Joe Bruner
IDS 365
Final Term Paper

I say what I mean; I mean what I say

What do theories on sexuality, quantum physics and sociological ghostly hauntings have in common with a nautical novella, a book on death and a Shakespearean comedy? The answer is tone of voice. Every published work has one thing in common, and that is tone. Tone pervades every nook and cranny in writing, because it is inevitable whenever words are selected and shared. It is what tells us when we should be sad; it is what tells us when we should be confused. Tone can be used to persuade someone against their will; it can also be used to ease or complicate understanding of a subject matter. It is a powerful writing technique that directly influences what kind of understanding that the audience walks away with. Tone is so powerful in writing, that it overrides all else in a literary work, because tone is what shows the writer's bias, and therefore is what influences how the reader understands the work.

Before I can examine how tone is used in a variety of different literary works, I must set my definition of what tone is. There are two aspects that I will consider. The first, which is perhaps the more obvious, is that tone is revealed through the specific words that the writer chooses. This is perhaps more obvious because it is more visible and intuitive to the reader. For example, the distinction between the words *sad* and *despair* seems quite clear. Despair has a much darker connotation to it, which naturally evokes a much stronger emotion within

the reader. An examination of this sort to any literary work reveals the writer's intent, as I will show in Drew Gilpin Faust's historical account *This Republic of Suffering*. The second aspect of tone is the application of the words. Essentially, once the words have been chosen, how are they used? In this paper I will examine four applications to demonstrate what I mean, and they are *accessibility*, *rhetoric*, *pacing* and *emotion*.

Faust's historical account *This Republic of Suffering* is laden with emotion, and this emotion is dictated through the deliberate use of tone. Faust primarily creates her tone by drawing from dozens of personal accounts – journals, diaries, published articles and more – from the Civil War era, to portray the striking image of death both on the battlefield and off. Lt. General Ulysses Grant wrote, "I saw an open field… so covered with dead that it would have been possible to walk across the clearing, in any direction, stepping only on dead bodies without a foot touching the ground" (Faust 58). Given that tone is set by what words a writer chooses to use, Grant's despair is evident given his description of how the soldiers lost their humanity by becoming common stepping items that "paved the earth," as one soldier wrote. A Federal officer said, "the fact that many men get so accustomed to the thing, that they can step about among the heaps of dead bodies many of them their friends and acquaintances[,] without any particular emotion, is the worst of all" (Faust 60). Each quote that Faust offers had to be found, interpreted and specifically chosen to be put into the book for a purpose, which in this case is to set the tone. In Grant's journal for example, he wrote about the dehumanization of the soldiers. While Faust could not change the words she used, she

decided to use the quote because his words created an image she clearly wanted the reader to picture. It would have been just as easy to leave the quote out, and pick a different one with a less vivid image. The purpose of this quote, therefore, is to help set the tone.

Faust influences the tone of her book through which specific quotes she chooses to share. The language Faust uses when she is not quoting should not be overlooked either, however. Despite lacking the same intensity as descriptions of people present at the battlefield, she still uses fiery language in her own way to evoke emotion within the reader, and get them to sympathize with the soldiers. In describing the need for revenge, Faust writes "The desire for retribution could be almost elemental in its passion, overcoming reason and releasing the restraints of fear and moral inhibition for soldiers who had witnessed the slaughter of their comrades" (Faust 35). The phrases "almost elemental in its passion" and "slaughter of their comrades" can hardly be described as neutral. Her intent was not to sway the reader towards the Union or the Confederacy, but towards the soldiers and their emotions, as well as their families back home. She writes, "To be deprived of these lessons, and thus this connection, seemed unbearable to many nineteenth-century Americans left at home while their sons, fathers, husbands, and brothers died with their words unrecorded or even unheard" (Faust 11). The phrase "died with their words unrecorded or even unheard" is also emotionally charged, and is intended to deliver the sense of sadness should this misfortune happen. The tone of despair, of the dehumanization of the dead soldiers, of the fiery vengeance that swept the armies are careful constructions on Faust's part to convey a

specific image, and to drive the reader's understanding of death in the civil war through the use of tone.

In the case of accessibility, the writer influences the reader's interpretation by setting how easy it is to understand the text and its argument. In Avery Gordon's book *Ghostly Matters* for example, she not only tells the reader that understanding a haunting in sociological terms is complicated, but shows that complexity within the language itself. She writes about the ghostly experiences that kept altering the direction of her field work, "The persistent and troubling ghosts in the house highlighted the limitation of many of our prevalent modes of inquiry and the assumptions they make about the social world, the people who inhabit these worlds, and what is required to study them" (Gordon 8). My main interest is on the statement "the limitations of many of our prevalent modes of inquiry and the assumptions they make about the social world." This sentence would never appear outside of academia, because only in academia do we discuss "modes of inquiry" rather than "questions" and only through professional sociological study do we question the "assumptions" about "the social world" in a formal way published in a book.

Gordon makes the language even messier however, by formally acknowledging that language fails to express her intent. She says, "The available critical vocabularies were failing (me) to communicate the depth, density, and intricacies of the dialectic of subjection and subjectivity, of domination and freedom, of critique and utopian longing" (8). Haunting is a messy subject, and Gordon shares this fact with the reader by acknowledging the

dialectic surrounding haunting is complicated, and to be fully understood must use a different type of language than sociology pursuing hard, empirical data uses, which is exactly the type of language Gordon is trying to avoid. Her claim that haunting is messy and difficult to pin down comes through in her consistently difficult language, and is backed up by the fact she chose not to simplify the language, or the matter of physical vs. metaphorical hauntings, to help the reader understand what she was trying to say. Her very point is that it is not easy to understand, and so if her language were simplified, she would not be making the same point that she is in this book, and the reader's understanding of haunting would be different. For example, if another sociologist came along and decided the book needed to be easier, and so published a watered down version, the reader would then get that sociologist's perspective, and not the original one. The book might be easier to read because it would be more accessible, but the understanding of the subject matter, hauntings, would be different, because the tone of the book (the accessibility) was changed.

Ghostly Matters is not the only book that acknowledges its own language; the editors in *The Ghost in the Atom* do so as well, and in response they get an answer that satisfactorily simplifies the scientific language. The editors ask John Bell, "Your famous result that we all know as 'Bell's Inequality' can obviously only be properly discussed by using mathematics. But could you explain briefly in ordinary language what it is about?" (Davies and Brown 45). They are interested in knowing how to understand the inequality, without having to understand all the complicated mathematics behind it. Considering my argument about

haunting, it would follow that the reader gets a different, simplified understanding of the subject, just like they would if the subject got republished in simplified language. This is true, but the intent here is different. Whereas Gordon wanted to convey the difficulties of sociological haunting, the editors here want to achieve the clearest understanding of the quantum mechanics and its paradoxes – not to create an understanding that is as complicated and intricate as the subject matter.

An example of how understanding is changed with the difference in of tone involves the two comparisons of the delayed-choice experiment. Here is the description of the experiment on page 10, as given by the editors:

> Laser light incident on a half-silvered mirror A divides into two beams analogous to the two paths through the slits in Young's experiment. Further reflections at mirrors M redirect the beams so that they cross and enter photon detectors 1 and 2, respectively. In this arrangement a detection of a given photo by either 1 or 2 suffices to determine which of the two alternative routes the photo will have travelled (Davies and Brown 10).

This passage is accompanied by a diagram, but the fact that a diagram is needed illustrates that the language is still confusing to follow just by itself. Now I will offer the second description, given by one of the interviewed physicists, which is not offered a diagram.

> Light comes from a source and hits a half-silvered mirror and half goes through and half is reflected. These two beams are brought together again and can be allowed to cross each other at right angles without interacting. Further down the line there are two counters – one registers clicks for the photons which have travelled along what I may call the high road and the other counter registers clicks for photons along the low road – so that we seem to be dividing the light

> into photos which have quite clearly travelled one way or the other. It's a purely random business which counter clicks at any given instant (Davies and Brown 64).

Clearly the first description is shortened due to the availability of the diagram at the bottom of the page, but in the second description, the scientist takes the time to paint a picture in the reader's head, and allow the reader an understanding they can wrap their head around. This does present a problem of understanding the actual concept expressed by mathematics, which John Wheeler does express on the next page. He says, "In the case that the second half-silvered mirror is missing it is indeed possible to say – in bad language – that the photon travels along either the upper road or the lower road. Yet, in the experiment where the second half-silvered mirror is inserted, one may say – in equally bad language – that the quantum of light has travelled along both routes" (Davies and Brown 65). Quantum physics does not behave so neatly on well paved paths that we can measure while particles have momentum. This is known from the Uncertainty Principle. While the language breaks the strictest rules in quantum physics, it does give the reader a chance to wrap their head around the general concept of what is happening. This is ok in this instance, because unlike Gordon, the editors here did not intend to capture and portray the complexities of their subject, but rather simplify it and make it accessible to others besides academics.

For the final consideration of accessibility, I want to move about as far away from contemporary literature as I can, and discuss the accessibility of an ancient Greek text, *Phaedrus*, and examine a completely different type of accessibility, that influences

understanding in its own way. To start off the speeches, Phaedrus reads to Socrates the speech that Lysias has presented regarding lovers and non-lovers. In the following excerpts, he is addressing the responsibility that lovers have that non-lovers do not. He says, "Lovers examine both those of their affairs that have been badly managed on account of love and the benefactions they have conferred, and adding to the account the toils they have had they consider they have long ago paid back to the beloveds the favor in its worth" (231a-b). What makes this passage difficult to understand is the first component of tone, which is what words are specifically chosen. The problem lies in the use of the vague words such as "affairs." Our modern understanding of the word affairs could mean several things, including a cheating romantic relationship or the condition of pressing issues if referring to a 'state of affairs'. Given that this text was written thousands of years ago means that it could not have been used in the way we would exactly understand it today.

The statement regarding non-lovers is hardly better, saying, "But non-lovers cannot on this account allege as a pretext the neglect of their own concerns, nor calculate past toils, nor blame differences with relatives on this; so that, with such great evils stripped away, nothing remains but eagerly to do whatever they think will provide gratification when they have done it" (231b). Moving beyond the word level, the construction of the sentence does not make it easier to understand, because it is such a long sentence. The problem is that the whole of the speech is long sentences strung together, and with the use of vague or general words, it is easy to get lost in what the text is actually saying. This will prove problematic

when it comes to interpretation, as I will show in the discussion on rhetoric. Ultimately, *Phaedrus* is difficult to understand because of the vague words used and the long sentences, which is a result of the editor's intent on making this translation especially literal. It is clear then, by looking at these three texts that intent predominantly shapes the accessibility of the book, and therefore the reader's understanding. Avery Gordon intentionally blurred the lines in her description in haunting to portray its messiness, Davies and Brown intentionally simplified the language surrounding quantum physics to make it understandable to the common reader, and James Nichols Jr. intentionally translated *Phaedrus* as literally as he could, to generate as varied interpretations as possible, which proves problematic in Socrates' discussion of rhetoric.

Before I can demonstrate how the offered translation of *Phaedrus* is problematic, I should first look at why Nichols chose to do a literal translation of the work. He says, "My own adjustment [translation] puts considerable weight on literalness, with a view to trying to provide the reader with as direct access to Plato as possible and with as little dependency as possible on the translator's interpretive understanding" (Nichols viii). Essentially he wanted to avoid influencing the reader with his own personal interpretation as much as possible, and instead offer a translation that is as close to the actual words Plato wrote as it can get. This explains the use of the general words, because general words tend to not direct the reader towards any particular emotion or thought. This becomes problematic when trying to understand Socrates' argument regarding effective rhetoric however.

Socrates says, "Sure in passing over by little steps you will go towards the opposite without being noticed more than by big steps. He who is going to deceive another, and not be deceived himself, must therefore precisely distinguish the likeness and unlikeness of beings. So then, will he who ignores the truth of each thing be able to distinguish the small or great likeness, of the thing that he ignores, in other things?" Phaedrus responds with "Impossible," to which Socrates concludes, "So therefore, for those who form opinions contrary to the beings and are deceived, it's clear that this experience slipped in through certain likenesses" (262a-b). He starts off saying, if you take small steps in your arguments, your listener will understand each step, and not notice the end to which you are trying to lead them, but they would notice if you take large steps and skip crucial explanations. Socrates next explains that for you to "deceive" another and not be deceived, or tricked, yourself, you must "precisely distinguish likeness and unlikeness of beings". The first problematic word that shows up is beings. The reader likely asks what does "beings" refer to? The interpretation is open, but I took it to mean the truth of the issue being debated, because the context of that word is being used to distinguish the likeness or the unlikeness to it, which sounds a lot like being similar or dissimilar to the truth, and more importantly, truth makes sense within the context of the rest of the argument. Socrates continues then, asking, "So then, will he who ignores the truth of each thing be able to distinguish the small or great likeness, of the thing that he ignores, in other things?" *Thing* is perhaps the ultimate vague, meaningless word in the entire English language. It can, by definition, be applied to anything, anywhere, anytime. Given that

Nichols did not want to influence our understanding of what was being said, he could not have picked a less flavored word in the English language. When reading this passage therefore, I took “things” to mean “arguments” here, because they are discussing the techniques of rhetoric and debate, which is by nature, creating *arguments* attempting to persuade the other side. Socrates then concludes with asking that would he who ignores the truth of each argument be able to recognize how other arguments either have small or great likeness to the one that he ignores, to which Phaedrus answers the logical answer, which is no.

So understanding that Nichols intentionally left the vague words vague, with the intent that the reader could interpret Plato without being influenced, it becomes a neutral way for the reader to gauge whether or not Socrates follows his own advice on rhetoric. In his discussion on the immortality of the soul, Socrates says “All soul is deathless” (245c). To back up that claim, Socrates first explains what deathlessness is. “For that which is always moving is deathless; and that which moves something else and is moved by something else, since it has a stopping of motion has a stopping of life” (245c). There are several techniques going on that Socrates uses in his argument. The first technique is the vague words (something, it, that) and the absolute terms (all, always) to refer to *anything* that could *always* move, letting us understand what deathless precisely means in general terms. the second technique is his repetitive phrasing at the end, regarding stopping. He could have said ‘that which stops in motion has death.’ This would have been more direct and abrupt, but it

would have used circular reasoning and related death back to deathlessness. Ultimately this would not have proven as effective, because connecting a stopping of motion to a stopping of life creates a more dramatic and specific image for the listener (or reader) than just the broad word ‘death.’ The translation does not get in the way of this explanation, in fact, because of Nichols’ attempt to translate literally (thereby keeping those vague and extreme words) is what helps make the argument so successful.

In the next section of this same argument Socrates does use circular reasoning however. He says, “A beginning has no coming into being. For everything that comes into being must of necessity come into being from a beginning, but the latter must not come from anything, for if the beginning came into being from something, it would no longer be a beginning” (245d). At the surface, this seems like a muddle of ‘beings’ and ‘beginnings,’ but it does make sense, is intentionally crafted, and is crucial to understanding his argument. He says if something goes through the act of coming into being, by definition it has a beginning. The beginning however, cannot come into being. There would be something that started it, and by definition would no longer be the beginning. What makes Socrates’ explanation different from this one is the play on words (being and beginning), which runs in a circular pattern. The circle would have been broken if the word ‘start’ had been inserted in place of one of the ‘beginnings’ for example. The circle not being broken however, creates a more dramatic effect that helps the reader relate the start of the argument to the end. This dramatic effect is the logic, the rhetoric that he uses, to demonstrate his point. Regardless of whether

or not you believe in souls or deathlessness, you do end up believing his argument. He is successful in his persuasion because of the small steps he takes, which he argues is necessary to be a successful rhetorician. Taking these small steps creates what I call the step-by-step tone, and it generally works in making a successful point.

Freud uses this step-by-step tone in his work, which is what makes his arguments so persuasive at times. In his initial discussion of inversions of sexuality, Freud uses this step-by-step tone to explain how an invert is not degenerate, despite the fact that homosexuals were commonly believed to be degenerate in the medical community. The first thing he does is establish that inverts are considered degenerate in the scientific and medical community. According to Freud, "The earliest assessments regarded inversion as an innate indication of nervous degeneracy. This corresponded to the fact that medical observers first came across it in persons suffering, or appearing to suffer, from nervous diseases" (Freud 4). He then proceeds to define what degeneracy is, in a numbered order. He says that degeneracy first must be based off several significant "deviations" from the normal. Secondly, "the capacity for efficient functioning and survival seem to be severely impaired" (Freud 4). Having established that inverts are degenerate is considered true in the medical community, and explaining what degeneracy is, he then proceeds to counter each definition in biological terms, followed with a third point discussing inversion within sociological terms. His first point regarding the biological stance is that inversion is found in patients that suffer no other deviations from normal states. Secondly, he contends, "it [inversion] is similarly found in

people whose efficiency is unimpaired, and who are indeed distinguished by specially high intellectual development and ethical culture" (Freud 5). He uses the example of the spokesmen of Uranism. In his footnotes he writes, "It must be allowed that the spokesmen of 'Uranism' are justified in asserting that some of the most prominent men in all recorded history were inverts and perhaps even absolute inverts" (Freud 5).

After refuting the two points from a biological perspective, Freud uses a sociological view to show how inverts are not degenerate people. First he argues that in ancient civilizations inversion was a frequent occurrence and even "an institution charged with important functions" (Freud 5). Freud's point here is that from a different perspective, inversion is treated with reverence and he uses that as proof that inversion is not an illness that is detrimental to an individual. His second point is that like ancient societies, inversion is quite common among contemporary primitive societies, and they do not consider it degeneracy like the "high civilization" of Europe, making the conclusion that it is "climate and race [that] exercise the most powerful influence on the prevalence of inversion and upon the attitude adopted towards it" (Freud 5).

Freud first identifies the link between degeneracy and inversions as a medical term, which leads him to define degeneracy. He does this in two bullet points, and proceeds to refute them in two consecutive bullet points. Finally he brings up sociological perceptions, and how it is merely Europeans' way of looking at inversions that considers them

degenerate. Through taking these small steps, Freud is able to carry the reader through his argument, and understand the logic.

These small steps set up a unique kind of tone, whose purpose is to guide the listener to a conclusion they may not have thought of or agree with. The way that Freud works through each of these steps is the same method that Socrates claims makes for persuasive rhetoric. While Freud did not include research data in this argument, he does show how using language can challenge known "truths" and offer a perspective that shows it as wrong. In this example as well, it is clear how tone is supremely important. It certainly overrides the importance of the content, because this tone can be applied to any work trying to be persuasive. It does not matter whether Freud writes about thumb sucking being sexual or inverts being degenerate; without the persuasive tone, there is no way Freud's intent, to persuade the reader that his theory is true, is going to get passed along.

The third application I will look at is the pacing of a narrative, and how that shapes the reader's understanding of the story itself. Melville uses a pacing technique, which is to continuously change the pacing of the story. At times, he is casually drifting through the history, filling in the readers on the backstory of the world at sea, as decisions are being made by the characters in the main plot. Take for example, his explanation of why the *Bellipotent* is isolated from other ships for the duration of the story.

> At the time of Billy Budd's arbitrary enlistment into the *Bellipotent* that ship was on her way to join the Mediterranean fleet. No long time elapsed before the junction was effected. As one of that fleet the seventy-four participated in its movements, though at times on account of her superior sailing qualities, in the

absence of frigates, dispatched on separate duty as a scout and at times on less temporary service But with all this the story has little concernment, restricted as it is to the inner life of one particular ship and the career of an individual sailor. (Melville 54).

The narrator openly admits this particular detail has no relevance to the story at hand, and yet, by taking the time to share this detail with the reader, Melville has slowed down the narrative in this moment. This slowing down of the text gives greater impact to those moments that action happens and there is no moment to breath. Such is the case in the moment when John Claggart, the Master-at-arms aboard the *Bellipotent*, is killed. Melville writes, "The next instant, quick as the flame from a discharged cannon at night, his right arm shot out, and Claggart dropped to the deck" (Melville 99). The image given is also a rapid one, as the reader can picture it several times over in the time it takes to read it. The action happens so fast, that if the reader is not paying attention, he might fail to comprehend the significance of what just happened. The effect is to draw attention to the quick moments. By drawing attention to these moments, the narrator influences how the reader thinks about the text, and what they consider important. For instance, in this case, the reader is inevitably drawn to the conclusion that Claggart's death is significant. Overlooking the fact that any death in a fictional work is usually significant, this importance is set up through the single sentence and the simile. The image Budd is compared to is a rapid, violent one, just like the rapid, violent movement of his arm. The single sentence draws attention to itself because it is loaded with information, in this case with information that the reader wants (presuming they are cheering for Billy Budd, and not the antagonist).

In comparison, the effect of the drawn out paragraph is quite different. In part, the reader is not quite clear on what the most important part of that paragraph is. Is it the that the ship is a seventy-four? Is it that it is in the Mediterranean? Or is it perhaps that it serves as a scout for the fleet? It is because no language particularly stands out. In the case of Claggart's death, the strike of Budd's fist stands out, because the simile presents a clear image that the reader can picture. There is no distinct image like that in the description of the *Bellipotent*'s involvement with the fleet. The words 'flame', 'discharge' and 'night' are the words that most powerfully evoke the image in the reader, because they have the most charged emotion. Examining Melville more closely, it seems that the moments that stand out are the shorter ones, and that is in part because there is more charged emotion packed into those descriptions, such as is the case with Claggart's death.

Emotion is the final application of tone that I will examine, and it is inextricably linked with pacing, as is clear in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. In the second scene of Act 3, Rosalind appears to Orlando as Ganymede, and chides him for claiming he is in love with Rosalind. She claims she will cure him of his love saying, "At which time would I, being but a moonish youth, grieve, be effeminate, changeable, longing and liking, proud, fantastical, apish, shallow, inconstant, full of tears, full of smiles; for every passion something and for no passion truly anything, as boys and women are for the most part cattle of this color; would now like him, now loathe; then entertain him, then foreswear him; now weep for him then spit at him, that I drove my suitor from his mad humor of love to a living humor of madness"

(3.2.394-403). Tone comes through pretty heavy in this passage through the choice of specific words, including ‘longing and liking, fantastical, apish, full of tears, full of smiles, loathe, weep, spit, humor of love, and humor of madness,’ which are used to depict images and evoke emotions. As the reader is reading the play, they get a strong sense of the emotion that Rosalind is trying to convey. When she says longing, we get a sense of longing, when she says loathing, we can picture the character who she is faking, loathing her fictitious lover. This occurs because of the specific words that she chooses, which is the first part of tone that I identified.

How this emotion relates to pacing however is through the syntax of the sentences. The whole quote is actually one sentence, which is a common way to induce a fast pace. It is commonly known in the study of poetry, that one way to make a poem read fast is to not give the reader very many breathing pauses (i.e. sentences) and make it all run continuously, because then the reader will take fewer moments to stop and think, and instead will run through the entire thought. As a result, the combination is emotion through the specific words that are chosen, and then the pacing is delivered quite rapidly because of the syntax of the sentences. It would be quite different if one or the other was taken away from the passage, because the two are inextricably linked. If emotion were taken out of the passage, it would become a list of events that happened, rather than a list of emotions she had thrown at her fictitious lover. A list of events is exactly what Melville gave the reader when he was describing the *Bellipotent*’s involvement in the Mediterranean fleet. It was long-winded,

boring and slow to read. Therefore, by taking out the emotion, it seems logical to conclude that Rosalind's passage would then take on the same pace that Melville's passage has: slow. If the pacing of Rosalind's passage were changed, there would be two options: making it faster or making it slower. If the passage were written to be even faster, there would not be enough time to cover all the emotions that are there, limiting the emotional spectrum covered. If it were made to be slower, there would be so many words in between the emotions, that we would lose the intensity that her description offers, because it would be less about rapidly bouncing between emotions, and more about hearing a description of each.

Ultimately, the tone is effected by three things: the word choice, the emotion and the syntax. Without the word choice, the emotion would not be delivered; without the emotion, the pacing would be changed, and without the syntax, the pacing could not exist as it is. If any of these three components were to be altered, then the writer's intent would be missed, because the message would be changed. It is clear that as these three issues relate to tone, the writer's intent is at stake should any of them be changed, and if the intent is going to be altered as a result of the tone changing, then it is clear that tone is overall the most important aspect of this passage.

Tone is inescapable in whatever work one looks at: it determines the way we understand the duration of the work, the way we feel about it, and how intense of a journey we're taken on for the piece. This inevitability of encountering tone is what makes it have overarching importance in any literary work. It does not matter if you are reading about sex

or about ghosts, if you cannot understand it, then there is no use in pretending to read it. This is not to say you should not try to read something challenging however, there is a difference. If you sit down to read the most intense romance novel of all time, and find yourself wading through dense, boring and long-winded descriptions of a character's physical features that are so attractive, it doesn't matter if they might have the same content, you are going to put the book down because it fails to meet your expectations. Often times our expectations are met when we sit down to read a book, occasionally they are exceeded. If we are satisfied by a book, (e.g. we thought a book was appropriately messy and challenging, or we thought the pacing of its intensity was phenomenal) it is because the tone, and the application of that tone, matched the writer's intent.