

Matthew Hobberlin - Abstract for Practicum Paper

“Masked Darkness: Concealment and Disclosure in the Writings of *Open Minds Quarterly*”

Depression is recognized as not being uncommon, but this fact can serve to hide the seriousness of the condition and the difficulties it entails. Public acceptance has decreased the stigma surrounding depression, but the acceptance has arguably engendered complacency and insensitivity towards it. Conversely, other forms of mental illness carry a great deal of stigma, such that persons so afflicted may well feel that others see their illness rather than the person. In both cases, the individual is masked by their condition. *Open Minds Quarterly* is a literary journal which publishes poetry, fiction, and first-person accounts of persons who have experienced mental illness; its stated mission is to show its readers that people with mental illness are more than their condition, that there is an individual underneath the “mask of mental illness”.

The metaphor and the rhetorical movements of masking are central to this paper; these are examined within the context of the disclosure that the publication promotes as it encourages authors to tell their stories (a great deal of the works are inspired by the author’s experiences or direct accounts of those experiences). This paper examines the way disclosure and concealment (both as masking and in other forms) function together in the literary and rhetorical operations of the published texts. I argue that the rhetoric of disclosure that is common to many of the works effects a sort of concealment, and even when this is not the case, metaphors of concealment, masking, and disclosure are imbricated within the narratives of these works.