

# *Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*

Post-Now

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## **The Privilege of Inquiry: Using Problem-Posing Education to Subvert Censorship of Diverse Perspectives**

Hannah Woolsey

**Abstract:** The politicization of education has presented a challenge to offering students diverse English Language Arts instruction. Across the country, lawmakers have proposed legislation that limits discussion about race and sex or allows parents to restrict their child's exposure to materials that violate their moral or religious beliefs. In this tug-of-war, teachers will be forced to decide between avoiding controversial topics or risking dismissal. Increasing censorship, now codified by law in many states, is rooted in our polarized political landscape, divided along cultural and geographic lines. The challenge facing educators, then, is how to create space for inclusive, social justice-oriented instruction without "violating" the rights of parents. The success of censorship in the classroom relies on the idea that educators are the bestowers of knowledge. Paulo Freire's answer to the banking model of education is the empowerment of students as independent, critical thinkers. In the tradition of liberatory pedagogy, Henry Giroux argues that educators have a responsibility to create an environment in which students can develop the skills necessary to engage in and uphold democracy. Contextualizing the debate over censorship as a crisis of democracy provides a framework through which educators can offer meaningful, inclusive instruction despite efforts to stifle discussion in the classroom. Problem-posing education has the potential to help teachers include diverse perspectives in classrooms under threat of censorship. Despite policies that seek to censor instruction, the English classroom can maintain a focus on social justice by providing a safe, open space for discussion and empowering students to engage meaningfully with diverse perspectives.

**Keywords:** censorship legislation, censorship in schools, ELA education, project-based learning, democratic pedagogy, teaching under censorship

## **Synthesizing Sounds: Vibration, Poetry, and Belonging in Sun Ra's Space Age**

Adam Schuster

**Abstract:** The avant-garde jazz artist Sun Ra was an enigmatic figure fitting tenuously within the jazz world, Black Arts, and American diplomacy. As Civil Rights waned and Black Power rose, his music was broadcast by the State Department overseas at the same time that it was claimed by

leaders of the Black Arts Movement. Yet in his poetry he imagined forms of affiliation that exceeded both, translating his work with the newly invented analog synthesizer—an instrument that sculpts and combines signals of different frequencies—into a metaphor for relationality. This article suggests that Sun Ra’s poetry—which remains underexamined in studies of the artist—conceives of bodies through vibration, as instruments or sound generators susceptible to adjustment by exposure to “other” music. If vibration is the base property of being in Sun Ra’s philosophy, then our capacity for belonging shifts in the age of synthesized sounds. At a time of heightening calls for Black particularity and affiliation along identity lines, Sun Ra’s writing turns to questions of entanglement, orientation, and (re)alignment, thereby adopting the synthesizer’s capacities to imagine new forms of collectivity. And by using the synthesizer as a critical lens through which to begin approaching Sun Ra’s poetry, we engage in alternative modes of reading at the intersection of sound and literature. I argue that by adopting the synthesizer as a conceptual model in his poetry, Sun Ra charted new pathways to existing post now, reimagining preset parameters of affiliation while also refusing to succumb to raceless generality.

**Keywords:** African American literature, Afrofuturism, Black Arts, Sun Ra, vibration

## **Don Manuel’s Atheism and Salvation in *San Manuel Bueno, mártir***

Steven Mills

**Abstract:** One could argue that Spanish philosopher and writer Miguel de Unamuno was obsessed with the post-now. He ardently desired the continuation of his being, his self, his consciousness, yet he could never accept as true any foundation or dogma of faith. Doubt, incredulity, and logic consistently complicated any effort to accept wholeheartedly a belief in divinity or immortality. He repeatedly explored the question of what happens “post now” regarding our identity, our existence, our life, our fame, our world. In his famous novella *San Manuel Bueno, mártir*, Don Manuel, an atheist priest, rejects the notion of God, an afterlife, or continuation of consciousness. However, Don Manuel performs marvelously altruistic acts of kindness and service that would appear to qualify him for a Christian salvation. Thus, Manuel, who rejects altogether the concept of God and immortality, explores salvation without having to rely on faith. Because Don Manuel demonstrates greater works than most Christians, he leads readers to ask if works without faith can save him. I argue he achieves salvation through immortality in three ways: first, he lives on through his people as he helps them unite as a community—their mutual communion—though not because of their connection to God; second, he inspires followers who carry on his legacy; and third, he lives on through the memory of others, particularly through a union between him and his people akin to Unamuno’s union of author, character, and reader. Don Manuel achieves each of these objectives through his works and without faith, which shows that while faith without works may be dead for Christians, works without faith can bring life for Don Manuel post now.

**Keywords:** Atheism, Catholicism, literary criticism, religious studies, salvation, Spain, Unamuno

## Sacrificing the Goat in *La fiesta del Chivo*

Chris Schulenburg

**Abstract:** In his novel *La fiesta del Chivo*, the Peruvian Nobel Prize winner (2000) Mario Vargas Llosa enlists his readers in an attempt to end Rafael Trujillo's dictatorship in the Dominican Republic (1930–1961) by discursive means. Although assassination proved to be Trujillo's ultimate undoing, Vargas Llosa's utilization of repeating the circumstances of this killing from multiple perspectives encourages a global audience to “close the book” on future Trujillos in the region's historical imagination.

**Keywords:** collective memory, fiction, globalization, Latin American fiction, literary criticism