see his pictures, and the rest is up to us" (186). In this way, she argues, Spenser employs "the right words to speak to his readers' pictorial imaginations, not in order to make photocopies in our minds, but to arouse by sympathy an illusion of seeing, which yet is dependent upon the poet's words for its renewal" (186). With this in mind, Spenser's ekphrases enable the reader to co-visualize with him: we learn through ekphrasis what Britomart sees, and have our own visual experience as Spenser "arouse[s] by sympathy an illusion of seeing" (186). Whereas Dundas uses the word "renewal" to describe Spenser's conjuring of images in the mind's eye, the word "renewal" also speaks to how Spenser's particular use of ekphrasis extrapolates from past artworks to influence future works; Spenser demonstrates throughout Book III how visual art is cyclic, constantly renewing and experiencing renewal by other artworks over time. This cyclically regenerative nature

of art associates with and underlines the themes of cyclic regeneration in Britomart's quest, and helps readers understand how to read art to make sense of their own cyclic lives.

Insofar as the verbal descriptions of visual art help us interpret and learn through Britomart's engagement in art objects, Spenser thus reveals that he is less suspicious, at least in Book III, of visual art than he is generally assumed to be. As rigorously discussed in Ernest B. Gilman's *Iconoclasm and Poetry in the English Reformation*, Spenser's poem supports the iconoclastic tendencies of Post-Reformation Protestantism. Gilman sees Sir Guyon's destruction of the Bower of Bliss in Book II, for example, as emblematic of what he sees as Spenser's perception of visual art—that it is a lesser form of art that cannot achieve the depth of poetry (75-77)—and argues: “Against such a threat [as the Bower], the hero [Guyon] must forgo the nobility of epic combat—just as the poet at the end must refuse the challenge of emulating the pictorial triumphs of his predecessors—for a style at once more crude and more effective: he must become a defacer of images” (72). However, as argued in the following sections, Spenser *does* also emulate the “pictorial triumphs of his predecessors,” and does not act as a “defacer of images” but rather regards them as artworks to celebrate and learn from. Thus, Spenser's depiction of visual art in Book III may act as subtle or even subliminal subversion, undermining the notion presented in Book II that art must be destroyed and slyly communicating that we have much to learn from images. Spenser's ekphrasis, in this regard, gives the readers of his time visual artworks that are otherwise denied to them as a result of lower-class living

conditions or Post-Reformation Protestantism's removal and destruction of wall-paintings and frescoes in Protestant counties. By way of ekphrasis, Spenser creates the opportunity for a wider demographic of people access to a visual experience with art from which they may further "fashion" themselves as people "in vertuous and gentle discipline" (Letter to Sir Walter Raleigh 790).

The following two sections of this article examine how the images of cyclic nature depicted and represented by visual art in Book III (including, I argue, the mirror and the past art that it references) directly correlate with and accentuate the underlying themes of cyclicity in Britomart's quest, and ultimately instruct the reader on how to read art well. In Part I, I use the first image of Britomart's journey to investigate the simultaneously fixed and continual forms of stillness of Spenser's ekphrasis, which establish the poem's theme of art as cyclic. In Part II, building upon the foundation of art as cyclic, I look at a tapestry encountered by Britomart as well as the final image of her quest—the Hermaphrodite statue—to investigate the correlations that Spenser draws between cyclic nature and art. By recognizing the cyclicity of both images, the reader learns to read art well through Britomart's ekphrastic encounters in Book III, and also learns that Britomart stands as a human, exemplary reader rather than a static symbolic figure. The Conclusion then proposes how and why the cyclic renewal of life depicted and represented by the ekphrastic instances of Britomart's quest may reflect the procreativity inherent to Britomart's destiny to create an ancestral line, namely one that leads to the greatest rulers of England, including England's own

queen. The Conclusion also summarizes how Spenserian ekphrasis helps readers learn to read art well, namely as a cyclic means of sense-making for their own cyclic lives.

Part I: The Cyclic Nature of Merlin's Magic Mirror

When Britomart encounters visual art in her quest, the forward movement of the plot pauses: we stop to examine the art objects along with Britomart by way of the poet's ekphrastic description. In addition to creating such fixed stillness of plot, ekphrasis also creates stillness in the sense of continuance, in that the figures depicted on the described visual art object are always present through time. In *The Ekphrastic Principle*, Murray Krieger describes the ways that ekphrasis communicates stillness in the sense of continuance, and also makes this continuance containable by means of fixed stillness (118). Krieger calls ekphrastic instances "forever-now motions . . . [and] finality-without-end" (118-119). To break down the quote by Krieger, the visual art objects and the figures they depict are always "final" and "now" in their fixed stillness, and always "forever" and "without-end" in their everlasting and continual containment through time. In this way, ekphrasis is able to "celebrate time's movement as well as to arrest it, to arrest it in the very act of celebrating it" (125). Although Krieger applies his understanding of ekphrasis' multiple states of stillness in the context of discussing John Keats's "Ode to a Grecian Urn" and T.S. Eliot's ekphrastic description of the Chinese jar in *Burnt Norton*, Krieger's insight harmoniously converges with the ekphrases of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, which also "arrest" and thereby "celebrate" time. The simultaneous stillness of the art

objects Britomart beholds and of the plot allows for deepened reflection on the encounters with art objects, for just as the art objects Britomart encounters are still, as in fixed, Britomart becomes still in examining them. Furthermore, while the art objects still the poem by arresting the forward movement of the plot, they also provide stillness in the sense of continuance, drawing from past art while influencing future outcomes of Britomart's quest, and communicating the story's themes of everlasting cyclic time. With Krieger's understanding that ekphrasis demonstrates art's stillness in the form of fixedness as well as its stillness in the form of everlastingness, readers may begin to see how Spenser's ekphrases share the same dual nature of fixedness and continuance with art's cyclic nature. In order to represent cyclicity, the artworks must be able to arrest cyclic nature into a fixed state while also depicting its cyclicity by way of referencing the past to influence the future.

An ekphrastic instance that perfectly aligns with and establishes the simultaneous fixedness and continuance of Spenser's ekphrasis is in fact the visual object that provides the impetus for Britomart's quest. The moment of ekphrasis takes shape in Britomart's encounter with the aesthetically-pleasing magic mirror forged by Merlin. Long ago, Britomart's father had been given the magic mirror created by Merlin:

The great Magitian Merlin had devised,
By his deepe science, and hell-dreaded might,
A looking glasse, right wonderously aguized,
Whose vertues through the wyde world soone were solemnized. (3.2.18.6-9)

The mirror shows its viewer what it is s/he desires to see, and Britomart, stumbling upon the mirror by chance, asks that it show her the man she is destined to marry

(3.2.23). In response, the mirror's outer rims pictorially frame for Britomart the image of her true love, Arthegall, a knight who she has yet to meet at this point, and who dons armor "round about yfretted all with gold, / In which there written was with ciphers old, / Achilles armes, which Arthegall did win" (3.2.25.4-6). The opening image of the mirror establishes the goal of Britomart's journey, as it pictorially frames a vision of her one true love, Arthegall, who she must search for and marry. What is more, Britomart's quest to find and marry Arthegall perhaps stands as the most crucial quest of *The Faerie Queene*, as Merlin takes pains to inform Britomart that the couple's lineage will lead to the birth of Elizabeth I (3.3.11-57), the explicit audience of Spenser's poem.⁴ Thus, as a figure of generativity and the ancestor of Elizabeth I, Britomart is quite literally seeing the future of England reflected back to her in Arthegall's image.

However, because Britomart represents Chastity, "That fairest vertue, farre above the rest" (3.1.1-2)—and despite the profound severity of what is at stake for her and Elizabeth I—she at first stubbornly and steadfastly resists her feelings of desire. Upon seeing the mirror's conjured image of her one true love, Britomart does not immediately embrace the feeling of love she experiences. Instead, she falls into a deeply neurotic and woeful state, believing her feelings of desire are "not love, but some melancholy" (3.2.27.9). Many critics argue that her quest therefore represents

⁴ As articulated by Constance Jordan and Clare Carroll, Spenser's direct audience, Elizabeth I, "liked the poem that illustrated her majesty in so many ways, 'desired at timely hours to hear' it, and rewarded Spenser with a life pension of 50 pounds a year" (784). Subsequently, Spenser's poetry came "to be known as a monument to Queen Elizabeth's England" (784), not only because Elizabeth I is his explicit audience and whose virtues are allegorically represented by each knight, but also because "Spenser's moral chivalry is sponsored and sustained by the court of [the poem's character] Gloriana, the Faerie Queene, in whom is reflected the imposing figure of Queen Elizabeth" (789).

the overcoming of such denial of feeling in order to embrace her womanhood and realize that to love is, in short, to live.⁵ For instance, Benjamin G. Lockerd, Jr. asserts that “the image [of Arthegall] in the glass is not only [Britomart’s] future husband but her own animus reflected by the magic mirror Thus, [Britomart] comes to know [her] larger self and to grow into or realize it” (24). In other words, Britomart self-actualizes by accepting her quest to consummate her love with Arthegall. Though I agree with the standard reading that Britomart achieves a more realized and whole sense of self by accepting her quest, it is also true that cyclic life is represented by the art objects Britomart encounters throughout Book III, beginning with Merlin’s mirror, which underscore the cyclicity of Britomart’s quest. After all, in order to live in accordance with her destiny and achieve the end-goal of her journey, Britomart must perpetuate cyclic life herself.

Although one may argue that the mirror’s function as an ekphrastic *art* object is debatable in that it is not, for instance, a painting or tapestry, but rather a practical object, Spenser overtly describes the mirror as a “wonderous worke” (3.2.20.1) so “wondrously aguized” (3.2.18.8). In this regard, the mirror functions as visual art because it is a visually-aesthetic “worke” (3.2.20.1), a word used to denote “artwork” in regards to art objects such as paintings, tapestries, statues, and other ornamental objects throughout the poem.⁶ However, it is the way that the mirror references

⁵ See James W. Broaddus’s *Spenser’s Allegory of Love* (28-29); Benjamin G. Lockerd, Jr.’s *The Sacred Marriage*; William Nelson’s *The Poetry of Edmund Spenser: A Study* (142); and Kathleen Williams’s *Spenser’s “Faerie Queene”: The World of Glass* (115-116).

⁶ Examples include Spenser’s use of “worke” to denote a book that Redcrosse gives to Prince Arthur as a gift, “wherein his Saueours testament / Was writ with golden letters rich and braue; A worke of wondrous grace, and able soules to saue” (1.4.19.7-9); an ornamental cloth described as a “worke of

Achilles's armor from Homer's poem that solidifies the mirror as an ekphrastic art object. The mirror pictorially frames Arthegall wearing Achilles' shield, which is widely regarded as one of the foundational examples of ekphrasis in Western literature:

[Arthegall's] crest was couered with a couchant Hound,
 And all his armour seem'd of antique mould,
 But wondrous massie and assured sound,
 And round about yfretted all with gold,
 In which there written was with cyphers old,
 Achilles armes, which Arthegall did win.
 And on his shield enueloped seuenfold
 He bore a crowned litle Ermilin,
 That deckt the azure field with her faire pouldred skin. (3.2.25)

As James A.W. Heffernan observes: "Homer's re-creation of the scenes sculpted on the shield is not simply the earliest example of ekphrasis we know in western literature; it is paradigmatic, establishing conventions, contentions, and strategies that would inform ekphrastic poetry for centuries to come" (9). Within Homer's poem, the ekphrasis of the shield functions as a manifestation of the story's most crucial themes; as Kenneth Atchity puts it, Achilles's shield "microcosmically reflects the whole 'thematic expanse'" of *The Iliad* (qtd. in Heffernan 10). By representing Achilles's armor by way of ekphrasis, Spenser calls our attention to the ways his own use of ekphrasis in *The Faerie Queene* follows Homer's example and similarly emblemizes

rich entayle, and curious mould, / Wouen with anticke and wild Imagery" (2.7.4.5-6); the "painted flowres . . . the Christall running by; / And that, which all faire workes doth most aggrace, / The art, which all that wrought, appeared in no place" than the Bower of Bliss (2.12.58.5-9); and the tapestry in the Castle Joyous, the walls of which "round about apparell'd / With costly clothes of Arras and of Toure, / In which with cunning hand was pourtrahed / The loue of Venus and her Paramoure / The faire Adonis, turned to a flowre, / A worke of rare deuce, and wondrous wit" (3.1.34.1-6).

the entire thematic expanse of his own poem. As Achilles's shield ekphrastically reflects the entire narrative in which it appears, so too does Merlin's mirror reflect the narrative of Britomart: the mirror establishes the goal of her quest while connecting it to and emphasizing the themes of cyclicity represented by the visual art she encounters.⁷ Though one may nevertheless question whether or not the mirror is necessarily ekphrastic, it undeniably functions ekphrastically and deeply engages with the issue of ekphrasis.

As Spenser's Merlin forges the image of a cyclic world in his magic mirror, in Homer's poem, Hephaestus forges the image of a perpetually rebirthing world on Achilles's shield, an artfully wrought world that has "the earth upon it, and the sky, and the sea's water and on it all the constellations that festoon the heavens" (XVIII, 483-85) as well as "a green [where] there danced youths an maidens whom all would woo, with their hands on one another's wrists" (XVIII, 598-600). As displayed by the shield's represented dancers, joined by the wrists in a collective and everlasting dance, the aesthetic involves shared experiences felt as part of a collective human spirit. In *The Faerie Queene*, Merlin's magic mirror therefore not only aligns itself with a visual reflection of the earliest known example of ekphrasis, but with one that—apropos to Spenser's own use of ekphrasis—manifests itself and depicts human life harmonized with the eternity of time by means of art. To understand Britomart's particular engagement in visual art, it is therefore essential to understand that to

⁷ Homer's influence on Spenser is confirmed by Spenser's letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, which reads, "In [*The Faerie Queene*] I have followed all the antique Poets historicall, first Homere, who in the Persons of Agamemnon and Ulysses hath ensampled a good governour and a vertuous man, the one in his Ilias, the other in his Odysseis" (791).

engage in art, in the epic tradition of Virgil, is to experience the kind of shared common world exemplified and celebrated by the shield's dancers. To reiterate, Britomart's encounters with visual art directly correlate with and deepen our understanding of her destiny to become Arthegall's wife: to become his wife is to live in the natural cycle of life, perpetuate that cycle and assure that Elizabeth I will one day be born. Again, this outcome of her quest is both associated with and underlined by the dimensions of cyclic nature inherent to the visual art that Britomart observes.

While it is not made clear whether or not Britomart subjectively reacts to the mirror's aesthetic qualities, she undeniably responds to the subject matter that the mirror reflects to her. Again, Britomart initially feels that her desire is "not love, but some melancholy" (3.2.27.9), of which many critics view as her resistance to newly-awakened and psychologically healthy thoughts and feelings of desire. James W. Broaddus, for example, describes Britomart's trepidation as both "psychological and physiological," and explains that her reaction establishes the "problem" she must overcome throughout her adventures, namely, "how to harness the energies of self-love, expressed allegorically as the love that moves the lovers on their quests" (*Spenser's Allegory of Love* 28-9). For Lockerd, Jr., the moment catalyzes Britomart's need to understand the virtue of Chastity that she comes to represent; he argues that Britomart "freely reveals" through her tentativeness the "likeness she experiences between her love and the most degraded lusts" (142). He adds, "It becomes necessary, therefore, for [Britomart] to hold back from any further expression of even the well-oriented desire until a process of maturation has helped distinguish the different

varieties of desire. That is the psychological function of chastity” (142). Critics such as Broaddus and Lockerd, Jr., therefore, understand Britomart’s initial resistance to her feelings of desire as an issue to come to terms with during her quest, and specifically an issue central to her symbolic representation of Chastity.

Kathleen Williams argues that Britomart’s reaction to the image of Arthegall is one of “confused horror,” as Britomart “hints of it to her old nurse Glauce as if it were a brutal and destructive visitation, love for a shadow, unnatural and leading to death” (115). Upon feeling so distraught by her initial feelings of love, Britomart is reassured by Glauce that love is natural:

For who with reason can you aye reprove,
To love the semblant pleasing most your mind,
And yield your heart, whence ye cannot remove?
No guilt in you, but in the tyranny of love. (3.2.40.6-9)

In simpler words, Glauce assures Britomart that love is a natural, fated part of life, and she must therefore not feel the need to dismiss her feelings as simply “some melancholy” (3.2.27.9). Of this, Williams observes:

[T]hrough the commonsense wisdom represented by Glauce Britomart learns that human affections are guided by divine purpose, that her eyes were led to the mirror by a higher power than Venus, and that her vision of Arthegall will lead to the fulfilling of heavenly destiny for centuries to come. The looking-glass has shown her not a shadow, an illusion, but a fuller truth than she could otherwise see, for it is a little image of the world, a glass globe “Like to the world it selfe, and seem’d a world of glas” [3.2.19]. (115-16)

Williams’s interpretation underscores how Britomart’s quest teaches Britomart that love enables her to live in accordance with the world. Williams articulates that love, for Britomart, becomes understood as the means by which to “accept completely the responsibility of the fully human being for its fellows [to] cooperate actively with

a creative and purposeful destiny,” and to do so in a way that looks “far beyond ourselves” (116). Britomart learns to live in accord with the “world it selfe” by realizing that her love is both natural and part of her grand destiny (3.2.19).

Williams does not, however, take note of how closely and reciprocally tied together Glauce’s insights are with the mirror’s ekphrastic description. The mirror helps establish the visual art that appears throughout Britomart’s quest as regenerative in nature and as a means by which the reader may make sense of and recognize regenerative time as the essential underlying theme to Britomart’s quest:

It vertue had, to shew in perfect sight,
 What ever thing was in the world contaynd
 Betwixt the lowest earth and heavens hight
 So that it to the looker appertaynd. (3.2.19.1-4)

In other words, all that is taking place in the world in all its continual renewal may be examined, learned, and understood by looking into the mirror, which simultaneously reflects this cyclicity as integral to Britomart’s journey.

Because the magic mirror’s viewer may achieve deepened understanding in “perfect sight, / What ever thing was in the world contaynd,” it serves not only as a reflection of the world but also as a representation of art’s ability to enable and deepen examination of one’s place in the world. By gazing into the glass globe, the viewer becomes more “appertaynd”—as in the viewer more fully understands—her/his belonging in the world on which s/he reflects. This realization that may be made by looking into the art object is fundamental to Britomart’s quest, as it instructs her to assure England’s future through finding, marrying, and procreating with Arthegall; it literally helps her reflect and discover by way of examining art. Spenser explicitly

represents the mirror as a work of artistic material and natural life, both of which become interchangeable in Spenser's description of the mirror's appearance: "For thy it round and hollow shaped was, / Like to the world it selfe, and seemed a world of glas" (3.2.19.8-9). Because the "glassie globe" (3.2.21.1) of the mirror is both an aesthetic "world of glas" as well as an emblem of the natural world in which we live, "Betwixt the lowest earth and heavens hight" (3.2.19.3), the mirror establishes life and art as so deeply hand in hand that the two become inseparable.

In summary, Merlin's magic mirror functions ekphrastically, not only because it is described by the poem's narrator, but also because it directly references and shares characteristics with Achilles's shield from *The Iliad*, the first known example of ekphrasis in Western literature. Within the pictorial frame of the mirror, Arthegall possesses Achilles's armor, and Britomart seeks this image of Arthegall just as Spenser seeks to duplicate the way in which Homer uses ekphrasis to emblemize the entire thematic expanse of his poem. Through the ekphrastic instance, Spenser demonstrates how the visual art that Britomart encounters is cyclic in its referencing past visual and literary art, its influencing future outcomes, and its encapsulation of themes of nature's cyclicity. All these forms of cyclic continuation underscore the procreation inherent to Britomart's quest, and this procreation is confirmed as a natural part of cyclic life by Glauce's words of reassurance to Britomart. In short, Merlin's magic mirror stands as the initial ekphrastic instance that sends Britomart on her quest and establishes what Britomart aims to achieve. Moreover, the mirror may reflect what Spenser himself perhaps aims to achieve in his poem by way of ekphrasis:

an imitation of Homer's ekphrastic description of Achilles's shield to ekphrastically encapsulate the whole thematic span of the narrative.

Part II: Cyclic Means of Sense-Making: The Tapestry of Venus and Adonis and the Statue of Hermaphrodite

In the following section, I investigate two more instances of ekphrasis in Britomart's quest, both of which further represent the cyclicity underlined and celebrated by Spenser's verbal descriptions of visual art. Like Merlin's mirror, these instances also support the argument that the reader, by way of ekphrasis, becomes able to interpret and learn about the cyclicity of art and life from the visual art objects observed by Britomart. However, despite the fact that both ekphrastic instances function similarly, critics view only the first of the two instances—a tapestry that appears in the Castle Joyeous, visited by Britomart—as a traditional example of ekphrasis. Although the second of the two instances, a statue presented to the reader by way of analogy, is not deemed as a traditional example of ekphrasis (for the reason that it is an art object imagined by the narrator and not observed by any character), I argue that it nevertheless stands as an ekphrastic instance in the ancient rhetorical sense of being “a speech which brings the subject matter [or, more precisely, ‘the thing shown’] before the eyes” (qtd in Webb 53). In this regard, and also by how it extrapolates from past art to make sense of the present and shape the future, the recollected image of the statue mirrors the earlier mirror forged by Merlin. Moreover, identifying the moment as ekphrasis—or as in line with the other ekphrases—indicates that Britomart, contrary to many critics' outlook, interprets and learns from the visual

art she sees throughout her journey, and stands as an active reader to emulate rather than a passive reader and static symbol. Moreover, by imitating Britomart's reading, the reader learns to read art well.

After looking into Merlin's magic mirror, disguising herself as a male knight, and venturing forth on her quest to find Arthegall, Britomart soon finds herself in the halls of Castle Joyeous. A vast tapestry series depicting the story of Venus and Adonis adorns the halls:

The wals were round about apparelled
 With costly clothes of Arras and of Toure
 In which with cunning hand was pourtrahed
 The love of Venus and her Paramoure
 The faire Adonis, turned to a flowre. (3.1.34.1-5)

As Britomart examines Castle Joyeous' tapestries of Venus and Adonis after her initial exchange with Malecasta, the castle's hostess, we read a description that begins with an image of Venus "making girlonds of each flower that grew" (3.1.35.4) in the tapestry's pastoral setting. Adonis becomes "Deadly engored of a great wild Bore, / And by his side the Goddess groveling / Makes for him endless mone, and evermore" (3.1.38.2-4). The story told in the tapestry concludes with Adonis turning into "a dainty flower [that Venus] did transmew, / Which in that cloth was wrought, as if it lively grew" (3.1.38.8-9). By visually aligning the beginning and ending of the tapestry's description with the image of a flower that represents both death and rebirth, Spenser renders the tapestry as a cyclical image that represents a continual creation, a world of perpetual transience and renewal. Notably, the tapestry depicts cyclic life in the same way as Merlin's mirror: it stands as an ekphrastic instance that presents to its

viewer a world of everlasting creation, and associates itself with and highlights the quest's themes of cyclic nature (3.2.19).

Spenser takes the cyclicity of Adonis's story further in Canto VI, in which Spenser actually brings us into the Garden of Adonis, where Adonis actually appears. Spenser consistently likens the Garden to a living caul of a world perpetually rebirthing itself:

All things from thence doe their first being fetch,
 And borrow matter, whereof they are made,
 Which when as forme and feature it does ketch,
 The state of life, out of the grisly shade.
 That substance is eterne, and bideth so,
 Ne when the life decayes, and forme does fade,
 Doth it consume, and into nothing go,
 But changed is, and often alfred to and fro. (3.6.37)

As life is perpetually reborn in the Garden, life must also inevitably fade in the cyclical pattern of death and rebirth. Spenser describes Adonis' Garden as "[T]he first seminarie / Of all things, that are borne to live and die ... Here to account the endlesse progenie / Of all the weedes, that bud and blossome there" (3.6.30.4-8). In the Garden, all living things harmonize as part of "eternall fate" (3.6.32.6):

But were it not, that Time their troubler is,
 All that in this delightfull Gardin growes,
 Should happie be, and have immortall blis:
 For here all plenty, and all pleasure flowes
 And sweet love gentle fits emongst them throwes. (3.6.41.1-5)

Death, therefore, stands as the "eternall fate" of all life in the Garden, explaining why "Time their troubler is" (3.6.32.6; 3.6.41.1). As Time is an enemy to all living things in the Garden, it is also an enemy to the tapestry itself, which, again, seems to grow from its cloth the transient flower that represents the death of Adonis. By recalling the

tapestry of Venus and Adonis when he describes Adonis' Garden, Spenser once again associates art with the cyclic; similarly, once readers are first introduced to the actual Garden of Adonis, they inevitably think back to the tapestry that likewise represented cyclic life and death.

The tapestry's function as a representation of both art and cyclic life is further supported by Lauren Silberman, who argues that Britomart subjectively reacts to the visual art she encounters (*Transforming Desire* 32). In particular, Silberman argues that the tapestry in the Castle Joyeous helps Britomart understand the significance of her own quest and life, for the reason that the tapestry serves as a work of art by which Britomart may learn to more fully take agency in life and "pursue a quest in which risk and engagement are necessary conditions for going forth" (32). As Silberman affirms, such "risk" and "engagement," on full display in the tapestry by Venus and Adonis, ennoble and embolden Britomart with a deepened understanding of her quest, particularly because "[t]he imagery [of the tapestry] suggests vulnerability, the beginnings of passion, the loss of virginity; it mirrors Britomart's enrapturement at the sight of Artegall and foreshadows her own wounding by the evil Busirane [an evil sorcerer who appears later in Britomart's narrative]" (32). The cyclic nature of death observed by Silberman also mirrors the procreativity inherent to Britomart's quest. If Britomart enters the Castle Joyeous in need of a more mature understanding of love and desire, her encounter with the tapestry, Silberman claims, could help her reach such understanding (32). I add that, by examining the procreative cyclic nature communicated by the tapestry, Britomart may further grasp the procreative line she

must establish as the goal of her quest. Although Venus and Adonis do not have children, procreation undeniably plays a key role in the tapestry, “[w]hich in that cloth was wrought” the perpetual rebirth of Adonis as if he “lively grew” (3.1.38.8-9). With the greater capacity for risk and engagement that Silberman argues is prompted and encouraged by the tapestry, Britomart may now pursue her quest’s goal with deepened insight.

Although readers are able to interpret the art objects Britomart encounters throughout her quest by way of ekphrasis, critics debate how much Britomart herself reacts to or learns from her direct encounters with visual art in the ways that Silberman suggests. For instance, James W. Broaddus makes the following case:

The words in the poem which articulate her response to [visual art] add up to little more than wonderment I see no evidence that Britomart learns anything from any of her experiences in Book III What Britomart exhibits through all her trials are not understanding and a point of view, but the qualities she is given in her first appearance in the poem, a “constant mind,” “stedfast courage and stout hardiment,” and innocence: “Ne euill thing she fear’d, ne euill thing she ment” (III.i.19). (“Renaissance Psychology” 199-200)

Similarly, Sheila T. Cavanagh argues that Britomart, as the representation of Chastity, does not have the capacity to interpret or gain knowledge from visual art: “In order to uphold the version of chastity lauded in *The Faerie Queene*, Britomart cannot acquire insight or understanding” (141). Likewise, Adam McKeown claims that the visuals overwhelm Britomart’s senses, and that her dazzled state prevents her from actual examination and interpretation of the art objects (52-54). Nevertheless, the closing scene of Britomart’s quest supports the notion that she does respond to the artworks she encounters, particularly in how she reacts to what I argue is the final ekphrastic

instance in Book III: a statue of Hermaphrodite recollected by the narrator. By understanding the statue as an ekphrastic instance, the reader further grasps how Spenser employs ekphrasis to underline and associate the cyclic nature of life with the visual art Britomart observes. In so doing, the reader also learns how Britomart is not a static symbolic figure but a conversely human one, emulation of whom results in a deepened and enriched proficiency for reading art.

The recollected image of the Hermaphrodite statue, as Silberman supports, stands as “the concluding image of Spenser’s anatomy of love in Book III” (207). Before Spenser evokes the image of the statue, Britomart rescues the kidnapped Amoret from the evil sorcerer Busirane, and reunites Amoret with her husband Scudamore. Outside the Hall of Busirane, from which Britomart has rescued Amoret, the reunited couple falls into a deep and loving embrace (3.12.45.9). As the chaste knight Britomart closely observes the two lovers’ reunion, the narrator describes the significance of their love by comparing the pair to a statue:

Had ye them seene, ye would have surely thought,
That they had beene that faire Hermaphrodite,
Which that rich Romane of white marble wrought,
And in his costly Bath causd to bee site:
So seemd those two, as growne together quite,
The Britomart halfe envying their blesse,
Was much empassiond in her gentle sprite,
And to her self oft wisht like happinesse,
In vaine she wisht, that fate n’ould let her yet possesse. (3.12.46)⁸

Because the Hermaphrodite statue appears by way of Spenser’s narration rather than as an actual visual artwork observed by Britomart, the statue is not discussed by critics

⁸ It should be noted that the Hermaphrodite stanza appears in the first installment of *The Faerie Queene*’s publication in 1590, not in the 1596 edition of the poem.

as an ekphrastic instance. Regardless, the statue stands as an example of the narrator invoking visual art in a way that nonetheless speaks to the earlier and more sustained moments of visual description in Book III. As I previously stated, although the definition of ekphrasis has narrowed over time to mean the verbal description of visual art, ancient rhetoricians first defined the trope as “a speech which brings the subject matter [or, more precisely, ‘the thing shown’] before the eyes” (qtd in Webb 53). According to this first-known definition of ekphrasis, the narrator’s creating the Hermaphrodite statue before the reader’s mind’s eye helps qualify the instance as ekphrastic in nature. Specifically, Spenser brings the image before the mind’s eye of the reader by making a second person address to the reader: “Had *ye* them seene, *ye* would have surely thought, / That they had been that faire Hermaphrodite, / Which that rich Romane of white marble wrought” (3.12.46.1-3, emphasis added). Furthermore, the “rich ... white marble” out of which the imagined statue is “wrought” renders the Hermaphrodite image as composed of artistic materials, further augmenting its visual conceptualization as akin to a visual art object.

Although it is arguable whether or not Britomart also sees the pair of reunited lovers as similar to the Hermaphrodite statue, the moment is nevertheless a culmination of what she sees and what we see. As Silberman argues:

At the conclusion of the 1590 *Faerie Queene*, both Britomart and Spenser’s reader are onlookers. Both Britomart and the epic reader bear witness to the union of Amoret and Scudamour as part of their own self-fashioning in virtuous and gentle discipline. Both [Britomart and the reader] are challenged ... to make right use of poetry ... Half envying their bliss, Britomart is moved by what she sees to pursue her own love. The reader is challenged to imitate Britomart in fashioning a self in virtuous and gentle discipline rather than ... trivializing art as a mere erotic fetish ... The reader is challenged to moralize

art, to engage the text in a process of sense-making, rather than to reify art ... by avoiding the role of interpreter. ("The Hermaphrodite" 221-222)

As Britomart sees the visual of the two lovers, we see the lovers in the form of a visual art object through an ekphrastic image that evokes the appearance of a statue before the mind's eye. As a result, both Britomart and the readers of the poem become able to interpret and engage in the "sense-making" that Silberman describes as a means by which the reader may "imitate Britomart in fashioning a self in virtuous and gentle discipline" (222). As we "would have surely thought" (3.12.46.1) that we had seen a statue if we had been present at the moment of the reunion, Britomart is indeed present at that moment, perhaps suggesting that she, too, sees the statue. The moment also speaks to the more sustained moments of verbal descriptions of visual art that appear earlier in Britomart's quest, underlining the quest's themes of cyclic life and associating them with visual art. Because the two lovers are married, it is not unlikely that they may procreate cyclic life in the way Britomart and Arthegall will in their own future marriage. With Amoret and Scudamore's marriage now solidified in the form of a statue in the mind's eye of the reader, the cyclicity they represent becomes correlated to and highlighted by the Hermaphrodite statue, much like how cyclic themes are represented earlier by visual phenomena and artworks such as Merlin's magic mirror and the tapestry of Venus and Adonis.

According to Kelly A. Quinn, characters in Renaissance poetry often "make art stand as allegory in relation to themselves, taking their cues for interpretation not from the art, but from their own lives, and find analogical relationships between the inset art and the primary narratives which are different from those their [Elizabethan] readers

are likely to discover” (26). Whereas, again, it is debatable that Britomart sees the reunited lovers as a statue, the passage in which the narrator recollects the Hermaphrodite statue suggests an “analogical relationship” between the statue and the primary narrative of Britomart’s quest. While Britomart earlier shows resistance to love, interpreting it as “some melancholy” (3.2.27.9), in the passage the knight becomes “halfe envying” (3.2.27.6) and “much empassiond” (3.2.27.7) as she wishes “to her self ... like happinesse” (3.2.27.8). Her response indicates that she has begun to allow herself to live more fully in union with the eternal rhythms of love that Glauce earlier reassures her is a natural and fated part of life: Britomart recalls Glauce’s early description of love as fated in the final line of the stanza, which reads, “In vaine she wisht, that fate n’ould let her yet possesse” (3.2.27.9). Indeed, Britomart’s response to seeing the reunited lovers suggests that she has come full circle in the sense that she now fully understands the fated element of her quest as articulated by Glauce and manifested before her by Merlin’s magic mirror. To reiterate Silberman’s argument, upon seeing the lovers and “Half envying their bliss, Britomart is moved by what she sees to pursue her own love” (222). I add to Silberman’s claim that, although Britomart has not yet found Arthegall, she has acquired sensibilities more in line with Glauce’s words of wisdom and reassurance, consequently becoming more compelled to fully engage in the goal established within the mirror’s pictorial rims.

By not providing readers with the ending to Book III that they may expect—Britomart does not find Arthegall until Book V—Spenser directly asks readers to look

forward, motivating them to journey onward with the kind of assurance and inspiration that Britomart feels upon seeing the lovers embrace. At the end of the 1590 edition of *The Faerie Queene*'s third book, after referring to the Hermaphrodite statue, Spenser closes the final canto with the following:

Thus doe those lovers with sweet countervayle,
 Each other of loves bitter fruit despoile.
 But now my teme begins to faint and fayle,
 All woxen weary of their journal toyle:
 Therefore I will their sweatie yokes assoyle
 At this same furrowes end, till a new day:
 And ye faire Swayns, after your long turmoyle,
 Now cease your worke, and at your pleasure play;
 Now cease your work; to morrow is an holy day. (3.12.47)

One may initially suspect that Spenser concludes the tale of Britomart on a note of melancholic transience by telling us that his “teme begins to faint and fayle” (3.12.47.3), perhaps to leave us with a taste of the “bitter fruit despoile” (3.12.47.2), and despite ending the story with a reunion between two married lovers. However, in the lines “Now cease your worke, and at your pleasure play; / Now cease your worke; to morrow is an holy day” (3.12.47.8-9), Spenser provides consolation: he ends the story of Britomart with an emphasis on the cyclical nature of transience and rebirth. He reassures us that in endings there arrive new beginnings, and that “At this same furrowes end” there comes “a new day” (3.12.47.6). Silberman agrees that Spenser’s ending suggests continuation, arguing that Amoret and Scudamore’s reunion provides a “picture of chaste love presented for our education [that] is not the traditional image of two becoming one but the two lovers becoming a new entity” (“The Hermaphrodite 222). She observes that Spenser’s description of the two lovers as “like two senceles

stocks” (3.12.48.9) indicates “both that the lovers have gone beyond earthly things and that the onlooker is not privy to their experience ... the reader, like Britomart, is left with the quest of making sense unfinished” (223). Such an ending perpetuates the themes of cyclic renewal, as the reunited lovers are themselves renewed into a new entity, and Spenser, in his own art, creates cyclic continuance for his poem’s protagonist and his readers. By way of Merlin’s mirror, the tapestry of Venus and Adonis, and the recollected image of the Hermaphrodite statue, Spenser ultimately creates an ekphrastic pattern that helps readers contemplate the significance of the regenerative art presented within the poem—as well as of the regenerative art of the poem itself—for their own cyclic lives. This particular use of ekphrasis, previously overlooked by scholars, shows a sustained comment on and approach to visual art as a cyclic means of sense-making.

Conclusion: Implications of Ekphrastic Metanarration and Summary

The many forms of cyclicity represented throughout Book III may suggest a metanarrative function of Britomart’s quest. When Spenser composed *The Faerie Queene*, Elizabeth I was in her sixties and unable to produce an heir; as Britomart advances on her quest to establish the procreative line that leads to the birth of Elizabeth I, the narrator simultaneously illuminates with each ekphrastic encounter that art is in itself regenerative. If I am right in proposing that with his ekphrases Spenser communicates that art—and thus his own poem—is regenerative, we could read the poet as therefore alleviating Elizabeth I of the burden to reproduce. Spenser’s

poem, itself a regenerative work of art, could be the Queen's heir, ceaselessly and cyclically continuing her legacy. On the surface, Britomart's desire to reproduce may appear as an odd element of a story presented to an audience incapable of conceiving; however, by characterizing each knight as a distinct virtue of Elizabeth I ("Letter to Sir Walter Raleigh" 789), the poem stands as a memorial to her virtues and therefore inspiration to those who read the poem. As art draws from past art to inspire future art—as Merlin's magic mirror draws from Achilles's shield to inspire Britomart's quest throughout Book III, or as Spenser draws from the statue of Hermaphrodite to suggest how Britomart may envision her marriage to Arthegall later in the poem—Spenser's poem draws from Elizabeth I's virtues to inspire future readers and future art.

Although the metanarrative function of ekphrasis in *The Faerie Queene* is debatable, the constant connections Spenser draws between life and art's reciprocally regenerative natures through ekphrasis are undeniable. If art affirms life in the face of its transience in *The Faerie Queene*, as I suggested at the beginning of this essay, Spenser's consistent correlations between art and the renewal of life require both Britomart and Spenser's readers to understand that to live as part of cyclic life is to live as part of an aesthetic whole. We can better understand this aesthetic whole, the poem demonstrates, through the cyclical nature of art itself.⁹ Indeed, the reader may

⁹ The central literary foundations for Canto XI's twenty-eight stanzas describing the tapestries in Busirane's gallery come from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, with the tapestries mirroring the works of Arachne. Transformed into a spider, Arachne is an artist who weaves not only for expression but also for survival, creating patterns and designs in a woven web—a both deadly and regenerative creation—in order to live. A potential argument to be expounded upon may be that, by engaging art as Britomart

very well be reminded of the importance of cyclicity by the poem's very form, as the same nine-line stanza format repeats itself throughout. In Book III, Merlin's magic mirror, the tapestry of Venus and Adonis, and the conjured image of the Hermaphrodite statue all correlate cyclic life with visual art, and reference past art to make sense of the present and influence the future. By way of ekphrasis, readers may interpret the significance of the visual art within the poem, as well as the literary art of the poem itself, to deepen understanding of the themes of cyclicity in Britomart's quest, and also to deepen insight into their own cyclic lives.

does, we, too, engage art in order to survive, literally weaving ourselves together with life's cyclic nature.

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Picture This, Imagine That: Teaching Visual Literacy in the Disciplines

What do a World War 1-era poster by the American Red Cross, a museum installation that teaches ecology and marine science to children and adults alike, and the revolutionary Alpha-Helix model have in common? In today's classroom, across the curriculum, there is an urgent need for students to learn to read, interpret, examine, create, and appreciate such disciplinary visuals. In short, there is a vital and imperative need to teach visual literacy in the disciplines. Indeed, there has been a call from in and beyond the Writing Across the Curriculum community for a new economically, theoretically, and technologically accessible pedagogy and framework to help students improve higher order and critical thinking when practicing and applying visual literacy. What if we opened the doors to past pedagogies to help the present need for a new visual literacy pedagogy? And what if we reached as far back as the Classical era to develop an accessible pedagogy for teaching visual literacy?

My goal in this article is to develop a framework for teaching visual literacy in the disciplines. In a literature review, I attempt to put the current scholarly conversation on visual literacy in the disciplines in dialogue with what Jeff Rice describes as the "technology gap" (9) discussion. In so doing, I set out to narrate how visual literacy scholars, composition theorists, visualization specialists and theorists, and the library community all express the need for an overarching pedagogical framework for helping students improve visual literacy as the world becomes increasingly visual and new media thrives. I also argue that we must take into account how to develop students' visual literacy in ways that are available to students of all

backgrounds and economic upbringings, regardless of access to technology or media. The framework I propose in the article draws from classical rhetoric's concept of *ekphrasis*, the first systematized method for cultivating students' skills at vivid visual conceptualization. To demonstrate the framework's usability, I apply it to three different visuals: a poster, an educational public exhibit, and a three-dimensional scientific model.

Definitions of Key Terms

To aid in this discussion of visual literacy in the disciplines and the practical applications of ekphrastic principles in the writing classroom, it is helpful to provide the following definitions:

- The Visual—To use Cynthia Selfe's concise definition, the visual "refer[s] broadly to a focus on visual elements and materials of communication" ("Toward New Media" 69). Thus, the visual refers to materials such as photographs, illustrations, films, advertisements, etc. It should be noted that a clear distinction must be made between visual literacy and the visual, as people often conflate the two.
- Visual Literacy—The capacity to read, examine, appreciate, understand, compose and design visual materials. Therefore, while the visual refers to visual materials, visual literacy is the ability to interpret and create those visual materials.
- Visual Rhetoric—The idea or argument communicated by the visual.

- Ekphrasis—Ruth Webb observes that the *Progymnasmata*—elementary rhetorical exercises from classical rhetoric—hold the first definitions of ekphrasis: “a speech which brings the subject matter [or, more precisely, ‘the thing shown’] before the eyes” (qtd in Webb 53). Over time, the definition has narrowed, especially in literary studies, to mean the verbal description of visual art (Webb 5-6).

Visual Literacy Across the Curriculum: Student Access and the Growing Need for a Pedagogical Framework

To further contextualize this discussion of visual literacy across the curriculum, it is useful to review recent scholarly work on visual literacy’s use in the writing classroom, as well as the conversation on student access. A good starting point is Kathleen Blake Yancey’s 2004 essay “Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key,” based on her presentation of the same name delivered when she chaired the 2004 Conference on College Composition and Communication. In her essay—a call to arms for instructors to apply new media, technology, and visual literacy in the teaching of writing—Yancey argues: “At this moment, we need to focus on three changes: Develop a new curriculum; revisit and revise our writing-across-the-curriculum efforts; and develop a major in composition and rhetoric” (308). Although Yancey invests much time discussing the first and third of these points, she does not discuss how to implement the second of the three changes, and raises the topic of visual literacy across the curriculum only once more, saying: “This curricular change includes renewed attention to WAC” (321). Although WAC and visual literacy are

discussed throughout her essay, she does not provide a plan of action for how we may connect the two. Nonetheless, her call for “renewed attention to WAC” is insightful and perceptive, and many visual literacy scholars¹⁰ presently engage in dynamic discourse on how to apply visual literacy effectively in the disciplines.

Stephen Bernhardt stands among those actively participating in the discussion on applying visual literacy across the curriculum, and takes pains affirming that to understand language as a “visual event is to open wide the doors to many other disciplines” (747-48). As the textual, visual, and the visual design of texts themselves work in tandem, the field of visual rhetoric increasingly converges with disciplines employing media, art, advertising, film, photography, and other visual media. While this convergence may suggest that the need to teach visual literacy across the curriculum and the teaching of multimodality are one and the same, it is rather the case that the two are connected but distinct from each other; whereas multimodality entails helping students learn by way of interfacing with multiple forms of media, visual literacy across the curriculum is the teaching of students across all subjects to interpret and create visuals with higher order and critical thinking. As explored further in this literature review, although multimodal classroom practices and assignments help cultivate visual literacy, varying socioeconomic levels of diverse populations of students sometimes makes accessibility of multimodal learning an issue; however, many scholars do not see accessibility as the primary issue, but instead

¹⁰ Helpful sources include Brian Street’s “What’s ‘new’ in New Literacy Studies?,” Jerry T. Christopherson’s “The Growing Need for Visual Literacy at the University,” Lynell Burmark’s *Visual Literacy: Learn to see, See to Learn*, Lester Faigley’s “Visual Rhetoric: Literacy by Design,” Steve Westbrook’s “Visual Rhetoric in a Culture of Fear: Impediments to Multimedia Production,” and Ron Bleed’s “Visual Literacy in Higher Education.”

see resistance to exploring visual literacy's interdisciplinary nature as the central concern.

In *The Rhetoric of Cool*, Jeff Rice encourages fuller and more confident generation of dialogue on the interdisciplinary nature of visual literacy, observing that “[o]ur challenge is to foreground that acknowledgement [of visual literacy’s innately interdisciplinary quality], not resist it because of its unfamiliarity or because it doesn’t fit what we assume writing should entail” (10). Although Rice offers pedagogical suggestions and theories for visual literacy’s application in writing-based learning, he explicitly states that he is not concerned with the “laments regarding the technology gap” (9). Rather, he is “looking to generate an alternative approach [to teaching composition] that is both critical and performative” (9) and primarily centered on students’ production of texts by means of new media and technology. Rice states:

[T]his absence [of visual literacy practices in the writing classroom] signifies an ideological hesitation to allow imagery a place within composition studies, for most of the ‘only now’ work done in ‘visual rhetoric’ limits not only our understanding of visuality’s relevance to composition studies history and new media but also, pedagogically, students’ ability to produce their own visual-based writings in new media environments. (135)

Rice’s observation is a direct response to the scholarship of visual literacy scholars such as Donald and Christine McQuade, Dean Rader, and Carolyn Handa—and particularly the Bedford/St. Martin’s *Visual Rhetoric* sourcebook that Handa edited—who tend to privilege the verbal over the visual in their research, which is something that Rice sharply criticizes: “The preference is still for the word. Thus, we hear Rader using the word *interpretation* . . . and not the word *production*. Thus, we hear Handa—despite sporadic references to production in her introduction to the

sourcebook—stress the idea of ‘critical thinking’ repeatedly, a concept whose origins are in reading, not producing texts” (135). Rice argues:

[I]t is unclear what students are to do with such information. Should they then design their own visual texts? How? Based on the choices they have discovered? Based on other rhetorical ideas? Which? For what reasons would they compose visually even if given the chance? Why isn’t any instruction in this example of visual rhetorical pedagogy devoted to actual visual rhetorical production? Why is the visual something one admires but does not perform? (135)

A helpful suggestion Rice offers for how to foster students’ abilities to create visual texts is to employ assignments that ask students to “assemble iconic imagery” (152) in a way that renders autobiographical statements or advertisements of themselves; namely, students are to do this by way of Web sites, Photoshop composites, Flash sites, and/or other animation or graphic manipulation programs (152-153). Rice also offers prompts such as: “compose with a series of iconic gestures the way the ... ad does; critique the ad through your own ad; complicate the ad’s ... message by juxtaposing new images which challenge the ad’s stance; further the ad’s stance with a new series of ads that promote the same message; or use the ad’s logic of juxtaposition to create your own series of ads” (152). However, according to Rice, all such assignments must be applied with the most up-to-date technology for the reason that pedagogy must adapt to the perpetual technological “change in this age of new media” (155). Although Rice provides keen and inventive pedagogical instruction for how to foster students’ actual performative visual literacy and production of visuals, his emphasis on new media does not consider the needs of students with limited to no access to such digital technologies.

Sharing Rice's sensibilities are Marvin Diogenes and Andrea A. Lunsford, who in "Toward Delivering New Definitions of Writing" endorse the use of multimedia in teaching visual literacy, and argue that rhetoric in general "seems ideally suited for making connections between what is old—the complex and shifting but also enduring relationships among message, text, audience, rhetor, and context—and what is new" (151). Indeed, in the eyes of those who approve of using the newest and most advanced of technologies in teaching composition through visual literacy, classrooms with greater access to technology provide a near-wish-fulfillment for students who complain that the more traditional verbal modes of composing are too limiting, and that research-based arguments do not allow for self-expression or creativity (Rottenberg and Winchell 67). Scholars such as Robert Davis and Mark Shadle have suggested what is termed "post/modern research," which allows students to apply various forms of media and genres of writing in order to complete research-based assignments ("Building a Mystery" 414-46). Stuart A. Selber argues in *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age* that students of all backgrounds may take part in even the most advanced of technological applications of visual literacy, as long as faculty help students "situate technological impasses in a broader context so that their characteristics can be organized and understood" (70). In other words, Selber, like many supporters of a more digital-based application of visual literacy, believes that as long as we provide individual assistance to each student's unique needs, all learners may overcome what he defines as "performance-oriented impasses" (72).

However, scholars Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe, in their 2004 book *Literate Lives in the Information Age*, argue that students' issues with technological uses of visual literacy in the classroom are not "performance-oriented impasses," but instead rooted in the varying levels of accessibility to technology that correspond to the varying economic and social backgrounds of each student (232). Indeed, Hawisher and Selfe summarize the central argument expressed by those who see complications inherent to the more technological elements of visual literacy when they declare, "[B]ecause students from different cultures, races, and backgrounds bring different literacies and different experiences with literacy to the classroom, focusing so single-mindedly on only one privileged form of literacy encourages a continuation of the literate/illiterate divide that perpetuates class-based systems" (232).

Selfe articulates in "The Movement of Air, the Breath of Meaning" (2009) that many composition instructors "continue to experiment with assignments that encourage students to create meaning in and through ... video, multimedia, and other forms of multimodal composition" (640). Selfe cautions, however, that the relationship between visual modalities and writing leaves certain students at a disadvantage, as not all students have such "valuable semiotic resources [as technology] for meaning making" ("Movement of Air" 616). In other words, because some students may not have media available to them, such students are at a disadvantage in comparison to more privileged students with greater access to technology. It is important to note, however, that Selfe does not in any way want to dismiss visual literacy's possibilities in helping students learn and engage the world

more fully through visuals. She affirms, “I *do* want to argue that teachers of composition need to pay attention to, and come to value, the multiple ways in which students compose and communicate meaning, the exciting hybrid, multimodal texts they create—in both nondigital and digital environments—to meet their own needs in a changing world” (642). Her worry is that the visual may overtake the textual in the writing classroom, as she supports a stronger emphasis on the exciting and growth-promoting hybridization of the verbal and the visual; she also strongly encourages sensitive attention to the students who may not use technology on a regular basis or have such technology available to them.

Scholars such as Geoffrey Sirc, Anne Wysocki, and Dennis Lynch argue that the visual includes both digital and non-digital images, as the use of simpler, less technological forms of visual literacy significantly widens the circle of students who may take part in examining the visual outside of the classroom, and also literally and figuratively makes the carrying of the visual into any classroom space—regardless of the room’s technological capabilities—easier and more readily accessible. Sirc observes: “Certainly, I’m aware that many composition teachers today use the popular [visual media], but I wonder just what formal and conceptual liberties students have in writing on it” (150). This is not to say, however, that Sirc is in any way opposed to visual literacy, as he is in favor of making meaning through the visual. Sirc advocates teaching composition by recognizing composition’s inherent “explorations of technology; its collaborative nature; its use of imaginative materials, juxtaposed in interesting, poetic ways . . . its structure as more performative gesture than hierarchical

form . . . the homemade aesthetic nature of the piece; and its boldly naïve desire to try to make something other than just another dull piece of art” (122). Anne Wysocki and Dennis Lynch in *Compose, Design, Advocate* recommend activities that involve the imagination and creativity encouraged by Sirc, and with visuals as accessible as hand-drawn pictures, helping students to literally sketch out their thoughts. Wysocki and Lynch, similar to Sirc, argue that rendering one’s ideas into pictures opens up and generates new thoughts and directions that may be used when creating rhetoric. They provide the following exercise as an example:

Try drawing a picture of your audience when and where they’ll encounter what you make. Try drawing a picture of what your audience will look like after they’ve read what you’ve made. This will help you make your audience—and your purpose—more concrete, and so will help you (when you turn to it) make your statement of purpose more detailed and useful. (63)

Sirc also highlights that instructors who use visual literacy in the writing classroom universally agree, by principle, that to enhance students’ fluency in oral, textual, visual, and electronic literacy is to help them contribute their voices more fully and creatively within and beyond academia, and also to understand composition as a tangible act that influences our world (267).

While practitioners of visual literacy agree in this regard, they are certainly not always in synch. Whereas many instructors affirm that writing classroom practices must work in accord with our culture’s technological progression by teaching students to use the most up-to-date of multimedia both in and outside of the classroom, others stress that too much application of the more technology-based visual literacy is problematic. Part of the reason why rhetoricians and instructors express concern

toward more technologically-advanced uses of visual literacy is that they see such practices as leaving less technologically-privileged students at a disadvantage.

An affinity that scholars commonly draw between textual literacy and visual literacy is the importance of context. As James Paul Gee articulates, visual literacy “can take on quite different meanings (and values) in different contexts” (188), and we must therefore be conscious of context when creating and communicating through visuals. Indeed, Gee argues that context and the words/visuals comprising an act of communication are “two mirrors facing each other, infinitely and simultaneously reflecting each other” (190). Indeed, Gee is part of the New London Group, the collective of scholars who investigate the effects and changes caused by multimodality and multiliteracy on education, and who wrote the often-cited article “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures.” In the article, when discussing how visuals should be context-specific, the New London Group argues that “[t]eachers and students need a language to describe the forms of meaning that are represented In other words, they need a metalanguage—a language for talking about language, images, texts and meaning-making interactions” (23-24) from context to context. According to the New London Group, this metalanguage “needs to be quite flexible and open-ended. It should be seen as a tool kit for working on semiotic activities, not a formalism to be applied to them. We should be comfortable with fuzzy-edged, overlapping concepts. Teachers and learners should be able to pick and choose from the tools offered” (24). The New London Group thereby proposes in their article a metalanguage for analyzing what they call the “Design” of texts, and uses the term

“Design” “because it is free of the negative associations for teachers of terms such as ‘grammar’ [and] also has a felicitous ambiguity; it can identify either the organizational structure (or morphology) of products, or the process of designing” (20).

The New London Group’s suggested metalanguage is rich and complex, as they created it to help students understand the processes of making linguistic meanings, visual meanings, audio meanings, gestural meanings, spatial meanings, and multimodal meanings; also, the metalanguage consists of numerous terms and concepts collected by the New London Group for students to internalize, including transitivity, nominalization of processes, information structures, local coherence relations, global coherence relations, and many others (26-30). While the metalanguage is complex, so too is the process by which it is applied by the students to Design, which involves three elements: “Available Designs” (such as linguistic, audio, spatial, visual, and gestural modes of meaning making), “Designing” (reading, seeing, and listening to the Available Designs), and “Redesigning” (the meaning that results from Designing, and that in turn becomes a new Available Design and meaning making resource) (20-23). By applying the metalanguage to each of the three elements of Design, the students become more able to critically reflect on, describe, and eventually create the form, content, and function of the various modes of meaning making and discourses of practice. Certainly, the intricate and expansive metalanguage provides much foundational instruction and practice for helping students in the composition classroom interpret and create multiple modes of literacy.

The need for a pedagogy for teaching visual literacy also goes far beyond the composition classroom, with visual literacy scholars and data visualization specialists offering strategies and principles for visual design to diverse audiences, including businessmen, software developers, and others whose professions require the creation of data representation, charts, graphs, diagrams, data graphics, tables, guides, maps, web pages, technical illustrations, graphic designs, and numerous other forms of visual communication and display. Edward Tufte, in his many various texts such as *Visual Explanations*, *Envisioning Information*, and *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*, provides ideas and language for effective visual display; in particular, Tufte offers guidance on the communication of quantitative information, statistical evidence, information design, and data analysis, often by drawing from theories for creating art, architecture, and prose. However, as noted by ecologist Emily Lemagie in “Communicating Science,” Tufte’s works are primarily aimed at “experts or individuals with a keen interest in visual communication” (184), usually including economic and political policymakers as well as businessmen and graphical statisticians, and thus Tufte’s proposed principles and language tend to be highly advanced and deeply theoretical in nature.

Comparable to Edward Tufte, Colin Ware offers many rich principles and ideas for clear visual communication in books such as *Information Visualization* and *Visual Thinking for Design*. Ware’s strategies, like Tufte’s, begin at an expert level, are highly theoretical, and also mostly center on 3D data visualization and 3D interactive interfaces as opposed to a wider range of contexts and genres. Unique to

Ware is his rigorous exploration of the psychological and neurophysiological interactions that humans have with the visual, as his works focus intensively on the relationship between seeing and cognition in addition to seeing and design. Throughout *Information Visualization*, for instance, Ware details the brain's never-ending conscious and unconscious interpretations of the visuals people encounter daily, frequently describing the brain's visual sensory system as a "collection of highly specialized parallel-processing machines with high-bandwidth interconnections. The entire system is designed to extract information from the world in which we live, not from some other environment with entirely different physical properties [and therefore] [s]ensory aspects of visualizations derive their expressive power from being well designed to stimulate the visual sensory system" (11-12). While Tufte and Ware's ideas are influential, instrumental, and effective, the vastly theoretical and advanced nature of their ideas are not readily accessible for those new to learning and developing visual literacy.

Visual literacy scholars and theorists in and beyond the composition classroom are not alone in the call for a pedagogy for teaching visual literacy, as the library community also expresses the need for students to learn visual literacy across the disciplines. The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), a professional association of academic librarians dedicated to improving teaching, learning, and research in higher education, argue that "standards outlining student learning outcomes around interdisciplinary visual literacy in higher education have not been articulated" (ACRL). Thus, the ACRL recently organized the Visual Literacy

Standards Task Force (VLTF), which “addresses this gap in the literature and provides tools for educators seeking to pursue visual literacy with college and university students” (ACRL). Namely, the VLTF collectively established a structure of standards for facilitating students’ development of visual literacy, calling their structure the ACRL Visual Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education.

In creating the Competency Standards, the ACRL keenly observe that, although “[n]ew digital technologies have made it possible for almost anyone to create and share visual media the pervasiveness of images and visual media does not necessarily mean that individuals are able to critically view, use, and produce visual content” (ACRL). The seven competency standards proposed by the ACRL work to help students “develop these essential skills in order to engage capably in a visually-oriented society,” and call for the following:

1. The visually literate student determines the nature and extent of the visual materials needed.
2. The visually literate student finds and accesses needed images and visual media effectively and efficiently.
3. The visually literate student interprets and analyzes the meanings of images and visual media.
4. The visually literate student evaluates images and their sources.
5. The visually literate student uses images and visual media effectively.
6. The visually literate student designs and creates meaningful images and visual media.

7. The visually literate student understands many of the ethical, legal, social, and economic issues surrounding the creation and use of images and visual media, and accesses and uses visual materials ethically. (ACRL)

The ACRL Standards document adds, “Across disciplines, students engage with images and visual materials throughout the course of their education. Although students are expected to understand, use, and create images in academic work, they are not always prepared to do so [A]bilities [in visual literacy] cannot be taken for granted and need to be taught, supported, and integrated into the curriculum.”

Namely, the ACRL Standards document maintains that common language and a conceptual framework for discussing and teaching visual literacy must be provided for faculty and students; whereas their seven standards provide helpful common language, the ACRL Standards document does not provide a conceptual framework. How, then, do we create the kind of framework encouraged by the ACRL Standards document for interpreting and creating visuals, and in a way that is broadly, theoretically, and economically accessible for instructors and students?

A good example of an accessible pedagogical guide for helping students learn visual literacy in the disciplines is graphic design scholar Andrea Marks’s e-book and print book titled *Writing for Visual Thinkers*, published in 2008 and 2011, respectively. The origins of Marks’s pedagogical guide grew from her involvement in WAC through Oregon State University’s Writing Intensive Curriculum program, and the guide has since flourished to become a widely-used text across multiple university art and design departments. The pedagogy that Marks encourages in her book reflects

the less technologically-driven and theoretically-heavy approaches to learning visual literacy, and offers unique strategies for enriching visual thinking in ways that help writing students across disciplines achieve clarity of written expression. Throughout her book's many exercises (involving mind maps, concept maps, freewriting, looping, word lists, outlines, reflective writing, journal and sketchbook exercises, narrative storytelling, and many more), Marks makes the case that learning to write helps one become a better visual thinker and vice versa. As the introduction reads, "visual thinkers can blossom into fine writers, drawing on their sense of color, texture, and structural conciseness to craft sentences and paragraphs that use vivid, compact language to tell a story" (vii). In the process of creating visuals, students see visual composition and textual composition as akin to one another; drawing a picture suddenly goes hand in hand with freewriting one's ideas in order to concretize the ideas and give literal shape to one's thoughts and arguments.

As Marks's *Writing for Visual Thinkers* stands as a strong example of an accessible and engaging pedagogy for deepening students' visual literacy skills in the disciplines, what is an overarching pedagogy that may similarly function in and beyond WAC? Visual literacy scholars, composition theorists, visualization specialists and theorists, and the library community all express the need for an overarching pedagogical framework for helping students improve visual literacy as the world becomes increasingly visual and new media thrives. As these groups are progressive and forward thinking, what if they also open the doors to past pedagogies to help the present need for a new visual literacy pedagogy? Indeed, what if they

reached as far back as our Classical era to develop an accessible pedagogy for teaching visual literacy?

In the following section, I propose a framework that functions with the accessibility necessary for students learning visual literacy, and that draws from the earliest known example of visual literacy instruction: *ekphrasis*. Although Catherine L. Hobbs is the first to argue that ekphrasis is a concept we may return to when helping students understand visual literacy at a beginning level, her discussion is more historical than pedagogical, as she does not explain how to apply ekphrasis in the classroom. My project, then, is to articulate the ways in which ekphrasis may help students deepen and enrich visual literacy in the disciplines and use ekphrastic principles in a framework for visual literacy. In order to set up a clear understanding of the framework in the following section, I provide a short discussion of ancient Greece's *Progymnasmata*, a series of oration exercises in which ekphrasis made its first known appearance (Hagaman 25), as well as the *peristaseis*, a framework from the classical era that helped students use ekphrasis effectively in oration (Webb 56). In constructing my proposed framework, I draw from these classical roots and extend them to offer an instructional framework that applies the pedagogic force of ekphrastic principles in the 21st century classrooms across the disciplines.

Reclaiming Classical Roots: A Pedagogical Framework for Teaching Visual Literacy

In the *Progymnasmata* of ancient Greece, a sequence of fourteen exercises trained students in oration (Hagaman 24). According to Webb, oration instructor

Theon guided students through each exercise by introducing them to a framework of “narrative elements,” called common places (*topoi*), actions (*pragmata*), persons (*prosopa*), and times (*kairoi* or *chronoi*) (Webb 56). These elements of narration, collectively named the *peristaseis* or *peristatika*, provided a conceptual framework or pattern that could be readily applied to each of the fourteen exercises, including—and according to Webb, especially—the twelfth, *ekphrasis*, the “complete description of a thing or object . . . that brings the object clearly before the readers’ eyes” (Hagaman 25). The visuals conjured by ekphrasis are meant to strengthen and enrich verbal arguments, and students’ application of the *peristaseis* when using ekphrasis guided and focused their understanding and construction of the visual.

In presenting the following framework, I aim to draw from, update, and extend the classical era’s use of ekphrasis into a tool for the 21st century writing classroom, and to provide scaffolding and common language for students and instructors to discuss visual literacy in the disciplines. Moreover, in constructing the framework, I have attempted to align it with the New London Group’s perception of the ideal framework of concepts and tools, which is one that is “quite flexible and open-ended” (24). As Quintilian suggests, we must embrace “brilliant improvisation . . . [and] we must not cling superstitiously to any premeditated scheme . . . There is no greater folly than the rejection of the gifts of the moment” (X, vi, 5, 6). I also align the framework with principles of visual literacy identified by contemporary theorists, namely Anne Wysocki and Dennis Lynch. However, the framework is not based on any pedagogical structure already created by Wysocki, Lynch, or other contemporary

theorists. Rather, this framework extends and modernizes the Classical concept of ekphrasis.

Although students may enjoy learning about or find fascinating the classical era's use of ekphrasis, they are not expected or required to have background information on the concept, as I have modernized the classical era's method for conceptualizing visuals for the contemporary classroom. Similar to the four narrative elements of the classical era's *peristaseis*, my framework consists of five principles for guiding students' interpretation and creation of visuals. My framework's principles include *common visuals*, *movement*, *participants*, *context*, and *purpose*. The first four elements, respectively, help students understand how effective visuals make unfamiliar ideas more readily familiar (*common visuals*); present their elements sequentially (*movement*); relate to the viewer and welcome them as participants (*participants*); and function in accordance with the subject and location in which they are presented (*context*). Collectively, the four principles demonstrate how the visual achieves its *purpose*, the fifth principle of my framework, which emphasizes that effective visuals function as rhetoric. Provided below are overviews of each of the five principles.

Common Visuals:

In my framework, students are encouraged to use commonly-known visuals when creating their own visuals, thereby communicating their complex ideas out of descriptions and images commonly known to their audience. As a result, the students learn to communicate what is at first unfamiliar to their audience in a way that is

readily and visually familiar. Aristotle's students used the concept of "common places," or *topoi*, as "places to look' for arguments" (Bizzell and Herzberg 30); students who practiced ekphrasis used common places similarly to how students using my framework use commonly-known visuals. By using common places when practicing ekphrasis, the classical era's students learned that "[e]kphrasis does not only make 'visible' the appearance of a subject, but makes something about its nature intelligible" (Webb 54). Instructing students to use commonly-known visuals when applying my framework helps students similarly make their visuals intelligible, namely by communicating ideas and information through what is readily-understandable to their audience. In my framework, the similar use of common places is called the use of "common visuals."

Contemporary theorists Mary E. Hocks, Michelle R. Kendrick, and Wysocki and Lynch confirm that students find it helpful when a visual's abstractness is related to a concept with which people are familiar. Wysocki and Lynch define this relationship as creating a visual analogy, an "argumentative form based on the assumption that if two objects or processes are alike in one way, they must be alike in more if not all ways" (Wysocki and Lynch 306). Using my framework similarly helps students use common visuals to make what is unknown become known.

Movement:

The need to construct and present visuals with sequential clarity is called *movement* in the proposed framework. The name "movement" is used for the term to describe the motion that a visual's composition causes the eye to experience along a

sequential visual pathway, such as when following the top-to-bottom or left-to-right motions across a graph or poster presentation. Through the principle of movement, students learn to recognize an effective visual's clear sequential presentation of information. By ekphrasis of actions (*pragmata*), students of classical rhetoric learned to construct and communicate a visual's composition in a linear, narrative-like sequence that guides listeners from one part of the visual to the next. This particular narrative element is called "actions" because it demonstrates how visuals "constitute narratives (in the sense of accounts of actions unfolding over time) in themselves" (Webb 68). As Ruth Webb observes, "The category of *pragmata* seems to have perplexed some modern readers of the *Progymnasmata*[,] who come to it with a strong conception of description as distinct from narration" (67). In other words, such readers understand visuals as static objects, or perhaps even as decorative digressions, rather than as narratives unto themselves. For Webb, ekphrasis is "not *by definition* separable from narration, nor does it by definition constitute a digression" (68), in that effective visuals communicate sequential progression of thought in the way that effective verbal compositions linearly present and unfold events.

Participants:

Students using my framework learn that effective visuals relate to and engage audiences as participants by way of personalization and personification. According to Theon, when ekphrasis conjures images of people, personifies, or invites the audience as participants, the narrative element of persons (*prosopa*) is taking place (Webb 54-55). Similarly, my proposed framework has the principle of "participants," a principle

to instruct students that personalization and personification in visuals are each ways by which an author humanizes and thereby more intimately welcomes a viewer to engage the visual text. The participatory and personalizing nature of effective visuals in today's culture is significant:

In our culture, photographs and drawings of people can seem automatically to carry more emotion than writing. When photographs or drawings are of people or events, we respond to how the people look—and we respond because we know or can imagine what it is like to be in the body posture shown. We respond because we can imagine the emotions photographed people feel. Including photographs or drawings in a written composition can thus attach emotions and bodily sensations to the writing—but do be alert to how different audiences can respond in very different ways. (Wysocki and Lynch 268)

Whereas Wysocki and Lynch focus on photographs and drawings of actual people when discussing how visuals personalize their subject matter for the audience, students using my framework learn how to personalize visuals across media such as poster presentations, exhibits, and models, and without necessarily including images of actual people; students using my framework recognize that other forms of personalization exist, such as the welcoming of the audience as participants by way of overt invitation to interpret or even physically engage the visual in some way.

Context:

To stress the need for the visual to not float freely, and to instead function in accordance with its subject and the location in which it is presented, students can be directed to notice the visual's context. According to the *Progymnasmata*, the elements of an argument's visual should "somehow reflect those of the [written] subject" (Webb 57). In short, the visuals should share the characteristics of and be appropriate to the subject matter and context in which the argument is given. Theon referred to

this rendering of a visual to suit its context as “time,” in that such rendering helps the visual function more appropriately and powerfully in the time and location in which it is presented (Webb 57). To further emphasize the importance of context for students, it is also helpful for them to recognize that visuals may be created and executed in the right *kairotic* moment: the opportune time, place, and instance for an argument to achieve success (Webb 207). In short, through the principle of context, students heighten their awareness to the *kairotic* moment and recognize how effective visuals are appropriately tailored to their subject matter and function in accordance to the time and location in which they appear.

Purpose:

Finally, my framework includes a principle that does not draw from a narrative element of the *peristaseis*: “purpose.” By attending to the principle of purpose, students see that the visual must function rhetorically over aesthetically and achieve its objective in making a particular argument. The principles of common visuals, movement, participants, and context all collectively work together to help the visual achieve its purpose. As noted by Wysocki and Lynch, when students ask, “When should you use visual strategies for argument instead of or in addition to written or oral strategies?” the teacher responds “Whenever it is appropriate to your purpose—and when the visual strategies support your purpose” (268). I add to Wysocki and Lynch’s statement that the rhetorical purpose stands as the most important principle in visual literacy, as well as in my visual literacy framework. To help students think through the purposes they aim to achieve, it is helpful to ask students to imagine: what

would you like your audience to learn from your visual? In what ways would you like your visual to appeal to your audience's emotions or logic? How would you like things to be changed, shaped, or influenced as a result of your visual composition? Helping students envision purpose assists them in deciphering how to achieve purpose rhetorically and identify the rhetorical purpose of the visuals they interpret.

Application and Overview of the Narrative Elements:

In this section, the principles are applied to the World War I-era poster "Help Her for the Duration of the War," both to help review and practice the proposed framework and also to demonstrate how to guide students as they learn and use the principles. The poster synthesizes verbal elements with Vincent Aderente's 1918 oil-on-canvas painting *World War I American Red Cross*, and was created for the general public to raise money for the Bayside, New York American Red Cross League (*Smithsonian Art Museum Art Inventories Catalog* par. 1). If an instructor has Internet access, s/he may easily locate the poster online, as the *Smithsonian Art Museum Art Inventories Catalog* includes an image of the poster in its online collection.

As an exercise, students may discuss, list, or freewrite on what they see as the common visuals, participants, and movement of the poster, and also decide what the poster's context and purpose may be. Below are quick definitions of each principle followed by bulleted lists summarizing how the principle functions in the poster. Do the bulleted lists reflect the students' responses? Also, how accurately did the students

guess or identify the poster's purpose? Did they find the poster effective? If so, how?

If not, why?

Context: The visual's functioning appropriately to its subject, time, and location

- The poster was created by the American Red Cross during World War I and displayed throughout Bayside, New York (*Smithsonian Art Museum Art Inventories Catalog* paragraph 1)
- It may help students to provide them with background on WW1 (who was fighting whom, when it occurred, etc.)

Purpose: The visual's rhetorical function

- The American Red Cross created the poster to raise money for Bayside, New York's Red Cross League, and provide further care for wounded soldiers
- Red Cross directly addresses the audience to "Help" and "Join" them within a specific timeline
- Dramatic urgency and presentation appeal to the audience's emotions

Common Visuals: The visual's use of what is familiar

- Medical red cross
- Red Cross nurse dressed in white, head covered
- Bandaged soldier
- Nurse's gestures (outreached arm, troubled expression—common signals for help)

Participants: The visual's relating to and engagement of its audience

- Perceived physical closeness of its featured persons (nurse and soldier) to the viewer
- Nurse extends her hand, physically asking audience to carry out the poster's request: "Help Her."
- Nurse's eyes look directly at viewer—depending on poster's positioning on wall, possibly meets viewer's gaze at eye-level

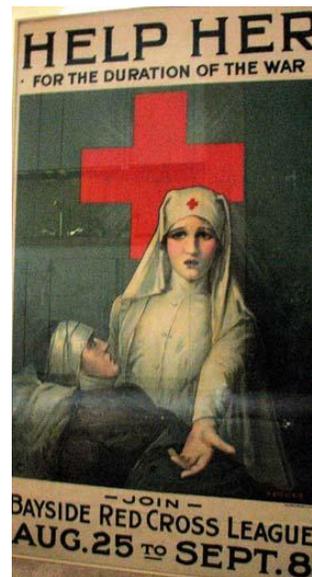


Figure 1: "Help Her for the Duration of the War"



Figure 2: "Help Her for the Duration of the War" with inserted arrows

- The shape and color of the nurse’s headdress mirror the soldier’s bandaged head, visually relating the two figures
- Direct and instructive text composed in bold, capitalized lettering—urgent and insistent typeface

Movement: The visual’s sequential presentation of its components

- Uses top-to-bottom and left-to-right motions of reading required by English
- As illustrated by the inserted arrows, the large medical Red Cross navigates viewer’s eyes from prominent “Help Her” to nurse’s eyes
- Following the direction of the soldier’s eyes takes the viewer to the nurse’s eyes
- Nurse’s headdress leads the viewer from nurse’s eyes to her shoulder and down her arm, which reaches out to viewer as well as continues the visual pathway to the word “Join.”

Classroom practices and discussions for teaching visual literacy based on immediately available resources like the poster “Help Her for the Duration of the War”—or other non-electronic images such as ads, billboards, photographs, and illustrations—are readily usable in all classroom spaces, as such practices do not rely on digital devices or electronic classroom spaces. By practicing the five principles of my framework when examining non-digital visuals created for the general public, which students may encounter frequently in their everyday lives, students learn how visuals’ designers achieve their purpose with fast and clear communication; such a visual’s elements are chosen and arranged to catch one’s attention and hold it long enough to understand the visual’s purpose, and in a way that may be scanned and read quickly. Students’ understanding such visual composition helps them interpret, and also to emulate such composition when creating their own visual rhetoric.

Application of the Framework to Experiential Visuals Across the Disciplines

As applying my framework to the historical “Help Her for the Duration of the War” poster is helpful for students’ discussion and cultivation of visual interpretation, so too is application of the framework to additional visuals across the disciplines. In this section, I apply my framework to two artifacts: ecologist Emily Lemagie’s table-top educational exhibit, and chemist Linus Pauling’s molecular model of the Alpha Helix. In 2011, the first of these two artifacts became part of the Visitor Center at the Hatfield Marine Science Center (HMSC) in Newport, Oregon, where children and adults visit to learn about coastal and marine life and habitats. The second artifact, created in 1948, stands as an example of a visual with historic significance in the field of science, as it conceptualized the protein molecule’s structure for analytic study and for distinguishing a diseased protein cell from a normal protein cell. As demonstrated in the following subsections, application of my framework to guide discussion on the effectiveness of these visuals helps students recognize how complex subject matter is made more accessible; the following applications of the framework also illustrate the benefits and critical thinking students gain from examining the craft of experiential visuals.

Examination of “Current” Events: A Table-Top Educational Exhibit:

For her Master’s thesis in ecology at Oregon State University, Emily Lemagie created the public table-top exhibit “*Current*” Events to help non-scientist viewers of all ages practice raising questions like scientists as they engage with visuals that

communicate information about oyster biology and estuary currents, and also to recognize scientific models as important tools for studying estuary currents and larval transport (Lemagie 1). Lemagie chose to install the exhibit at the HMSC Visitor Center in part because the HMSC is a research and education facility associated with Oregon State University, and also due to the Visitor Center's location near the Yaquina Bay estuary, the marine life of which is the focus of Lemagie's exhibit. On two vertical panels and one curved horizontal panel on the table-top's surface, text, photos, and illustrations explain how the oyster population in the Yaquina Bay estuary is dwindling due to overfishing, pollution, and destruction of habitat; summarize how estuaries make good homes for oysters because they are located where freshwater from rivers meets saltwater from the ocean; and also provide contextual information on the life cycle of an Olympia oyster. The panels also direct viewers to interact with the computer interface touchscreen, on which viewers discover and identify on an illustration of the Yaquina Bay estuary what depths and locations along the estuary make the healthiest habitats for an Olympia oyster. Of all the rich and enriching visuals that comprise Lemagie's educational exhibit, I will demonstrate the usefulness of my framework on the computer touchscreen, the focal point of Lemagie's table-top installation. Finally, I will end by offering suggestions for how instructors from K-12 to university level may use my framework when studying visual and public displays like Lemagie's museum installation.

Again, the *purpose* of Lemagie’s exhibit is to help viewers think like scientists and understand scientific models as essential tools for investigating estuary currents and larval transport. In addition, the *context* of the exhibit is the Hatfield Marine Science Center’s Visitor Center, where children and adults visit to learn about marine and coastal life and habitats. Lemagie explains in her thesis that context was crucial to deciphering how to execute her exhibit’s purpose, and explains that because of her context, she needed to design the exhibit “to be appealing to all age



Figure 3: “*Current*” *Events* exhibit, consisting of the hanging focused audio speaker, vertical static panels, the computer interface, and the curving horizontal static panel below the computer screen (Lemagie 3).

ranges within a family group, [and] so I tried to focus on bright colors. I also wanted the exhibit design to stay simple so that the content would be the primary focus” (64).

In order to think like scientists, Lemagie explains, viewers must learn to raise questions and allow their inquiry to guide their investigations; while the vertical panels provide the question, “Where is a Good Olympia Oyster Habitat in an Estuary?” the viewer takes what they learn from the panels in order to determine

where, on the map that appears on the computer touchscreen, they would deposit oyster shells to create new habitats for Olympia oysters. Helpfully, the menus that appear on the computer are comprised of *common visuals* to make navigating through the interface clearer to the viewers; in her thesis, Lemagie summarizes the commonly-known visuals, which she in fact chose because of audiences' familiarity with them (57):

- The Yaquina Bay estuary as the central part of the image and interface
 - Blue-scale shading to represent bathymetry (depth) layers in the estuary
 - Topographic shading for the land background in order to utilize a familiar technique used on maps as an indicator of what the similar blue-scale shading in the estuary represents
 - A legend to interpret that the blue-scale shading in the estuary represents depth
- (Lemagie 57)

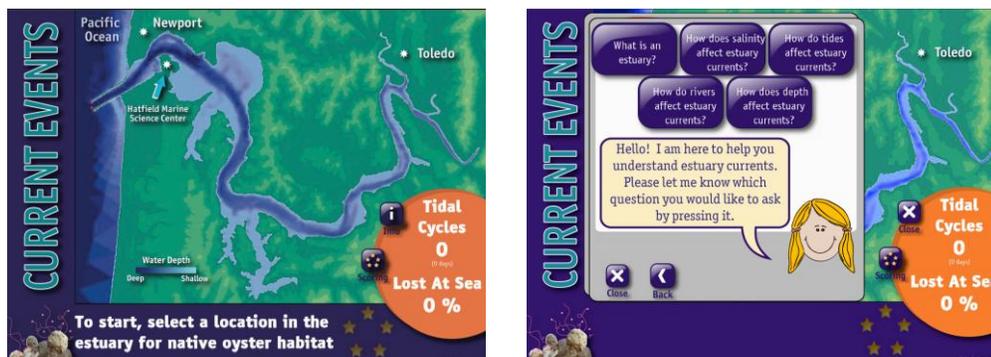


Figure 4: Pictured above left, the “*Current*” Events main interface that appears on the computer touchscreen, which features the Yaquina Bay estuary as its central interface (Lemagie 57). Figure 5: Pictured above right, the “*Current*” Events pop-up menu which appears to provide the viewer with help (Lemagie 62).

Lemagie personalizes and humanizes her visual in numerous ways, successfully engaging her viewers as *participants*. Lemagie again considers her context, and renders the Yaquina Bay—located nearby the HMSC Visitor Center—as the focus and subject of her visual, giving viewers’ engagement in their “mission” to deposit oyster shells on the touchscreen to create healthy habitats for Olympia oysters a heightened sense of urgency and reality. On a smaller scale, Lemagie also humanizes the material by including cartoon images of human faces to provide help, direction, and questions for the viewers. Also, Lemagie directly invites viewers to interact on the touchscreen as participants, and patterns the interface components after the computer game *The Oregon Trail*, the 1970s computer game developed to educate children about pioneer life, and that, as Lemagie details in her thesis, “is still popular (new versions have been created and released for cell phones and Facebook) and

considered to be a highly successful example of computer-based educational gaming” (54). By engaging her audiences by way of a familiar and accessible video game, Lemagie further grounds her viewers as participants.

Finally, *movement* is conveyed simply in the touchscreen image of the Yaquina Bay, with yellow dots representing the oysters lighting from left to right across the screen to communicate the left to right travel of the Olympia oyster across the estuary. Movement is also conveyed simply in the pop-up menu screen, which asks the viewer to read in the left-to-right and top-to-bottom progression expected by English-language users. To summarize, Lemagie uses the *common visuals* of the nearby Yaquina Bay estuary, blue-scale shading, topographic shading, and an accompanying legend to help familiarize viewers with the otherwise unfamiliar information; engages the audience as *participants* by focusing her subject matter on the same geographic location as the HMSC Visitor Center, and also by using images of people and a computer interface that draws from the popular *Oregon Trail* computer game; creates a linear progression of *movement* across her visual by way of the left-to-right movement of words and of lighted dots representing oysters across the touchscreen; and stays mindful of her *context* by, again, focusing her subject matter on the Yaquina Bay near which the HMSC Visitor Center is located and by conveying her information in ways that are accessible to children and adults. Lemagie’s use of all four principles helps her achieve her rhetorical *purpose*, to help viewers raise questions and use visual scientific models as tools of inspection and discovery.

If teachers want to find Lemagie's visuals online, they may easily do so by downloading a PDF of Lemagie's thesis, available on Oregon State University's Valley Library website (<http://osulibrary.oregonstate.edu/about/valley>). Lemagie's visuals may be studied as both scientific models as well as parts of a museum installation; Lemagie produced her scientific research and visual conceptualizations as part of her Master's thesis, and also to ultimately communicate a scientific process to the public. For students at the university level, visuals such as Lemagie's museum installation serve as a powerful example for communicating technical information to the public, but in this context, the framework is also very much applicable for K-12 instructors; the framework may be used to help reaffirm content learned during a field trip to a museum, gallery, aquarium, etc., upon returning to class, and reinforce learning and critical thinking. Also, with the commonness of cell phones, the instructor, chaperone(s), or perhaps even one or more students may be able to take photos of the various visual displays encountered during the field trip, and bring the visuals back to the classroom for continued discussion and deepened inquiry and analysis. In the case that a camera or camera-phone is not accessible, instructors may also retrieve images or postcards from the gift store at the given museum, aquarium, zoo, gallery, etc., to then bring back to the classroom to reinforce learning by way of the visual literacy framework.

Examination of Linus Pauling's Alpha-Helix Model: A Three-Dimensional Visual:

Chemist Linus Pauling created a three-dimensional model of the alpha helix, the basic structure of the protein molecule, in 1948, when doctors and researchers needed to know what the structure looked like so that they could distinguish a diseased protein cell from a normal protein cell. In the spring of 1948, Pauling served as the George Eastman Professor at Balliol College in Oxford, England, but after catching a head cold, received orders to stay in bed; growing tired of the science fiction and detective novels he had been reading

during his recovery, Pauling decided to try visualizing the alpha-helix model using only paper and pencil ("Alpha Helix – Gamma Helix"). To accomplish this, Pauling needed to

illustrate a polypeptide chain of amino acids in such a way so that, when folding the paper into a helical shape, the polypeptide chain's hydrogen bonds (represented by the letter "H") overlapped with each other, holding the helical structure together and with the correct dimensions. Pauling transferred

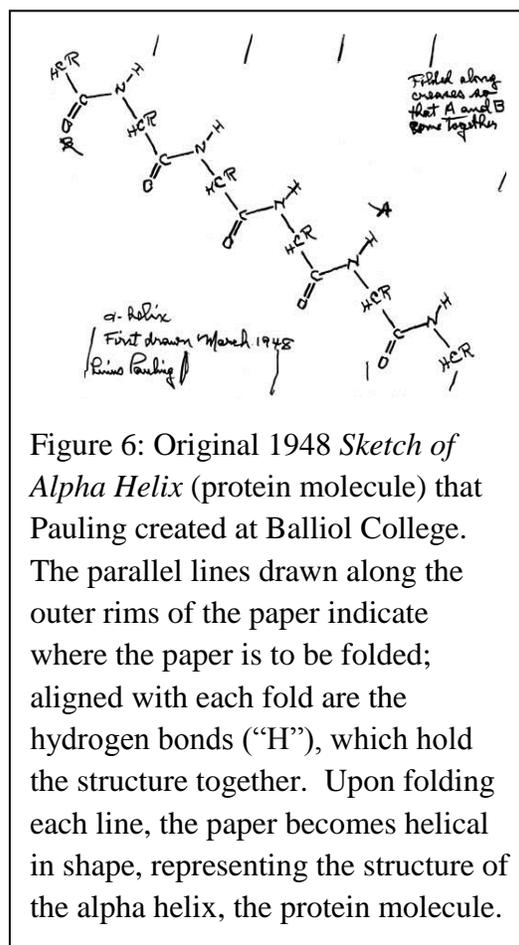


Figure 6: Original 1948 *Sketch of Alpha Helix* (protein molecule) that Pauling created at Balliol College. The parallel lines drawn along the outer rims of the paper indicate where the paper is to be folded; aligned with each fold are the hydrogen bonds ("H"), which hold the structure together. Upon folding each line, the paper becomes helical in shape, representing the structure of the alpha helix, the protein molecule.

the illustration into a three-dimensional model of plastic balls and sticks, with each

colored ball representing either the polypeptide chain's carbon atoms or the hydrogen bonds that hold the structure together. This particular artifact is one of historic importance in that it changed science, providing the visual model for the alpha helix and thereby helping scientists, researchers, and doctors tell apart diseased protein cells from normal protein cells. The alpha-helix model is also used today to study the structure of hair, fingernail, horn, and muscle, as well as the structures present in myoglobin, hemoglobin, and other globular proteins; moreover, because the alpha-helix model provided a visual structure to help scientists see that the molecule's visual structure is the central source of division between normal cells and diseased cells, it changed the way scientists interpret biological tissues, and helped lead to the proliferation of visual models in the field of science ("Alpha Helix – Gamma Helix").

Despite the ambitious *purpose* to find the then-unknown protein structure

and the revolutionary impact that the completed structure would make on the history

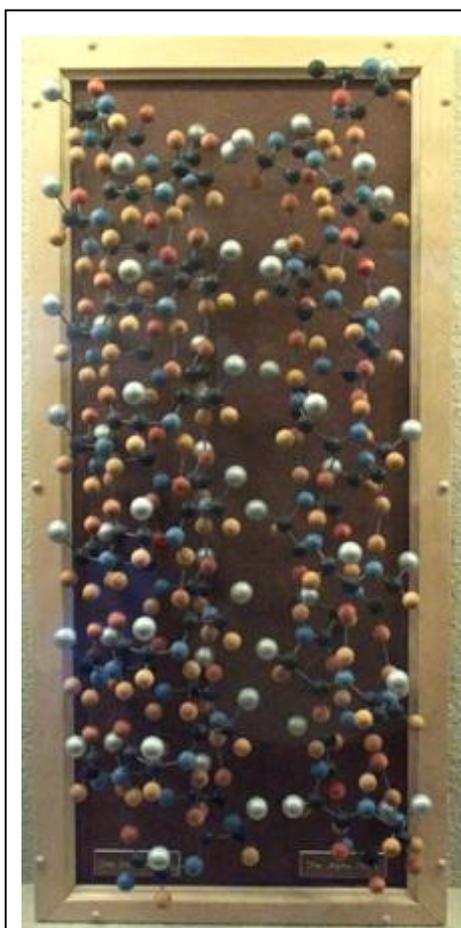


Figure 7: The three-dimensional alpha-helix model, composed of plastic balls representing the amino acids and hydrogen bonds, as well as wooden sticks that hold them together.

and future of science, applying the visual literacy framework to the alpha-helix model reveals that the model's components are quite straightforward in nature. Indeed, the alpha-helix model's simplicity insightfully demonstrates to students that visuals do not need to possess aesthetic beauty or be elaborate in nature, and also that one does not have to be an artist or employ artistry in order to create effective visuals. Again, the basic rhetorical purpose of Pauling's alpha-helix model is to provide the structure of the protein molecule; however, Pauling also sets out to help people visualize and examine part of their own anatomic makeup that they otherwise cannot see. This literal and figurative human dimension to Pauling's model is its central rhetorical purpose, as it helps people visualize something to identify and distinguish normal anatomic makeup from what may be dangerously abnormal.

Pauling sets out to achieve his purpose in the *context* in which there was an especial urgency and need to know the structure so that doctors could identify diseased protein cells from normal cells. Although the structure is helical in shape, unfolding the paper on which Pauling illustrated the protein molecule provides a linear, sequential *movement* across the polypeptide chain that audiences may read from left to right, seeing how the successive chain of amino acids and the hydrogen bonds that hold them together are comprised within the alpha-helix structure. Pauling made up his original sketch with the *common visual* of paper folded along parallel lines to demonstrate where the structure's hydrogen bonds hold the structure together; in addition, Pauling composed his three-dimensional structure of the alpha-helix model with the common visuals of plastic balls to represent amino acids and hydrogen bonds,

and wooden sticks to indicate where the hydrogen bonds and amino acids are held together. The alpha-helix model engages its audience as *participants* quite simply in that it is an experiential model intended to be handled and observed.

Oregon State University's Special Collections and Archives Research Center (SCARC) houses many of Linus Pauling's papers, research journals, illustrations, and three-dimensional models, which I spent much time researching in person; I selected the sketch and model of the alpha-helix model to demonstrate my framework's usability, in part because these particular visuals are available for anyone to find on SCARC's website "Linus Pauling Online" (<http://pauling.library.oregonstate.edu/>) and use in their own classrooms. Thus, any science teacher could locate the images online and show their students the artifact, the history behind it, and the process by which it was made. Additionally, when applying my framework to the alpha-helix model, teachers may help students think critically about how molecular structures may be created and interpreted using basic building materials such as paper, plastic balls, and wooden sticks; seeing the simplicity by which models such as the alpha-helix model are made helps students recognize and practice how to create and interpret visuals using simple building materials when studying biological tissue, molecular structures, and other elements of the human body that otherwise cannot be seen without the help of models and other tangible visuals. Again, teachers guiding students when examining the alpha-helix model helps students see that one does not need to possess artistic abilities or render visuals using artistic flourishes in order to create and use visuals effectively. In short, the alpha-helix model serves as an especially helpful

artifact when communicating to students the simplicity by which complex material may be created visually, and also stands as an insightful example of how teachers may use the visual to help students answer the question: how do you visualize what you otherwise cannot see?

Conclusion

As demonstrated in this article, the visual literacy framework opens possibilities to teachers across the curriculum for enriching students' critical thinking when learning visual literacy, and provides a coherent foundational structure for teaching visual literacy across levels, from K-12 to university-level teaching. Using the visual literacy framework reveals how visuals are made to achieve their rhetorical purpose, and creates for students more scaffolding and common language for discussing and better understanding how visuals are crafted to make meaning. Visual literacy scholars, composition teachers, WAC course instructors, visual theorists and specialists, and members of the library community may use the visual literacy framework to provide the groundwork that they want students to have when learning how to compose and critically engage visuals.

Teaching students visual literacy by applying the framework to visuals such as the "Help Her for the Duration of the War" poster, Emily Lemagie's "*Current*" *Events* exhibit, and Linus Pauling's alpha-helix model demonstrates that my framework may be utilized across disciplines, and also helps students recognize that they do not have to be technical experts at computer imaging software, graphic

designers, or visual artists to create and use visuals for communication and meaning making. Further research may show how the framework can be adapted for examining more advanced visuals, teaching across more levels of instruction and learning, and addressing students' varying learning abilities. For students in kindergarten and elementary levels and art classes, for instance, the framework may be used to help them recognize and articulate how illustrators of picturebooks, animators of their favorite films, and creators of advertisements and commercials use the visual to craft and create meaning. Moreover, the framework may be incorporated into museum tours to provide help for visitors, thereby making a more fulfilling and enriching visual experience for them.

Although this article does not detail how the visual literacy framework may be used to foster students' performative production of visuals, it encourages and opens the discussion for doing so. Furthermore, discussion of how to apply the framework when teaching students' to become more performative in visual literacy accommodates students across various economic and social backgrounds; whereas Jeff Rice provides excellent pedagogical instruction for deepening students' performative visual literacy, his emphasis on new media limits the number of students who may participate. To reiterate Hawisher and Selfe's argument:

[B]ecause students from different cultures, races, and backgrounds bring different literacies and different experiences with literacy to the classroom, focusing so single-mindedly on only one privileged form of literacy encourages a continuation of the literate/illiterate divide that perpetuates class-based systems. (232)

Helping students enrich proficiency at performative visual literacy by way of my visual literacy framework assists students with more open flexibility and accessibility. Indeed, applying the framework converges harmoniously with the New London Group's urge to provide foundational instruction and practice for students in a way that is "quite flexible and open-ended" (24). The visual literacy framework may be used amenably when helping students critically reflect on, describe, interpret, and eventually create the form, content, and rhetorical function of the visual modes of meaning making and discourses of practice.

For those of us in fields like rhetoric and writing, it is deeply satisfying to draw from our roots to make connections between our past and present, see our way through new problems as they arise, and open the doors to future possibilities in deepening students' critical thinking and understanding of craft and meaning making. As shown in this article, extrapolating from classical roots and adapting and extending pedagogical practices from the past can address students' present needs, and lead to higher order and critical thinking for communicating meaningfully. The rich discoveries, conversations, and classroom practices that result from identifying and exploring connections between past, present, and future needs of students give opportunities for students and teachers to envision how to learn complex material with theoretical, economical, and technological accessibility, and guide the creation and composition of meaning making in their present and future lives.

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