

Copycats at Work and Play: Aura, Imitation, and Automation in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction



A Proposal for a Summer 2017 LARC Research Community Grant

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In his famous 1935 essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Walter Benjamin argues for how modern modes of technical reproduction have affected the “aura” of originality that in earlier times lent art objects a singular cultural authority. Substituting the “unique existence” of the art object with “a plurality of copies,” he contends, diminishes the mystique of art and, in making art broadly available to the public, results in new modes of perception, new publics, and new types of politics. Benjamin’s ideas seem ever more relevant to artists and scholars today, especially as we can now look back on more than a century of art and popular expression anchored in or in dialogue with a copycat aesthetic fueled in large part by the proliferation and increasing accessibility of reproduction technologies culminating in the digital technologies of our current day. Via typewriters, stenography, photography, film, and song performances in live, audio, video, digital, and karaoke contexts, artists of all stripes in the long twentieth century have orchestrated the effects of originality, imitation, and automation to copy their own and others’ work and thereby explore the possibilities and perils of art in the age of mechanical reproduction.

In this research community, Professors Chasar (English) and Susik (Art History) will be joined by students Kevin Alexander (English Creative Writing), Eli Kerry (English and Film), Owen

Netzer (English), Hailee Vandiver (English literature) to study and employ modes of artistic creation engaging the long history of mechanical reproduction that Benjamin helps bring into view. Susik and Vandiver anchor our timeline in the modern art worlds of the 1920s and in relation to typewriters, stenography, and photography. Chasar, Alexander, and Netzer bring us into the present day via the copycat poetics informing karaoke, musical parodies, recording formats, and even live song performance. And in re-filming a version of a 1940s Surrealist film—thus investigating the possibilities of what we might think of as video-karaoke—Kerry forms a bridge between the filmic technologies of the 1940s and the digital ones of the present day.

Over the course of May and June, the research community as a whole will meet for six different meetings of between two and three hours each. At these meetings, we will read and discuss materials contributed by—and of practical or theoretical interest to—all members of the research community. We will begin by pairing Benjamin’s essay with the Henry Jenkins-led white paper “Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century” (2009), which identifies how digital media and thus digital reproducibility are affecting the creation, circulation, and social lives of art in ways that Benjamin both could and could not anticipate. During May and June, we will also begin the first investigative stages of our own projects. In July and August, we will work full time independently and informally with others and will formally meet twice more to workshop our work in progress. We will also check virtually with progress reports in July and August. We will aim to have solid, full-length drafts of our final projects by the end of the second week in August.



Proposed Budget

Kerry/Netzer Tech Needs

Kerry and Netzer anticipate that the majority of their technology and equipment needs will be fulfilled via loan from Salem's Capital Community Television (CCTV) and the WU Art Department. Kerry and Netzer will complete CCTV equipment training during the Spring semester or in early summer, so that they can borrow CCTV equipment (free for trained users) and eventually broadcast on that channel. Materials not available via CCTV may be available via WU's Art Department pending summer availability. That said, some items are necessary for regular home, travel, on-site, editing, production, or other uses. Those include:

1TB Hard Drive: \$50

Total: \$50

The Poetics of Karaoke

Mike Chasar

My project for the summer of 2017 stems from the book I'm writing about the intersections of poetry and non-print media forms such as audio recording, film, television, radio, and digital formats. Poetry criticism has by and large focused on poetry as a print phenomenon—largely in “little” magazines and books with limited press-runs—and in the process has overlooked not just the sheer quantity of poetry distributed via non-print media but also how those media affect people's experience of poetry and the unexpected ways that poetry has in turn shaped the cultural standing of those media.

In Chapter One, I look at how and why religious poems were crucial to establishing the public's perception of an early slide projector called the magic lantern, which offered the first popular alternative to reading via print. In Chapter Two, I study how audiences reacted differently to Edna St. Vincent Millay's World War Two poem *The Murder of Lidice* depending on the medium by which they encountered it. In Chapter Three, I reveal how film in the silent and sound eras—on screen and in the industry's discourse—sought to both affiliate with and disaffiliate from poetry in order to help construct film's legitimacy as an art form. In Chapter Four, I argue for how and why TV sitcom plots associating poetry with plagiarism helped TV carve out a place of distinction for itself in the Cold War media landscape.

As part of this research community, I intend to start researching and writing Chapter Five, which will focus on American karaoke and especially on the simultaneous multimodal experiences with song lyrics that karaoke offers as the oral, aural, recorded, live, screen, and digital converge. I'm interested in karaoke for a variety of reasons:

- I would love to argue that one of the world's most popular entertainment activities involves poetry and that the nature of that popularity entails—indeed, demands—poetry in non-print media.
- I think that I can intervene in the debate about whether or not—or rather how—song lyrics can be considered poetry.
- I would like to appreciate if not redeem the aesthetics of “badness” common to a lot of karaoke and thus extend an argument I set forth in relation to TV poetry in Chapter Four.
- I would like a final chapter that brings the book into the current day by considering the the digital remediation of poetry.
- The magic lantern (the subject of my first chapter) was once used to project song lyrics in music halls and thus served as a proto-karaoke machine, therefore allowing me to bring my book full circle.

I don't yet know know the precise claim or claims I want to make about karaoke—indeed, I hope that this research community will help me identify and explore them—but I'm likely to focus on how karaoke's appeal entails this research community's three key terms: how audiences experience the originality or “aura” of the unique vocal performance, and how that performance is an imitation of a song in the age of automatic playback.



Just the
sweetest
sound my ears
have ever known

Surrealism and Secretaries

Abigail Susik

I have a theory that French Surrealism was influenced by the rise of the secretarial trade in the WWI era, and I'd like to delve into that idea this summer. When Surrealism first appeared in Paris in 1924, it valorized "automatic" writing and drawing, and chased after an ideal of "automatism" as a form of passive dictation received directly from the unconscious mind itself. I'm interested in the way in which Surrealist automatism seemed to absorb various forms of mediated writing that could be found in the popular culture of that era—a kind of writing that either entailed the usage of some kind of device or machine—like a typewriter for instance—or required that the human body itself become machine-like.

Many previous studies of Surrealist automatism have explored the idea that this aesthetic activity was influenced by spiritualist mediums—most often women-- who could channel spirit and supernatural voices. Spiritualism had a kind of heyday in the late 19th century and all the way through to the end of the 1920s, fueled by the millions of deaths that occurred as a result of WWI and also the Spanish Influenza epidemic. While I find the Surrealist fascination in the female medium intriguing and viable, I'm interested in turning toward the banal and heretofore neglected flipside of this image of the 20th century woman as a channeling device for remote dictation. Did perhaps the huge influx of female clerical workers that commenced in the WWI era influence Surrealist automatism? Is the mediated body of the Surrealist a gendered and politicized one—and is Surrealist automatism also therefore a type of gendered and labored text?

My project will explore the history of the secretarial trade, its workers, and its technology in Europe between the late 19th century and the 1930s. I'll be looking at: the development of stenography and typewriters; the shift from the male amanuensis to the female secretary; tropes of sexy or, alternately, stern secretaries in popular media; and, Surrealist art, literature and film.

I've already begun preliminary research about this topic over the past year, and I've given two related public lectures and one conference paper. Within the framework of the LARC research community, I'm planning to complete my research and write part of a first draft of one chapter of my book-in-process on Surrealism and the Media.

I envision the research community functioning primarily as a sounding board for in-process ideas and research discoveries. My field is already so specialized that as it is I rarely find sustained interlocutors for my work, so I look forward to the mutual discourse that this endeavor will foster. Our common themes of media, body and mechanical reproduction, as well as the shared readings that we are planning— will certainly forge an engaged and prolonged discussion about

the issue at the heart of my project—that of the body as a mediator and the ramifications thereof. The proposed trip to an academic conference in Bloomington, Indiana with student Hailee Vandiver should also be an incredible moment for collaborative thinking and idea-sharing, as we will spend three days together discussing issues of various ilks of avant-garde “copycats.”



Surrealist Automatism, 1924

Imitation as Interrogation: The Curious Life of Song Parodies

Kevin Alexander

Proposal:

Parody music, of the type made famous by Alfred Matthew “Weird Al” Yankovic, has not generally been held up as an example of high art. There may, however, be no genre that more wholly embodies the features, such as reproducibility and accessibility, that distinguish the modern artistic environment – for in parody music, these features are not merely byproducts of the medium but the driving force behind the work itself. The creations of Yankovic and those like him fundamentally rely on the songs they imitate being accessible enough that their audience will have at least token familiarity with the source material, not to mention accessible enough to accurately – and legally – ape. And they are, at their core, reproductions of other songs. However, unlike a film on home video or an art print sold in a gift shop, in parody music, drastic, intentional alterations to the original work take center stage. The reproduction is purposefully distorted.

On the surface, this may appear to be merely an intriguing poetic constraint, but in practice, parody music goes much further. Yankovic’s works, for example, often act as implicit commentaries on the songs they appropriate. His “Like A Surgeon,” juxtaposed against Madonna’s “Like A Virgin,” satirizes the social pressure – and anatomical befuddlement – of virginity loss by comparison to the far graver pressure of performing invasive surgery. More recently, “Word Crimes,” a parody of Robin Thicke’s “Blurred Lines,” employs a catalog of grammatical grievances, framed as the titular “crimes,” to implicitly critique the original’s attempts to justify sexual assault; linguistic pedantry becomes symbolic of consent. And these examples are but a drop in the proverbial bucket, both of Yankovic’s discography and of the parody music genre overall. The advent of internet platforms such as YouTube has caused an explosion in amateur song parodies, ranging from lone musicians performing before webcams to professionally-produced music videos. Often, these amateur creations adapt the original song’s message for a different subculture, such as K-Face Rules’ “Talk Nerdy to Me” redefining the criteria of seduction presented in Jason Derulo’s “Talk Dirty,” or scientists at Baylor College of Medicine using Lady Gaga’s “Bad Romance” to vent similar frustrations about unfavorable research assignments in “Bad Project.” As Tom Ballard explains in his 2016 essay “YouTube video parodies and the video ideograph,” many of these modern parodies constitute “a fairly new brand of cultural commentary, one that creates new messages from popular videos without directly mocking or contradicting the messages of the originals.” I would argue this also applies to at least some of Yankovic’s works.

But just as song parodies do not exist independent of their source material, so too do they have an impact on each other. Yankovic, by making parody music mainstream, laid a template for the genre that can still be seen in the YouTube parodies of today; conversely, though, Yankovic continues to publish new works in an age where the internet has democratized song parody, and would likely be influenced by his new peers. It is this relationship that I propose to explore, comparing Yankovic's songs to those of amateur online parodists. I am particularly interested in any contrasts in the ways they approach their source material, as well as the evolution of the genre from Yankovic's first album up to the present, but my final research paper will ultimately reflect wherever the evidence takes me.

Personal Statement:

It seems that every few months at Willamette has brought new learning experiences that have driven me to "read" the mundane or popular as art. The past semester alone has included, among others, a weather report presented as a poem in my Literary Theory class and a field trip to the Portland Art Museum's exhibit on Andy Warhol, whose works—especially his famous Campbell's soup can series—revel in exalting mundanity. What is more, both of these examples involve some sort of intentional, distorted mediation.

This line of thought led me to "Weird Al" Yankovic and similar song parodists in a few ways. On the one hand, much of Yankovic's work approaches mundane topics with a seriousness not unlike Warhol's. Rare is the artist of any medium who would dedicate a work to the subject of the pancreas, or of Spam, yet Yankovic does just that. Humor in no way invalidates the potential artistic merit of these compositions. At the same time, Yankovic's songs and other parodies are themselves just the sort of trivialized, under-studied art to which classes and lectures at Willamette have directed my attention.

Personally, I have long been drawn to the complex wordplay of musical parodies. Works in this genre often engage in an impressive sort of linguistic gymnastics, twisting and jumping to rhyme words rarely even thought of in daily life—both as a consequence of their atypical subject matters and for the inherent humor of juxtaposing this terminology against mainstream tunes. In my youth, I even jotted down a few parody lyrics of my own that, in retrospect, I can see contain thematic connections to their source material similar to those that I intend to study in the work of professional parodists.

Going forward, I see song parody as a particularly vibrant and tension-rich form of intertextuality that, as a Creative Writing major, I could apply to a wide range of literary studies throughout my time at Willamette. It has been said—and I agree—that there is no such thing as a truly original work, for all art is inescapably influenced, consciously or not, by that which

precedes it. Parody music seems to represent the most self-aware extreme of this maxim; by studying these intertextual conversations at their most evident, then, I hope to develop a level of fluency with the matter that will enable me to discern it more easily in works where such relationships are more veiled.

Lastly, but most importantly, I am currently in the process of writing a novel with prominent satirical elements, a project which I intend to be the first of many, and which I hope to one day turn into a living. I believe this endeavor would greatly benefit from the study, especially cross-disciplinary study, of other parodies. I have some familiarity with traditional literary satire—such as Voltaire’s *Candide* or Swift’s “A Modest Proposal”—from upper-level high school classes, but I foresee many new lessons I could learn from artistic media, such as music, other than the written word.

Surrealist Karaoke: Exploring Kitsch and Authenticity Through the Film Remake

Eli Kerry

Proposal:

The shot-for-shot remake has a decidedly checkered history in the world of film and film criticism. Michael Haneke's *Funny Games*, a remake of another film of his with the same name, was derided as "a sour project that defines the anti-imaginative" by one critic, amidst generally negative reviews. Alejandro Jodorowsky's 1973 cult classic *The Holy Mountain* was recently recreated by found-footage collective Everything Is Terrible using home videos of pet dogs; the project attracted scant critical or popular attention. Roger Ebert audaciously described Gus Van Sant's 1998 remake of *Psycho* as a film which "demonstrates that the shot-by-shot remake is pointless." In these and other instances, film critics seem uncomfortable with the idea of shot-for-shot remakes in general, decrying them as categorically useless or demanding that a given example justify the entire concept's validity. In what ways might this discomfort relate to Walter Benjamin's ideas about the aura of originality? What might I discover about this aura if I actively disrupted or tested it by filming a shot-for-shot remake of my own?

By studying Surrealist cinema and the techniques involved in its production, and then using this knowledge to produce a shot-for-shot remake of Maya Deren's 1943 Surrealist short film *Meshes of the Afternoon*, I hope to engage with a unique intersection of my fellow researcher's interests. Because I am relatively inexperienced in the technical aspects of filmmaking, I am prepared for my remake to border on kitsch, drag, or self-conscious spectacle the way Professor Chasar notes that karaoke does. My experience with this process and its product could therefore draw from or lead to insights in his project. At the same time, my study of Surrealism might both benefit from and be beneficial to Professor Susik's project. Cross-pollination could also occur with Alexander's investigation into the nature of imitation, Netzer's use of film as a medium, and Vandiver's exploration of twentieth-century gender politics, given Deren's status as one of the only women in the Surrealist directorial canon.

This last possibility for research collaboration is one reason that *Meshes of the Afternoon* stands out as a particularly enticing film to remake; another is its significant status within the Surrealist film canon, on account of which it has been referenced by a number of subsequent short films, feature-length films, and even music videos. In particular, Su Friedrich's *Cool Hands, Warm Heart* is a direct homage, and multiple critics have noted parallels to Deren's short film in David Lynch's *Lost Highway*. These two examples among others could prove useful in the context of my research into the nature of imitation. On the other hand, *Meshes of the Afternoon* is not quite as iconic as, say, *Un Chien Andalou*. I am less interested in remaking a film which is so

ingrained in the imaginations of filmmakers, and therefore already so frequently imitated—it would be difficult to contribute anything new to that conversation. *Meshes of the Afternoon*, on the other hand, is ripe for this kind of analysis.

I already have an amateur interest in and knowledge of Surrealism both as a movement and as a body of work. Additionally, Professor Ricardo De Mambro Santos’ “Fellini and the Arts” class provided me with a framework for how to think about the relationships between film and visual art, ranging from methodological connections between movements in art and film to single shots which reference specific works. In addition to these analytical tools, which would contribute to my understanding of my chosen medium as well as mediation as it relates to this project, there are also aspects of Fellini’s particular style that border on kitsch or self-conscious spectacle, such as his career-long habit of dubbing his actors very poorly. Professor De Mambro Santos’ explanations of these kinds of details relate directly to my filmmaking enterprise, not only as I make and justify directorial choices but also as I conceptualize the film after it’s finished.

Personal Statement:

This project presents me with a unique challenge, which I hope will be both enjoyable and educational. I am eager for the chance to have access to film equipment and make something of my own. At the same time, I am also excited specifically for the opportunity to film something *not* of my own original creation. Without the pressure of worrying about the quality of my own ideas or scriptwriting, I will be free to immerse myself entirely in film technique—the world of shots, angles, editing, and so on. This will make for an ideal introduction to the technical side of filmmaking, not to mention the ways in which practical knowledge of filmmaking will contribute to my ability to think critically and theoretically about film for my film major and in general.

The other element of the project—research into the historical moment and methods of surrealist cinema—is attractive to me in the context of my general interest in film history. I am excited to not only watch these films but watch them with an understanding of why they were so (relatively) widely appreciated in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, and why they’ve continued to resonate since. And this research will be even more interesting in light of my project’s other half, in which I will put into practice what I learn as I learn it. My studies will contribute substantially to my knowledge and proficiency as a film theorist, and I hope to finish the summer with a strong understanding of Surrealist influence on contemporary film.

Over and above the prospect of making a film while learning film history, this LARC offers me the chance to do those things as part of a research community. This aspect of the grant, like the filmmaking process, is new to me, and I am excited by the potential for collaboration and discussion that it brings. I anticipate not only valuable contributions and insights arising from

conversations with my fellow LARCers but also that their presence will keep me focused. This grant represents a unique opportunity to work in such an environment, especially given the relatively niche nature of the project.

Each aspect of my proposed LARC project appeals to different interests and passions of mine. I hope to combine these disparate elements into something that will not only contribute to my educational and professional development but also prove to be an enjoyable and engaging experience.

The Human Experience as a Medium: An Exploration of Live and Recorded Performance

Owen Netzer

Proposal:

What exactly is it that makes a live performance so powerful and enthralling? Fans of performing artists flock to concerts so they can have the experience of seeing their favorite performers live at large-scale events like Sasquatch, concert halls, and smaller, more intimate venues like the band-hosted parties that are so popular in Willamette's community. But how does direct performer-to-audience contact electrify us in a way that recorded does not? As Walter Benjamin argued in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," the reproduction of a unique work of art with a "plurality of copies" mitigates the power and aura, as our research community frames it, and changes the way that same art is experienced. We have already seen this in our everyday lives since the invention of the compact disc and the mp3; we rarely sit and experience an album like we did in the days when the vinyl record was king.

For my research, I plan to scrutinize live performance in Salem, recorded media (including written work such as lyrics committed to paper or screen and musical tablature), and those strange things in-between; attending live music performances, observing and criticizing videos of concert, comparing live performance to recordings, and conducting interviews with performers about their experiences with and thoughts on the effect that direct contact (i.e. live performance from the perspective of both the performer and the audience) has on the meaning of song. For example, how does the safety of a recording studio (as opposed to a crowded venue) affect a guitarist's technical skill, and does the singer perform better in a vacuum or when playing at a packed basement party? The intimate (and, for performers, often stressful) nature of these "band parties" makes them the perfect medium for finding answers to these questions. I plan to film a short, roughly 30- to 45-minute documentary film exploring these questions, the screening of which could be held in the Fall semester of the 2017-18 academic year. Despite having no personal experience with filmmaking, I plan to look for aid in Willamette's Film Studies department as well as use my own connections; a good friend of mine and my family, Brian Lindstrom, is a successful independent filmmaker based in easily accessible Portland. His advice and expertise will be an invaluable resource for my project and will help me to make my research a tangible reality.

The documentary, inspired by films such as 2013's *Muscle Shoals* with similar subject matter, will be the culmination of my research. The film will include my interviews with musicians (whose performances, ideally, will be included in the film as well) about their experiences in the

studio and on the stage as well as answering the questions brought up in my research by allowing my audience to experience my research firsthand. In addition, the medium of film itself plays into the theme of my research beautifully, as film is itself a recorded medium. Perhaps this will shed additional light on the questions at hand and allow viewers to better understand the nature of performance, possibly even revealing where the final, produced, and replicable version of the short film lies on the fine line between the innumerable and the irreplaceable.

Personal statement:

For as long as I can remember, I've had a close relationship with the stage. I have experience in everything from musical theatre to slam poetry competitions to more middle and high school rock bands than I can even remember being a part of, and the future holds more of the same. It stands to reason, of course, that I'm interested in dissecting and understanding this thing we call performance, in both its live and recorded forms; performance is an integral part of who I am and what I aspire to do with my time at Willamette and, on a grander scale, my life.

Of course, my project might be initially seen as a passion project, little more than an excuse to attend a lot of fun concerts. While I do enjoy attending performances, my research project directly relates to both of my greatest passions: the creation of music and the art of storytelling. My participation in the LARC program would benefit me greatly in the interest of my long-term goals; as a creator and performer, truly understanding the differences between recorded and live performance and the nuances of each is crucial to my career. Poetry and songwriting are the main foci of my Creative Writing major, and vocationally, having a deep understanding of the nuances of performance is vital to my goal of creating meaningful, thought-provoking art, both as a Willamette student and performing artist in the years to come. This Summer, I hope to better understand the human perception of music in a direct format so I can further hone my own work as a musician and writer, as well as improve my teamwork skills (after all, a performer must be able to work with a band and engage with the crowd). My colleagues in this community will be invaluable to me in both my project and my personal work; while filming and doing research, I will be working constantly on my own music, striving to create art that can stand among the subjects of our collective study.

As a rising junior at Willamette, the work done in the LARC program would aid me directly in the completion of my future thesis, and would help me to further enrich the already vibrant music culture at Willamette; the incredibly talented student bands performing at parties and concerts (as well as recording albums) are a perfect example of the subject of my research, and the work that they do is influenced, knowingly or not, by the aura of live performance. Understanding this and integrating it into my own work will be a crucial step in my career. In addition, the connections to experienced performers and artists through the process of filming my

project will aid in both my research and the research of our community, specifically the aspect of “aura” and how it affects art; a direct input from career performers about their experiences with live and recorded media would be an invaluable resource in understanding the relationship of poetry and the human experience relating to it.

Cross-Dressing and Athleticism in Art and Erotica

Hailee Vandiver

During the rise of the machine age in the early twentieth century, avant-garde art in France, Germany and the United States became increasingly infused with technology. In 1915 Francis Picabia published five machine portraits that look like machine-blueprints, but, Molly Nesbit states, their phallic nature “encodes the masculine world of engineered mass-production” (351). In response to Picabia’s portraits, Paul Haviland declared, “Man made the machine in his own image. She has limbs which act...she submits to his will but he must direct her activities...Through their mating they complete one another” (291). Artists began to gender the machine as useful for men, but the machine itself was female. In her essay Barbara Zabel states the Dadaists used “traditional constructs of the feminine to mediate between the realms of technology and nature” (25). However, while Picabia and other artists were reinforcing heteronormativity in art, a cross-dressing counter-movement was happening. Artists Claude Cahun, Hannah Hoch, Marcel Duchamp, and Elsa Von Freytag-Loringhoven were combining art and technology to create drag/androgynous personas. The Baroness Elsa Von Freytag-Loringhoven created an androgynous machine persona described as wearing “spherical metal tea infusers and iced tea spoons as jewelry, a coal scuttle lid as a hat, and...fashioned a battery-powered taillight as a bustle,” when asked about her outfits she said ‘Cars and bicycles have tail lights. Why not I?’ (Zabel 36). I contest that the rise of the machine also led to new forms of artistic and sexual construction.

I am interested in the mediation of a man’s clothing and appearance onto a woman’s body and the cultural migration of images and tropes. While the Baroness was cross-dressing and Picabia was making phallic machine portraits, Claude Cahun and Hannah Hoch were deconstructing gender and the gendered body through artistic depictions of androgynous athletes. Furthermore, these portraits made their way into the mainstream through the form of erotica. Pictures of women boxing in heels and corsets play fighting became a popular form of erotica. These photographs, appropriated stereotypes of male athleticism in a similar way that Hannah Hoch and Claude Cahun did in their art. However, their branding and reception differs greatly. How is the mediation of athleticism and gender through erotica different than through avant garde art? Does the reproduction of an art object diminish or alter its artistic value? Where is the line between art and pornography? I acknowledge that some of the texts I am examining may come from artists that speak a language with an inherently gendered aspect. In order to best address the implications of gendered language and how that might affect the art produced, I will look at performance theory. Much like the performance of gender in society, language in itself is a performance that can also reflect gender structures. With these issues in mind, I propose to

explore the connections between the machine age, the rise of drag in the international avant garde, and cross-dressing/androgyny in erotica through a research paper this summer.

Personal Statement:

I have previously completed an individual research grant on Nuclear Politics and Industrializing countries, and this summer I hope to continue fine-tuning my love of essay crafting with a LARC project. My first grant honed my research and writing skills; however, it also helped me determine that my interest was not in politics, but in the analysis of texts. I have since declared an English major. This summer I hope to improve my writing and teamwork skills through participating in the LARC community.

In my spare time I take boxing classes. From my interest in boxing I came across vintage photographs of women dressed in lingerie and boxing gear. When I came across these I was also in Dr. Susik's monographic studies class on Marcel Duchamp. While in this class I wrote an essay on Machine Age portraiture and the connection between machines, sexuality, and cross-dressing in the avant-garde. I plan to expand this research over the summer by looking at the gendering of the machine in connection with the rise of cross dressing/androgyny in art and erotica. Specifically, through representations of athleticism in art and erotica during the WWI era. My LARC research will combine my love of athleticism with further exploration into the analysis of texts.

The process of crafting an essay has become one of my fondest pursuits. However, I have yet to have the opportunity to explore this passion in a group setting. It is my hope that the LARC community helps me strive to new heights of academic writing. By working closely with Doctor Susik, and attending my first academic conference, I will have the opportunity to explore and prepare for graduate studies in the humanities. Furthermore, as a senior, I will soon be applying for jobs; improving my writing and communication skills through the summer LARC community will help prepare me for my job hunt and future in the workforce.