

Foreword

In the context of modern poetics, Charles Baudelaire alludes to the notion of the palimpsest as critical paradigm, not simply referring to the brain as a physical structure but also underscoring the referential status of poetry itself: “What is the human brain, if not an immense and natural palimpsest?” he asks. “My brain is a palimpsest, and yours too, reader. Innumerable layers of ideas, images, and sentiments fall upon your brain, as softly as light. It seems that each [new layer] buries the previous one. But no layer has perished.” *Paradis artificiels* [Artificial Paradises]

Baudelaire draws the metaphor of palimpsest from a common practice in the ancient and medieval worlds in which valuable parchments were often scraped down to enable new text to be written over the old. This overlaying technique of palimpsest masked the original texts but never truly effaced them, and modern technology is now capable of exposing these earlier layers of text. Similarly, contemporary theory, academic discourses, and new media forms find themselves imposing modern directions over earlier ones, overwriting the “original.” Past models appear effaced while simultaneously serving as the foundation for innovative thought.

In particular, we explore the various ways in which reality, theory and knowledge are remade as part of a never-ending human search for new meaning, conceptual reconfiguration and reinvention. In this issue, we observe the existence of this phenomenon in the study of new media language and literature. Specifically, in “Form and Function in the Social Perception and Appreciation of Web Sites,” Emmanuel Alvarado highlights the role of function in the aesthetic appreciation of Web sites within the context of contemporary society while acknowledging the traditional importance of form in aesthetic theory. This issue also considers the role of the palimpsest in the study of the Mayan language. In “Rethinking the Maya: Understanding an Ancient Language,” Rhianna C. Rogers presents how the historical study of Mayan language and glyphic systems has been consistently romanticized by Eurocentric interpretations, “masking” the underlying cultural characteristics of the Mayan people. In the realm of literature, Michele Braun’s “Indelible Ink of the Palimpsest: Language, Myth and Narrative in H.D.’s *Trilogy*” and Julie Goodspeed-Chadwick’s “Mary-ing Isis and Mary Magdalene in ‘The Flowering of the Rod’” analyze the way in which H.D. reclaims female types and reinvents them to counter the exclusion of women from master narratives and to reconcile her own art with her personal experiences. Still within literary studies, Colbey Emmerson Reid’s “Mina Loy’s Design Flaws” emphasizes metaphorical incongruity as Mina Loy’s method for replacing old forms by recombining them with new forms as a mode of ontological recovery. In doing so, she transforms formlessness into the possibility of new formal combinations, thus, generating a renewed sense of being. The present issue also explores the complexities found in the search for “original meaning”. In particular, Val Czerny’s “Monarch of All I Can Sway: ‘Crusoeing’ Alongside Oscar Wilde’s ‘The Decay of Lying’” celebrates the fictional lie inherent in every backward search for original meaning. Czerny argues that the search for origins is paradoxical because every time meaning and reality are “remade,” the foundation of the new structure necessarily involves a certain masking through the erosion of accepted constructs.

We hope that the reader benefits from our analysis on the process of “reconstructing” reality.