

Dear students of Modes of Writing,

At the end of this course we give you an entirely-subjective, literature list of writers we like and who we think might help your thesis writing process. However, before we start we have selected three texts for you. You are asked to select and read one of these and then come to the zoom on Monday prepared to discuss your responses:

Arnold Berleant, "Descriptive Aesthetics" chapter from *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 25-39.

Ursula Le Guin "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction" First Published in *Women of Vision*, 1986

Michael Taussig "I Swear I Saw This" Drawings in *Fieldwork Notebooks*, Namely *My Own Chapters 1-3* Chicago 2011. Chapters 1-3 (30 pages with drawings)

Max's notes on Arnold Berleant's "Descriptive Aesthetics"

Arnold Berleant's "Descriptive Aesthetics" was published as chapter 3 of his book *The Aesthetics of Environment* (1). Authors often quote novels and stories to support their point. Berleant asks: could we not provide our own descriptions, that would more accurately answer our needs. He describes his own encounters with different environments and attempts to provide rich descriptions, that would answer, with the needed details, to what he is after in his work - which is the ethical and aesthetical understanding of the environment. He proposes that more accent should be put on descriptions and that we have not yet really understood how important they are. We learn ourselves by describing well something that we want to discuss. And descriptive aesthetics could become a method on its own.

1 Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 25-39. [Quoted in Chicago Style here.]

Lucy's notes on Michael Taussig "I Swear I Saw This"

"A drawing is important not for what it records so much as what it leads you on to see."

"To draw is also to pull on some thread, pulling it out of its knotted tangle or skein ...we also speak of drawing water from a well." "Drawing is thus a depicting, a hauling, an unravelling, and being impelled toward something or somebody."

How might drawings be a form of knowing? How might they perform together with writing? The above quotations are drawn from the three opening chapters in anthropologist Michael Taussig's famous little book about the sketches in his field notebooks. In it Taussig has crafted an informal first person and often quirky voice with which to accompany you through this world. The book performs as a repeated return, a pilgrimage if you like, to a memory, enabled by one little sketch that he made of two people seeking shelter in a highway tunnel in Medellín, Columbia in the time of some of the worst militia violence.

Taussig's writing is lively, vivid as he slips and slides from anecdote to metaphor to material to realism, to magic. It's not the easiest read of this selection. Taussig also draws on the (largely male) rebels of the 20 century Western critical, literary and analytical canon; Barthes, Jean Genet, Freud are recurring figures. As is John Berger, who also writes beautiful embodied writing on drawing as practice. For writers interested in research and knowledge production

that combines writing with non-linguistic practices, for writers interested in relationships between words and images, then this is an inspiring read.

Lucy's notes on Ursula K Le Guin "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction" First Published in *Women of Vision*, 1986

It is possible that many of you have already read this text as it has been re-discovered of late alongside many other writings by feminist writers in the second half of the twentieth century. Much of Ursula K Le Guin's work was placed in, what at the time was regarded as a niche category of sci-fi or fantasy. At the same time, Le Guin's allegorical critiques of extractive capital, colonialism, patriarchy did not at all fit into that macho sci-fi world. The radical intersectional and interspecies resonances of the stories Le Guin wove have only been fully appreciated in the last twenty years. Ursula K Le Guin wrote this short essay on story telling in the 1980's, in parallel, but somewhat apart from post structuralist critiques of linear and master narratives. It is a charming, compelling and deceptively simple read, with ramifications far beyond the world of literature. Storytelling makes worlds. The forms our stories take matter. And for the tangled mess our planet is in now, as Tina Turner once sang, "We don't need another hero".