Edited by Takis Kayalis and Anastasia Natsina

Teaching Literature at a Distance

Open, Online and Blended Learning

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Introduction

The idea for this book was born following a research project conducted by the 'openLit' research team at the Hellenic Open University (http://www.openlit.gr) from 2004 until 2006, with funding from the European Social Fund and the Greek Ministry of Education. One of the aims of this project was to study educational methods and materials for the teaching of literature developed at several European Open Universities. The Hellenic Open University was at the time recently established and we expected to benefit greatly from the experience of colleagues at other Open and Distance Learning (ODL) institutions, as indeed we did. This inspired us to launch an International Conference on 'Literary Studies in Open and Distance Learning University Programs', which took place in the town of Ierapetra in April 2006, bringing together about half of this volume's contributors along with colleagues from many other open, virtual, and conventional universities around the globe. In some of its aspects, this book continues discussions and develops insights which were first articulated in the famous warmth of Cretan hospitality.

The teaching of literature poses significant challenges when transferred from face-to-face to a distance learning setting. Traditionally aimed at developing students' reading skills and interpretative abilities, literature teaching faces great difficulties when severed of such means as peer interaction, reciprocal classroom discussion and the form of 'cultural apprenticeship' normally practised at seminars and tutorials. Furthermore, open education is always a challenge in itself; to teach any academic subject to students who may have been away from formal education for a long time, or who would not necessarily fulfil the entry requirements of other universities, calls for clearly defined strategies and effective practices. Literary studies, requiring an ethos of patient engagement with challenging texts, confront a cardinal difficulty at this level. Finally, digital technologies have certainly unlocked unprecedented educational potentials, yet at the same time their widespread introduction in all aspects of the educational process calls for an imperative for caution. The use of digital technologies and online resources raises a great number of pedagogical as well as academic questions for literary studies. Not least of these is how to receive the benefits of new technologies without running the risk of trivializing the subject. J. Hillis Miller's maxim that 'if you are watching a movie or

television or playing a computer game or surfing the Internet, you cannot at the same time be reading Shakespeare' (2001, p. 57) may contradict current opinion in some quarters, yet its truth is not easy to revoke.

During the course of our research, we realized that ODL literature scholars around the world share a deep concern for these issues and have developed different strategies to face the challenges of teaching literature at a distance. However, here was a large transnational community with surprisingly few opportunities to engage in dialogue and share questions, insights, and experience. This as yet unacknowledged community is also rapidly growing. On the one hand, open and distance learning is becoming a preferred option for increasing numbers of students in societies that promote lifelong learning as an important feature of life quality and in a labour market that requires frequent career changes. On the other hand, digital applications and online courses are increasingly introduced in conventional universities, alongside traditional lectures and seminars, as a means to confront low budgets and advance their students' electronic literacy (or *electracy*) at the same time.

Focusing on a wide range of national, cultural, linguistic, and educational contexts, contributions to this volume bring to the fore some of the key challenges of teaching literature at a distance. These are weaved around three central axes, which are reflected in the three parts of the book.

The first part is focused on the development of curricula and pedagogies for teaching literature at open universities. Presenting literature-related curricula from nine European ODL universities, Anastasia Natsina describes prevailing tendencies and discusses their impact on literary studies pedagogy. Ellie Chambers proposes a set of aims and methods for the teaching of literature to first-year ODL students. Acknowledging their lack of preparation, she argues for an approach to learning as a socio-cultural process of meaning making, which enables these students to integrate the study of literature within their existing perceptive framework. Bob Owens sets out the challenges facing the design of an ODL Master's programme for literature and shares a number of answers on crucial issues, such as provision of necessary resources for research as well as practice in an adequately wide range of methodologies. Dennis Walder discusses how canon transformations seep through the distance curriculum and describes his own involvement in 'decolonizing' the Literature Programme of the UK Open University. Takis Kayalis argues that recent conceptualizations of 'world literature' provide the common ground ODL literature scholars need in order to move beyond their current condition of solitary and intuitive practice, towards a new professional culture of academic exchange, transnational collaboration, and pedagogical reflection.

The second part develops around the pedagogical challenges and potentials brought about by the introduction of digital applications in the teaching of literature. Kristine L. Blair discusses the role that distance delivery plays in curriculum development and student recruitment at a difficult time for literary studies; facing faculty concerns regarding the compatibility of this kind of

educational experience with the goals of a liberal arts education, she proposes a framework that assists both students and teachers through this transition. Ian Lancashire attests to the inescapable magic of digital technologies and discusses good practices and possible pitfalls as he shares his long experience of teaching and editing *Representative Poetry Online*. Laura Borràs-Castanyer guides the reader through the exigencies of designing the literature syllabus and educational hypertexts for one of the first entirely virtual universities in the world, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. Drawing on their experience as E-learning Advocates for blended learning (in a project run by the UK's Higher Education Academy English Subject Centre), Louise Marshall and Will Slocombe present examples for the successful integration of technology into staff and student practice and discuss the prospect of a technology-enhanced community of learning. Ayesha Heble discusses the pedagogical potential of digital applications vis-à-vis cultural restrictions and shares her experience from teaching literature online to Arab students, while also offering a balanced account of the outcomes, comparing them to those of her face-to-face classes.

The third part discusses specific uses of digital applications and online resources in literary studies. Chapters focus on the use of existing or specifically developed applications and also point towards the opening up of literary studies to new interdisciplinary areas, fostered by the spread of interactive multimedia. Raine Koskimaa presents literature in the new media landscape and describes applications suited to the teaching of literature. He clarifies the distinct meanings of digital literature and focuses on cybertexts and the challenges their teaching needs to face. Rui Torres describes uses of new media to teach 1960s experimental poetry, while at the same time exploiting their potentials to foster learning through practices of poetic creation and re-creation. Daniel Kline makes a case for the use of videogames in teaching – medieval literature, finding in them an engaging aspect of *metamedievalism* that may help overcome student resistance to what is usually considered a challenging subject. Anastasia Natsina and Takis Kayalis discuss the representations of critical theory on World Wide Web resources as well as its enactment in hyperfiction. Todd Presner presents the project 'HyperCities', an interactive web-based platform that allows users to navigate through and collaborate on the (re)construction of the urban, cultural, and social history of any city in the world, thus promoting transdisciplinary learning through the engagement of both critical abilities and affect. Finally, John Bradley and Frances Devlin-Glass present a powerful case for the potential of new media to preserve and teach narratives and knowledge that are otherwise difficult to access and which are often compromised by conventional transmission media. The Yanyuwa website is a contribution towards the preservation and sharing of aboriginal narratives in a context that takes into account and approximates the particularities of the original in an unprecedented manner.

We wish to thank Sage Publishers and the editors of *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* for allowing us to reproduce Ayesha Heble's 'Using technology

to overcome cultural restrictions: a case study of teaching English literature online to Arab students' as well as new versions of Raine Koskimaa's 'Cybertext challenge: teaching literature in the digital world', and Dennis Walder's, 'Decolonizing the (distance) curriculum', published in *AHHE* 6 (2), 2007 (special issue: On teaching Literature: old questions and new challenges, guest-edited by Takis Kayalis).

During this book's preparation, as through our previous initiatives, we met colleagues and made friends (some still unknown to us in person) throughout the world. This has created, at least in our minds, an active community of insightful and deeply caring scholars, with a commitment to fostering serious research in teaching literature in ODL, online, and blended learning. This book is an invitation to this small transnational community's ongoing dialogue addressed to our larger group of peers.

June 2009 Takis Kayalis and Anastasia Natsina

Reference

Miller, J. Hillis (2001), 'Literary study among the ruins', *Diacritics*, 31 (3), 57–66.

Part One

Open and Distance Learning: Curricula and Pedagogies

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Chapter 1

Tendencies and Stakes of Literary Studies in European Open and Distance Learning Universities

Anastasia Natsina

This chapter aims to present certain tendencies of literary studies curricula in European Open and Distance Learning (ODL) universities and discuss them in the context of the latest developments that seem to be shaping the discipline. It is based on the findings of a research conducted during 2004–06 by the research team 'openLit', under the premises of the School of Humanities of the Hellenic Open University and co-funded by the European Union (EU) and the Greek Ministry of Education.[1] Members of the research team visited nine European open universities and studied the teaching of literature in 16 programmes offered therein. A survey of its major findings regarding curriculum design, educational materials, and procedures was published recently (Natsina, 2007), whereas earlier publications (Vlavianou and Ioannidou, 2005; Natsina, 2005) present some of its aspects in more detail. Here I elaborate on curricular structures with a view to tracing and interpreting common tendencies that indicate broader modifications of literary studies which, for a number of reasons, seem to be more strongly felt in ODL.

As an introductory note, I should make clear that this research, as far as we know the first of its kind, cannot claim the validity of an exhaustive survey, for reasons that involve economic and time restrictions as well as questions of linguistic competence. We have tried, however, to make a balanced and representative choice of programmes and take into account their particularities in the interpretation of our findings. The universities that we examined are the following:[2]

1. [UB] Université de Bourgogne-Dijon: Centre de Formation Ouverte et à Distance (France, est. 1964, currently 1,300 students).
2. [UT] Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail: Service d'Enseignement à Distance (France, est. 1964, currently 4,500 students). These two French universities are among the oldest providing ODL programmes. In France there is not a single open university operating at national level, but different conventional universities provide ODL programmes.

3. [UNED] Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (Spain, est. 1972, currently 165,000 students). The national distance learning university of Spain and the only one of its kind in the country for many years.
4. [UOC] Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Spain, est. 1995, currently 100,000 students). Established in Catalonia, Spain, UOC is among the first few entirely virtual universities in the world.
5. [OU] The Open University (UK, est. 1967, currently 200,000 students). One of the oldest and largest European open universities.
6. Oscail-National Distance Education Centre (Ireland, est. 1982, currently 3,500 students). Oscail is a consortium of seven conventional Irish universities that offer and accredit joint ODL programmes.
7. [UTGM] Università Telematica Guglielmo Marconi (Italy, est. 2004, current number of students unavailable). The most recently established among the universities examined, UTGM is, like UOC, entirely virtual.
8. [FUH] Fernuniversitaet Hagen (Germany, est. 1976, currently 43,000 students). The national open university of Germany.
9. [HOU] The Hellenic Open University (Greece, est. 1992, offering courses since 1998, currently 20,000 students). The national open university of Greece.

One of the first things that stand out in this survey is that the teaching of literature falls within two major categories of programmes: (a) strictly literary and (b) more broadly cultural (or 'humanistic'), as shown in Tables 1.1 and 1.2.

Of the total of nine universities, five offer seven strictly literary programmes and six offer nine cultural/humanities programmes. One observes a marginal prevalence of cultural/humanities programmes over the strictly literary ones.

Regarding literary programmes (Table 1.1), it is interesting to point out that, judging by their titles, these do not appear to be restricted to national literatures, but nearly half of them have a nominally broader focus, on literature in general. In fact, even those programmes that concentrate on the literature of a

Table 1.1 Literature programmes

University	Programme
UB	Lettres modernes
UT	Lettres modernes
OU	Literature
	English Language and Literature
UOC	Filologia Catalana
UNED	Filologia Hispanica
	Filologia Inglesa

Table 1.2 Culture/humanities programmes

University	Programme
OU	European Studies
	Humanities with Literature
Oscail	Humanities
UOC	Humanitats
FUH	Kulturwissenschaften
UTGM	Lingua e Cultura Italiana
HOU	Studies in Greek Culture
	Studies in European Culture
	Spanish Language and Culture

single language also consider literatures written in the same language outside the metropolitan territory, following a practice that is now widely applied in conventional (i.e. non-ODL) higher education.

As regards cultural/humanities programmes (Table 1.2), these, too, are nearly evenly divided into more specialized programmes, focusing on specific cultures (the OU 'European Studies' as well as the UTGM and HOU programmes are the cases in point), and, again, broader programmes (the 'humanities' or 'culture studies' of OU, Oscail, UOC and FHU).

Programme titles thus seem to draw a picture of escalating breadth, in which only 4 out of 16 programmes appear to concentrate on the literature of a single language. This seems to entail a preponderance of broader scope degrees in ODL programmes, at least in Europe.

However, in order to draw more valid conclusions, one should also consider the extent to which this apparent tendency of redressing from the restrictions of national culture and placing literary studies in an interdisciplinary context is also reflected in the syllabi themselves. As a general observation, syllabi are quite in tune with the titles of their respective programmes, yet they also reflect certain notable resistances, probably stemming from the history of the subject and its teaching. These resistances, observable mostly in broader scope programmes, are indicative of what is at stake in this distinct ODL tendency. In the tables that follow (Tables 1.3–1.6) I present the composition of syllabi, as far as literature is concerned, in the four categories of programmes that I outlined above, namely (a) Single-language Literatures, (b) Literature in general, (c) Specific cultures, and (d) Culture/Humanities. The categorization of courses is based on their titles, descriptions and, in most cases, first-hand examination of their contents. Both compulsory and optional courses have been taken into consideration, which explains the percentage fluctuations wherever they occur.

Table 1.3 Single-language literature programmes

	Single-language Literature	**Comparative Literature**	**Methods of Literary Scholarship/Literary Theory**	**Other Languages/ Literatures**
OU	0–16%	33–58%	–	–
UOC	17%	0–8%	9–29%	6%
UNED English	20–33%	–	3%	11–24%
UNED Hispanic	23–33%	0–1,5%	3–13%	5–21%

Table 1.4 Literature programmes (general)

	National Literature	**Comparative Literature**	**Methods of Literary Scholarship/Literary Theory**	**Other Languages/ Literatures**
OU	0–16%	49–58%	–	–
UB	24%	16%	10%	7%
UT	45%	19%	6%	–

As far as single-language literature programmes are concerned (Table 1.3), one observes an expected focus on the literature of the respective language and only a marginal presence of comparative literature, which is however balanced by the offer of other literatures. Literary theory and research methods are represented by a modest percentage. As becomes evident from the study of educational materials, this distinction between literature and theory/methods in most cases practically means a more historical approach to literature courses and an independent presentation of different theories and research methodologies (although UOC introduces a strong applied dimension in its theory courses). A remarkable exception is provided by the OU, whose textbooks adopt a comparative view of the literary texts and phenomena under discussion entailing theoretically informed interpretations, which explains the lack of theoretical courses in their programmes.

Regarding broader scope literature programmes (Table 1.4), the percentage of comparative literature is increased – in analogy to the diminishment of other literatures – but in both French universities preponderance is given to national literature. Indeed, UT features an impressive 45 per cent of French literature. Let us note, however, that, with the exception of the OU, literary theory, presenting here an understandable increase, is again offered separately from literature courses.

Table 1.5 Specific-cultures programmes

	National Literature	Comparative Literature	Methods of Literary Scholarship/ Literary Theory	Other Languages/ Literatures	Interdisciplinary
OU	0–3,6%	0–25%	–	–	0–50%
UTGM	16%	3%	3%	13%	–
HOU Greek	8–16%	0–8%	–	–	–
HOU European	0–8%	8%	–	–	8%
HOU Spanish	16,5%	0–8%	–	16,5%	–

Table 1.6 Culture/humanities programmes (general)

	National Literature	Comparative Literature	Methods of Literary Scholarship/ Literary Theory	Other Languages/ Literatures	Interdisciplinary
OU Hum-Lit	16%	16–58%	–	–	16–66%
Oscail	–	0–41%	–	–	–
UOC	1,5%	–	3,5%	1,5%	1,5–3%
FUH	–	16%	0,5%	–	8,5%

Moving to the next broader category, specific-cultures programmes (Table 1.5), we observe that literary theory and methods of literary scholarship almost disappear, whereas there is a preponderance of the focus (i.e. national) literatures over comparative literature. We also notice the first appearance of interdisciplinary subjects, albeit rather feeble, with the notable exception of OU, where these may take up to 50 per cent of degree requirements.

Interdisciplinary courses naturally retain their place in the broadest programmes of all humanities and culture studies, in percentages comparable to those of the previous category (Table 1.6). Comparative literature also has a certain bearing in these programmes, whereas the presence of literary theory and methods of literary scholarship is, again, very slim, not only as a separate course but also, as seen in educational materials, within literature courses as well (again, with the exception of OU).

Moving from more specific to more general programmes of study, from Specific Literatures to Literature in general to Specific Cultures to Culture/ Humanities in general, one discerns an expected shift of the major weight of

literary courses from language-specific to comparative and interdisciplinary, with a concomitant waning of the focus placed on the theoretical apparatus of the discipline (Methods of Literary Scholarship and Literary Theory) as such. The resistances mentioned earlier concern the particularly great import of national literatures in certain cases, the slimmer than expected rate of comparative and interdisciplinary subjects in others, as well as a certain disinclination towards the functional integration of literary theory and scholarship methods in the teaching of literature. I would argue that the programmes examined above tend to exhibit one or more of these resistances and that the only exception manifesting an exact correspondence between programme titles and syllabi is to be found at OU and UOC – the second mostly because it is the only institution to have transferred a traditional, national literature degree to ODL.

This partial lack of correspondence between the titles of programmes and their syllabi shows, I think, a certain puzzlement on the part of the programmes' designers, who are academic specialists in their respective fields, when they are faced with the prospect of a broader scope programme – or, to put it slightly more provocatively, a 'general knowledge' programme. Specialization and expertise are what differentiates secondary from higher education and it is only natural that the transmission of the former's spirit to the latter meets with all kinds of resistances. It is certainly commendable that the universities examined have at least, in their vast majority, circumvented the distance-course's typical pitfall of encyclopaedic tuition. As is apparent from the various types of educational material, there has been a significant effort to present the different subjects in a critical manner. Nevertheless, in broader scope programmes, the restricted or disproportionate number of courses per field, which is neither balanced by comparative or interdisciplinary courses nor employs theory as a base for connections beyond the boundaries of a delimited course, reveals a problem which tends to be concealed in specialization programmes at conventional universities even if by the sheer amount of specialty courses. This problem is the necessary dialogue and interrelation among the different fields of a disciplinary area (however narrowly or broadly defined), which permits students to essentially delve into it and understand the ways in which it has been developed, thus exercising their own independent critical abilities. Broader scope ODL programmes, such as the ones presented here, seem to be mostly based on the juxtaposition of different subjects/fields, which, however critically presented, eliminate the student's chances to recreate the terms of the dialogue that brought about their development, hence making her/him a passive receiver of their findings.[3]

In order to understand more fully the phenomenon of broader scope degrees in ODL as well as its repercussions for literary studies pedagogy, one should try to examine its causes. Certainly, the history of ODL plays an important role. The first kind of humanities degree issued in the 1970s by the UK Open University – one of the largest and oldest in Europe – was BA Open, the

broadest possible conception of a degree, which allowed students to combine courses from any of the undergraduate subject areas. Despite the multiplication of specialty degrees in the following years, the fact that BA Open has never been discontinued, and indeed remains one of the most popular among OU students, manifests the importance of broader scope programmes in ODL.[4]

It seems indeed rational to assume that mature humanities students are more likely to seek general education than a strictly vocational degree, which is usually required at the beginning of one's career. Also, and perhaps more importantly, broader curricula point to more liberal agendas that seek to widen participation in higher education by moving away from the specialized degrees of an elite system, as well as contribute to the students' balanced development.[5] This kind of agenda is certainly in tune with the foundational principles of open education.

On the other hand it is equally rational to assume that, as most ODL students are first-timers in higher education, they have strong expectations of using their degree for professional purposes.[6] Furthermore, given that ODL degrees are equivalent to those of conventional universities and require an equal investment of time and effort – if not greater, considering the familial and professional circumstances of most mature students – perhaps we should not too readily assume that ODL programmes are solely geared towards the personal development of students. Moreover, it seems that the profile of ODL students is rapidly changing, as more and more young people are opting for flexible distance education, whereas ODL lifelong learning is promoted as a means to meet the exigencies of an unstable labour market requiring the frequent change of posts, or indeed jobs, throughout the course of one's career. All of these considerations would make one infer that ODL students would prefer specialized education. How then, could this tendency towards broader scope curricula be explained?

Indeed, the fact that literature is mostly being taught as part of wider scope programmes in ODL universities in Europe can be traced to a number of parameters which reveal that this tendency is probably not one that runs counter or parallel to those of conventional universities, but one that is just more strongly or perhaps earlier felt in ODL. In fact, these parameters involve all the stakeholders of higher education: labour market, EU and state policies, literary scholars, and students.

As far as labour market is concerned, one would expect employers to require expertise, rather than general knowledge, from university graduates. However, if this is perhaps the case in positive sciences, the same does not hold true for the humanities, where a requirement for transversal skills seems to prevail. A large survey conducted in Spain by the national Evaluation and Accreditation Agency in 2006 (*El Libro Blanco del Titulo de Grado en Estudios en el ambito de la Lengua, Literatura, Cultura y Civilizacion*, 2006), examined, among other things, employers' expectations from the literary studies graduates that they employ.[7]

Exempting secondary education, which absorbs nearly half of the graduates, the second largest percentage of them (nearly one quarter) is employed in the larger area of 'cultural consultancy': cultural and/or touristic management, human resources management, mass media and cultural industry, programmes for the integration of immigrants, etc. Employers in these fields require from literary studies graduates communication as well as learning skills, a capacity to apply knowledge to practice, a capacity for data analysis and synthesis, information management and problem solving skills, all of which are significantly broader than those pertaining to the interpretation and critical placing of literary texts in context, to which the discipline traditionaly aims.[8] A wider scope programme then, which exposes students to many different subjects, can be thought of as increasing the students' information management-, learning-, and other transversal skills. In their recent study on *Teaching and Learning English Literature*, Chambers and Gregory (2006, pp. 32–3) also regard the development of this type of skills as a requirement which plays a role in shaping literary studies in our days.

On a different front, EU policies as well as their closely related national Quality Assurance or Evaluation Agencies play an increasing role in shaping higher education curricula, albeit not always explicitly.[9] The 'Magna Charta Universitatum' issued in Bologna in 1988 was an innocuous beginning in a series of significantly more targeted EU initiatives, such as the Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997), the famous 'Bologna declaration' (1999) and the Communiqués of Prague (2001) and Berlin (2003) that followed it with a view to defining and promoting the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).[10] Among others, a main objective of these initiatives is the increase of European universities' attractiveness through the employability of their graduates. The addition of a European dimension in their degrees, the comparability of degrees and the students' mobility among European countries based on a credit system (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, ECTS) are proposed as means towards this end. The opening up of the different fields of humanities (including literary studies) towards larger areas that also reflect the European cultural tradition could be thought of as concurrent with these directions, which may also have exerted a direct influence in shaping the programmes of some more recently established ODL universities, such as the HOU, UTGM, and UOC. More importantly, the ECTS as well as the promotion, by the national Quality Assurance or Evaluation Agencies, of policies that aim at quantifiable skill outcomes for every course, tend to privilege a modular structure at the expense of curricular cohesion.

Another important factor for the widening of curricula is that of academic research itself, as it is developing in recent decades. The microscopic studies of the past have tended to give way to larger-scale interdisciplinary ones, which co-examine heterogeneous texts or literary texts in the context of larger cultural phenomena. The role of contemporary theory in its various aspects has been capital in this development. Structuralist, post-structuralist, semiotic,

feminist, Marxist, psychoanalytical, postcolonial, and other branches of theory have radically reformulated literary studies by promoting the examination of literature alongside other cultural formations.

Last – but not least when it comes to fee-charging universities (and this is incidentally the case of all of the universities that we examined) – is the factor of the students' own interests and expectations, which seem to be attuned to the developments of academic research. A survey that took place in 2002 within English departments in the UK (Halcrow Group et al., 2003) showed a preference of students towards courses that are 'meaningfully relevant to their lives', as Chambers and Gregory interpret its findings (2006, p. 105); these courses are mostly related either to contemporary literature or to wide-ranging subjects created by the latest developments in the field, such as women's and postcolonial writing.

The evidence that I have briefly discussed here draws a picture in which a number of important parameters involved in the shaping of higher education exhibit a predisposition towards the broadening of curricula. In this sense, the curriculum tendencies in ODL European universities that I presented are probably only a premonition of future developments in conventional universities; in any case, they are not a symptomatic ODL feature that is likely to change anytime soon. Possibly rooted in the principles that historically defined open education, broad curricula are very much in tune with the latest social as well as academic developments and find in the flexibility of lifelong distance learning a particularly apposite habitat.

Under this prism, the teaching of literature as part of a broader curriculum should perhaps be the object of careful scrutiny, especially since, as we saw earlier on, this type of curriculum is often the locus of resistances that stem from the tradition of the subject and quite possibly act against the students' best interests. Recognition of such resistances and engagement with the pressing pedagogical questions of curriculum building is essential for the creative transformation of the subject in the context of ODL.

In her thoughtful article 'Humanities higher education: new models, new challenges', Parker (2001) argues against a modular, skills-driven model of higher education and calls for a new one, where

> discrete disciplines can be reinstated as units within a broader humanities paradigm, bound together by common and open teaching aims and practices rather than separated off as discrete knowledge domains. The coherence of the paradigm must lie in the common pursuit of the humanities' objectives and practices, rather than in disciplines appropriating and controlling specialist practices and knowledge. (p. 33)

This proposal supports disciplines as a means of enabling students to develop their critical abilities through engaging with a subject's discourse and methodologies rather than consume unconnected knowledge (Parker 2001, p. 29,

echoing Barnett 1994, pp. 132–5), while also attending to common humanities practices; I believe it may be valuable as a basis for rethinking the teaching of literature in broad ODL curricula.

In such a framework, the resistance expressed by insistence on national literatures at the expense of comparative literature, for instance, could be used as an opportunity to engage students in this particular discipline; however, for this to become possible, literature courses should not be offered separately from the theoretical considerations and the methodological apparatus that have shaped the discipline. Students should be encouraged as well as offered the tools to engage critically with the subject and understand its historical formation, as well as the questions and mechanisms that drive its development in the present day. On the other hand, comparative and interdisciplinary courses happen to reflect to a great extent present-day developments in literary studies, while also exhibiting an openness and broadness desirable, as we saw, from many a part involved in education.

I am not, of course, proposing here specific lines along which literature should be taught in ODL broad-scope curricula. I am suggesting, however, that literary studies, as a discipline, do have the apparatus to respond to the challenge of wide ODL curricula in an academically sound manner, without compromising either their integrity or the students' potential to enjoy the distinct quality and outcomes of higher education. Disciplinary self-awareness, the modest aim to which this chapter aspires to contribute, could be a first important step towards fulfilling this goal.

Notes

[1] An analytic presentation of the research team, its activities as well as the outcomes of this research can be found at openLit, 2008. Kayalis (2005) discusses the rationale of the research programme.

[2] Research visits were conducted by Evripidis Garantoudis, Alexandra Ioannidou, Dimitrios Kargiotis, Takis Kayalis, Antigone Vlavianou, and the author. Details of the visits can be found at openLit, 2008. The present survey is indebted to the reports and sample materials provided by these researchers.

[3] Curricula in North American conventional universities tend to be very broad, allowing students great freedom of choice among multiple courses. In his work *Clueless in Academe: How Schooling Obscures the Life of the Mind*, Gerald Graff (2003, pp. 62–80) discusses this practice and points out the dire consequences of the 'mixed-message curriculum' on the students' critical abilities, as the sheer quantity of widely differing subjects and the lack of established dialogue among them creates confusion and hinders the students from using their knowledge and skills beyond the limits of each particular course.

[4] According to the official OU website, more than 40per cent of students opt for BA/BSc Open nowadays (http://www3.open.ac.uk/courses/bin/p12.dll?Q01BD [24 May 2009]).

[5] On wider scope curricula as pertaining to a liberal approach to education, see Barnett and Coate (2005, pp. 13–14, 38–9).

[6] On Open University degrees being the first for a great number of its students, see Woodley, 1980. Note also that the more recently established HOU did not, at its inception, accept applications from students who sought a second degree.

[7] For a discussion of the major points of this survey in English see Sanz-Cabrerizo (2006).

[8] See Sanz-Cabrerizo (2006) for an elaboration on the divergence between employers' and higher education teachers' aims as revealed in this survey.

[9] Barnett and Coate (2005, pp. 13–26) discuss at length the phenomenon of the curriculum as a 'missing term' from public debates on higher education as well as from the directives of institutions like the Quality Assurance Agency in the UK.

[10] The summit of European ministers responsible for higher education is held biannually (46 countries have so far joined the Bologna process), in order to monitor the realization progress of the Bologna process. The summits of Bergen (2005), London (2007), and Leuven/Louvain-La-Neuve, Belgium (2009) have further clarified its objectives.

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Chapter 2

Teaching First-year Students in Open and Distance Education: Aims and Methods

Ellie Chambers

Introduction

Currently, statements about the purposes and aims of a higher education in every discipline taught in the UK take behavioural form, expressed in terms of what students learning the discipline should achieve and the 'skills' they should acquire. That is, these statements concern the outcomes of the students' learning, which must be demonstrable and assessable. The UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has formulated and published 'Benchmark Statements' of subject knowledge and skills in all disciplines; the Literature Statement is reproduced in Appendix 1. It only indirectly expresses any aims teachers of the discipline may have. I don't want to take issue with this Statement here, nor engage in critique of outcomes-based or 'performative' conceptions of higher education – though these have been subject to much criticism over a long period (for instance, Lyotard,1984; Standish, 1991; Readings, 1996; Strathern, 2000; Barnett, 2003, etc.). Rather, I want to set against this a different way of thinking about the teaching and study of Literature which is, I believe, not only valid but especially helpful to open and distance learning (ODL) educators. It is based on the idea that higher learning is not just a cognitive but is also a socio-cultural process.

In brief, a socio-cultural approach to higher education rests on two basic assumptions about our students:

- they are encultured – mature members of societies and language groups, and
- they are mindful (thinking, feeling beings who have aims, interests, and concerns of their own), independent centres of consciousness.

Further, such an approach makes two assumptions about the discipline of Literature:

- it is a product of history and culture, and
- it is a communicative process constantly in the making.

The discipline, then, is conceived of as a dynamic, social 'community' (Wenger, 1998) – a living tradition of thought and enquiry. The way Literature (as every discipline) is constituted is, of course, constantly changing as our circumstances and understandings change (witness the emergence of Cultural and Media Studies in recent times); and the boundaries between Literature and these (and other) fields are permeable and often overlapping. Nonetheless, literary-critical discourse has identifiable and distinctive purposes, objects of study and text-genres, methods of enquiry, central concepts and networks of ideas, conventional uses of evidence, and modes of written and verbal expression, with which all its participants engage. And, as Knights (2005, pp. 33–4) has argued, 'bodies of knowledge and pedagogic practices are inextricably linked'. Characteristic of the discipline are richly dynamic relationships between processes of textual analysis, interpretation, and evaluation, based on abstract, complex mental discriminations.

Accordingly, it is the function of a higher education in Literature to offer students the opportunity to engage in literary-critical discourse as participants in a significant socio-cultural process. That is, the students should

- learn to read a range of primary texts and text genres appropriately – in breadth and depth – engaging in associated processes of textual analysis, interpretation and evaluation;
- engage with the concepts and networks of ideas that characterize literary discourse, and learn to think in terms of them;
- grasp the assumptions and purposes that underlie theoretical-critical debates within the discipline along with the beliefs and values that inform them;
- understand the way argument is conducted within literary discourse, what counts as evidence and how it is used;
- learn to speak and write within the conventions that apply; and
- take an independent, critical stance to study.

In what follows I shall try to explore these assumptions and their implications.

For the purposes of discussion I will focus on a specific case of distance education – teaching of the Words module in the UK Open University (UKOU) introductory course Living Arts (Robb, 1994)[1]. I focus on beginning students not only because beginnings just are fundamental but because of the changing demographics of our student populations. As a result of the massification of higher education systems in many countries, along with a 'widening student participation' agenda, the student body has become, and is increasingly, heterogeneous. For example, in the UK as far back as 1994–5, '[t]he majority of English programmes in almost all institutions [were] attracting proportions of mature students in excess of 30 per cent' – many of them under-qualified returners-to-study – and 'significant numbers of international students' (QAA, 1995). Engaging all these students and preparing them for higher levels of

study is a serious challenge, especially when the resources available for teaching are far from commensurate. In the UKOU all the students are mature aged.

It will be helpful to begin by deriving some underlying pedagogic principles from what has been said so far that may act as guides to our thoughts and actions. At bottom, we want to interest our mature distance education students in Literature – get them excited about it and, above all, really thinking about it – as they go about the difficult job of studying independently, sometimes in isolation and often many years after their formal education ended. In this context, I suggest that the interconnected principles of engagement, intelligibility, and participation can offer us the kind of guidance we need.

Socio-cultural Pedagogic Principles

The Principle of Engagement

This principle posits that introductory courses, intended as a prelude to years of further study, must arouse students' interest in the study of Literature, sustain their initial enthusiasm and aim to increase it. Furthermore, 'engagement' implies a process of connecting with, or latching onto, something that already exists (people's knowledge, experience, understanding, preconception, skill, desire) and harnessing it, ready to take off in appropriate directions. It may seem that teachers must therefore have some reliable knowledge of their students' backgrounds, in particular their current knowledge and experience of literature, their enthusiasms, and their expectations of higher education. But this poses problems, in distance education especially, when course-design teams are faced with large enrolments or when trying to reach out to new or hitherto under-represented student groups. How, then, is it possible to teach in ways that engage all our students?

In the Words module this is largely achieved by re-conceptualizing the process of engagement. The module begins with a brief discussion of the range of pastimes now available to people in their homes, and goes on to show (from newspaper reports of recent surveys) that nevertheless reading for pleasure is on the increase in the UK. This raises certain questions:

> Why is it that reading is still so popular, when the newer forms of entertainment . . . such as television, video and computers, offer such colourful and exciting alternatives? Why . . . should anyone choose to go to the trouble and effort of reading a book?

The students are then asked to explore these questions through the following 'Activity'.

> Think of a TV programme you watched and enjoyed recently – one that told a story, such as an episode from a drama series or soap opera, or a TV film.

> Think also of a story you've read, whether in a book or a magazine . . .
>
> Spend a few minutes thinking about the main differences between the two experiences . . . and then jot down your thoughts. You may find it helpful to use these questions as a guide:

1. Did you read the story/watch the programme in one go, or spread it out over a number of occasions?
2. Where were you when you were reading/watching?
3. How much work do you feel you were made to do in each case?
4. Was the experience a private one, or one that you shared with other people?
5. Which of the two experiences was more enjoyable? (Robb, 1994, p. 8)

Each of the numbered questions is then taken up and discussed, and the students are also asked to listen to part of a recording in which a group of people discuss their experiences and judgements. Aspects of this discussion lead students into the next section of the teaching text, entitled 'Writing and Imagination', in which they are asked to read a short story about a woman's conflict with her young child as she shops in a supermarket. In the process, their study of 'what happens when we read and how writing "works"' (p. 6) is launched.

So, this introduction to the discipline does not begin with a potted history of English Literature, with discussion of the major literary genres or literary-critical movements. Nor is it grounded in the belief that teachers must have knowledge of individual students' previous experience of such things, or even of their preparedness for study generally. Rather, it starts by asking the students to reflect on what they actually do, and experience while doing – it engages the students' attention by connecting with their present thoughts, beliefs, and feelings – with the intention of bringing their ideas about the roles of imaginative writing in the contemporary context to the forefront of their minds. It aims to focus their minds appropriately, on the subject to be studied, and get them thinking constructively about it from the start; thus, the general concerns of the subject are active in their minds. In doing this, the activities create a conceptual 'framework for understanding' and the making of meaning. As Bruner (1996, p. 13) has it: 'The meaning of any fact, proposition or encounter is relative to the . . . frame of reference in terms of which it is construed.' This has particular force when applied to propositional knowledge, the kind mainly encountered in higher education, which by its nature is decontextualized, abstract and rule-based, and so is especially challenging to beginning students.

> To be able to acquire a facility in using the meaning systems available within a disciplinary discourse, the student needs to accumulate familiarity with the ways of the discourse community – the taken-for-granted purposes, values and methods, the history of key debates, the influence of leading figures – as

> well as with its culture of method, argumentation and communication. These socio-cultural features are not merely 'characteristic' of the discipline but constitutive of the meanings traded within its discourses. (Northedge and McArthur, 2009, p. 113)

As teachers, all too often we assume that the context or framework for understanding what we are setting out to teach is already understood (Northedge, 2003, p. 172).

Frameworks for understanding may be established in a variety of ways (by presenting students with a case-study or a few photographs for analysis, for example, or with a vignette, scenario or story) but, whatever, activities such as those just described provide starting points for study which are developed subsequently. They are designed to explore the knowledge, experience, and preconceptions that students are likely to share at the outset, by virtue of their membership of a broadly common cultural group. No matter what their personal, gender, class, age or ethnic differences may be, all the students of Words are inhabitants of contemporary British-European society; they experience and are influenced by current cultural preoccupations and forms, especially through the ubiquitous mass media, and already participate in a wide range of 'everyday' discourses about them. The teacher's aim is to plan and conduct 'excursions' from these familiar discourses into the target, specialist discourse (Northedge, 2003, p. 175).

In other words, these introductory strategies arise out of a socio-cultural conception of engagement which suggests reliable and appropriate jumping-off points for the teaching–learning enterprise – just as the authors of the literary texts the student reads themselves rely on this kind of engagement with their broad audiences. An approach to teaching such as this therefore has the same kind of validity as the works of literature being studied; both the literary works and the teaching materials appeal to a similarly wide, notional 'reading public'. It is thus an intrinsically appropriate approach to the teaching of Literature.

The Principle of Intelligibility

At the same time, this socio-cultural conception of engagement accords with the principle of intelligibility, which assumes that if students are actively to engage in processes of textual analysis-interpretation-evaluation – to be active 'makers of meaning' (Gadamer, 1989) – then what they are taught must be intelligible to them from the start. Further, if the students' everyday experiences and understandings, invoked at the outset, are to be brought into ever closer relationship with the concerns, processes, and terms of the academic, literary-analytical discourse to which they seek introduction, then those frameworks for understanding must be sustained. Strands of meaning must run

through our teaching, frequently connecting with beginning students' everyday experience and concerns. In this context, UKOU teachers have found the notion of the 'teaching narrative' a fruitful one. That is, introductory teaching is conducted through a series of concrete activities contained within a developing 'story'.

> Story helps to construct conditions of intersubjectivity. . . . In contrast to the sharing of rule-based propositional meaning, which can easily break down, stories reliably generate stable shared meaning. This makes them excellent vehicles in teaching . . . (Northedge, 2003, p. 174)

In other words, intelligibility demands that teachers show and demonstrate rather than always explaining matters propositionally. Teachers tend first to explain a proposition or theory and then offer an example; students rarely understand the initial explanation. Intelligibility demands the reverse of this procedure: teaching from example to explanation. Definitions come last, not first, because understanding them is a high-level ability. In short, we are setting out to teach for *understanding*.

The storyline of the Words module, which encompasses both subject content and study process, is based on a few Core Questions put as simply as possible near the start. Questions imply 'answers' and so offer directional impetus to teachers when plotting the teaching narrative. We may begin with questions such as these:

CORE QUESTIONS

1. What can imaginative writing do?
2. How do fiction and poetry 'work'?
3. Is there a 'right' way to read a novel, story or poem?
4. How do some novels, stories and poems come to be seen as better than others? (Robb, 1994, p. 17)

Each major section of the teaching text focuses on one question only and, in turn, builds on the work done in previous sections. Accordingly, attention is focused also on connections between sections of text and relationships between main teaching points – that is, the flow of meaning is sustained – along the way towards some resolution of the issues (if only provisional). Each section ends with a short Section Summary which provides an 'answer' to the question addressed there. So, students may easily locate and refer to these summaries in order to remind themselves how the story is developing. Within each section,

fairly frequent Key Points boxes remind the students of the main issues as they are developed. For example, the Key Points that round off the opening section of Words are as follows.

KEY POINTS

Changes in technology have transformed both the range and nature of the leisure activities available to us.
Despite this, reading is still an extremely popular activity. In fact, more people are reading books than ever before.
Reading offers different kinds of enjoyment from watching television. While television and films use images and sounds to appeal to our senses, writing uses words to appeal to the imagination. (Robb, 1994, p. 12)

These devices enable students to follow the meaning of the teaching text as they go along and to access parts of it at will, and so more easily keep in mind relationships between the parts and the whole – rather than experiencing their study as a series of episodes or fragments, 'one damn thing after another'. In the introductory stages, some redundancy is entirely necessary (underscoring of main points, summaries, repetition of unfamiliar terms) within a generally discursive, though direct, mode of address. Furthermore, intelligibility demands that, to begin with, technical terms and abstractions are kept to a minimum, introduced only gradually, and always explored at the point of introduction. By initiating and supporting a vigorous flow of meaning, in effect 'the teacher is able to "lend" students the capacity to frame meanings they cannot yet produce independently' (Northedge, 2003, p. 172).

Comparison between the transparency of the Key Points for Section 1 of the module (above), and the relative conceptual and linguistic complexity of those for the final section, below, demonstrates how much this pedagogic approach enables beginning students to achieve in a short time.

KEY POINTS

One of the ways in which critical opinion can influence the status of a text is by classifying it, for example as either 'popular' or 'serious'.
The public reputation or status of a text can influence our private judgements about it.
The reputation of a text can change over time, as changing ideas and tastes make it possible to reappraise its status. (Robb, 1994, p. 99)

The Principle of Participation

The principles of engagement and intelligibility that underpin the construction of introductory courses encourage the students' active participation in their studies. But this is especially promoted through the series of Activities referred to earlier, which drive the teaching narrative. In the first few sections of the Words module, for example, Activities take the form of the one cited above – a specific task (watching a TV programme, etc.) followed by a number of questions that provide some direction for the students' thinking. Some of these strands of meaning are then developed in subsequent sections of the text – in this case, those connected with writing's appeal to the imagination. The tasks themselves almost always involve reading a story or poem (characteristic objects of study); and through a series of related questions, students are offered a staged approach to their reading, analysis, and interpretation of it. In ensuing discussion of these activities, the teacher-writer anticipates the students' likely responses and re-casts these responses in terms closer to those of the 'target', academic discourse[2]. In these ways, the students' thinking and growing understanding is channelled appropriately and fruitfully.

Activities are always concrete tasks, put as precisely as possible, so that students may indeed make some constructive sense of them. But in later parts of the module fewer prompts, or less 'scaffolding' (Vygotsky, 1978) is provided and, through the activities, students are taken closer to the heart of contemporary literary-critical concerns and categories. For instance, having read a poem ('If Life's a Lousy Picture, Why Not Leave Before the End' by Roger McGough, which plays on the theme of the Hollywood Western), students are presented with this scenario:

> Imagine for a moment that you had spent all your life in another country which had no cinema or television. However, you can speak English and have some experience of reading poetry. What do you think you would make of this poem? Would there be parts of it that you wouldn't understand?

The author then explores what historical and cultural knowledge the reader would need in order to understand reference to a 'deserted kinema' with 'torches extinguished' and 'cornish ripples locked away'[3], along with such word play as:

> The tornoff tickets chucked
> in the tornoff shotbin . . . (p. 63)

This particular instance leads into more general discussion of the assumptions writers make about their readers' shared frameworks of knowledge and experience. A further Activity asks students to guess how a story will develop after reading only the opening paragraph, which leads to discussion of how we

distinguish between literary genres and understand the expectations they raise in us as readers – abilities we acquire from familiarity with literature itself. So, by the end of this introductory module students are led to some understanding of the contemporary, and sophisticated, concept of 'intertextuality'.

Pedagogic Process

Study Skills

Throughout, the students are asked to write down their ideas in response to Activities, not just think about them; at first as jotted notes, later on they are asked to compose paragraph-length responses and, towards the end of the module, they are given guidance on how to make a case in essay form using appropriate evidence in support of an argument. Although such skills are an integral part of the subject matter of study, and are always taught in this kind of 'situated' manner, aspects of them are picked out for special emphasis in occasional Study Skills boxes. Students are also required to read parts of a set book on study skills (Chambers and Northedge, 1997; 2008) progressively, alongside their work on the module text.

As with other exercises, these study skills activities arise out of the students' actual experience. When they reach the end of Section 1 of the module, for example, a box entitled 'Getting Organised' asks them to work out how long they had spent studying the section, which parts were the most time consuming and why they think this was so – with assistance from the relevant part of the study skills book. On the basis of that understanding, the students are then asked to skim-read Section 2 and try to organize themselves and their time in advance of studying it. Later on, following a section of analysis and then comparison of two short stories, guidance is given in how to make notes that summarize the similarities/differences in structure and treatment the students had been asked to identify in previous activities. Other boxes deal in similar fashion with such matters as 'Interpretation and Evidence', 'Understanding Ideas', 'Discussing Ideas', and 'Writing' – all of them centrally important study processes in Literature. Note that students are not simply 'told about' these skills and processes; they always practise them, to some extent, before being asked to reflect on them.

Meta-cognition

As we have seen, through study skills activities students are encouraged to consider how they go about their studies at appropriate moments, and their attention is drawn to some of the key processes involved in it. In other words, they are helped to understand what they are doing, and why, while they are

doing it – on the assumption that people cannot participate in something mindfully unless they have some understanding of what that thing is and what they might be aiming for. They are thus introduced, at an early stage, to the idea of reflecting on their own studying and learning. That is, they are encouraged to engage in meta-cognitive activity. This takes us beyond Bruner's (1996, p. 119) idea of a 'spiral' of learning (of progression from a relatively simple and concrete characterization of the domain of knowledge to higher – abstract, complex, and generative – levels) to the perception that the higher levels, or 'mastery' of the discipline, also entail increasing meta-cognitive understanding of its purposes and processes. To be knowledgeable, then, is not just a matter of being able to participate in the specialist discourse of a knowledge community but also of being aware both that this is what one is doing and of exactly what it is that one is doing.

Teaching Open and Distance Learning Students

In summary, what beginning ODL Literature students need is educational material that

- provides frameworks for their understanding, each time a new subject/topic is encountered – presents ideas and devises activities that help focus the students' minds on the topic to be studied, sets them thinking constructively about it and along fruitful lines (providing less scaffolding over time);
- keeps those frameworks before the students as they progress and their understanding develops; presents Core Questions and a teaching narrative for each course of study – a storyline that encompasses the different kinds of subject matter and process involved in it; sustains strands of meaning; summarizes progress regularly and provides frequent reminders of key ideas and issues;
- does not make assumptions about the students' existing knowledge and skill (of subject matter or of how to go about their studies) – explains and illustrates new/difficult concepts, technical, and other terms; presents a realistic study timetable, maintaining a steady pace that allows sufficient time for reading primary and secondary sources, thinking about and assimilating new ideas, completing activities and assignments, and which is adjustable;
- helps 'translate' students' verbal and written contributions into terms closer to those of the target, literary-analytical and critical, discourses – acts as a model of how debate is conducted in the discipline and how scholarly argument works
- provides a structured, staged approach to reading different literary texts/genres – with processes of analysis-interpretation-evaluation at its heart – and

to writing essays using appropriate illustration and evidence from both primary and secondary sources, being precise and 'objective';

- helps them discuss their thoughts with other students, communicate ideas effectively and work productively with others – promotes seminar-style discussions and student-led sessions, small-group and team work (all of which is of course achievable online); and
- helps them think about study practices and reflect on their learning and achievements – offers opportunities for discussion of self-organization and time management, making useful notes, approaching various study tasks, both early on and when the students have had some experience of trying to do these things.

Teacher- versus Student-centredness: A Modern Dilemma

It will be apparent from this discussion that in the early stages of higher education it is not helpful for teachers to think in terms of individual students' prior knowledge or experience, and, on that basis, to teach incrementally in accordance with precise, pre-determined instructional objectives or 'learning outcomes'. Nor is it helpful to imagine that the only other recourse is to student-centredness: to negotiated aims and curricula, self-reflection, and 'discovery'. For this is the opposite face of the same, individualistic, coin – in its different way, just as anti-intellectual and asocial. Rather, as we saw, students are here conceived as members of societies and language groups – as encultured, subject to the historical and cultural influences that both constrain and enable us all; and also as mindful – thinking, feeling beings who have interests, intentions, and aspirations. Again, just like the authors they read. Likewise, Literature (as all academic disciplines) is conceived as a product of history and culture, and a dynamic communicative process.

It will also be apparent that in the context of a discursive, dialogic discipline such as Literature, talk about teacher- or student-centredness is misleading. In dialogue, the notion of a 'central' participant is incoherent – the point of dialogue is that it doesn't centre on one person. Rather, the socio-cultural conception of the educational process is student-centred *and* teacher-centred. We have just seen that teaching always 'starts from where the students are', acknowledging the value of their experience, their ideas, beliefs, and aspirations, and promoting their active participation. And what is ultimately achieved in education is of course what the students achieve – with the assistance of teachers, the people who have made it their business to learn about, understand and 'speak' the public discourses in which the students wish to participate. As teachers we help students achieve most by teaching them in ways that are consistent with such a socio-cultural understanding of the nature and purposes of a higher education, and by making courses of study as positively

engaging, accessible, and interesting as we can. Clearly, that takes sympathy and imagination as well as knowledge.

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Notes

[1] *Words* formed the basis of a more recent 'Openings' course for beginning students at the UKOU. Now, our courses are often taught online rather than via printed teaching texts, along with sound and vision on CD and DVD. However, it is valuable to refer back to the original course here precisely because it is in print; its teaching strategies are more readily transparent and, for purposes of this chapter, may be easily represented and examined.

[2] In fact, teacher-writers may actually work backwards – from the kind of student response they would like to see to the design of an Activity which is likely to elicit it.

[3] 'Kinema' refers to cinemas, and 'torches' to the lights used by attendants to show cinema-goers to their seats. 'Cornish ripple' is a type of ice cream.

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Appendix 1

Extracts from the UK Quality Assurance Agency's Benchmark Statement for English

This identifies the knowledge graduates 'who have studied English as a significant component of their degree' (p. 3) should be able to demonstrate.

Subject Knowledge

- knowledge of literature . . . [which] should include a substantial number of authors and texts from different periods of literary history. For single honours literature students this should include knowledge of writing from periods before 1800 . . .
- knowledge and understanding of the distinctive character of texts written in the principal literary genres, fiction, poetry and drama, and of other kinds of writing and communication
- experience of the range of literatures in English . . .

- appreciation of the power of imagination in literary creation
- awareness of the role of critical traditions in shaping literary history
- knowledge of linguistic, literary, cultural and socio-historical contexts in which literature is written and read
- knowledge of the relationship between literature and other media including . . . film or other forms of cultural production
- knowledge of useful and precise critical terminology and, where appropriate, linguistic and stylistic terminology
- awareness of the range and variety of approaches to literary study, which may include creative practice, performance, and extensive specialisation in critical and/or linguistic theory
- awareness of how literature and language produce and reflect cultural change and difference
- recognition of the multi-faceted nature of the discipline, and of its complex relationship to other disciplines and forms of knowledge.

Subject-specific Skills . . .

- critical skills in the close reading, description, analysis, or production of texts or discourses
- ability to articulate knowledge and understanding of texts, concepts and theories relating to English studies
- sensitivity to generic conventions and to the shaping effects upon communication of circumstances, authorship, textual production and intended audience
- responsiveness to the central role of language in the creation of meaning and sensitivity to the affective power of language
- rhetorical skills of effective communication and argument, both oral and written
- command of a broad range of vocabulary and an appropriate critical terminology
- bibliographic skills appropriate to the discipline, including accurate citation of sources and consistent use of conventions in the presentation of scholarly work
- awareness of how different social and cultural contexts affect the nature of language and meaning
- understanding of how cultural norms and assumptions influence questions of judgement
- comprehension of the complex nature of literary languages, and an awareness of the relevant research by which they may be better understood.

(QAA (2007) Subject Benchmark Statement – English, p. 3)

Chapter 3

Master's-level Study in Literature at The Open University: Pedagogic Challenges and Solutions

W. R. Owens

Most of the discussion of literary studies in open and distance learning has been concerned with the teaching of literature at undergraduate level, and this is as it should be, since undergraduates make up by far the greatest number of our students.[1] But with rising numbers of graduates, postgraduate Master's degrees are becoming more and more common. Many students evidently want to 'top-up' their first degree work with a further, postgraduate qualification that gives them the chance to deepen their study of literature at an advanced level, while demonstrating greater independence of study and more extensive research skills. Also, MA study is fast becoming a prerequisite for admission to a PhD.[2] The purpose of this chapter is to discuss some of the specific issues that arise in attempting to teach literature at Master's level using open and distance methods. My example will be the UK Open University MA in Literature, which has been in existence for over 20 years now. It has undergone one major revision in the 1990s, and is currently (2008) being replaced by a completely new MA in English. What I want to do in this chapter is outline some of the challenges we faced in devising what was the first distance MA in our subject, and how we met them, and then to turn to some of the challenges we are currently facing as we produce a new version of this popular degree.

As is well known, the UK Open University (hereafter OU) was founded in 1969 with the express aim of offering a 'second chance' to gain a degree to adult students who had missed out on higher education. By the time I joined the University in 1978 that aim was beginning to be realized, on a very large scale. The first generation of OU academics had proved beyond question that it was possible to design successful undergraduate teaching materials that could be studied 'at a distance' by part-time students working in their own homes. These materials took the form of printed correspondence tuition linked to set books, supplemented by television and radio broadcasts. What these open and distance learning pioneers also discovered, however, was that these published and broadcast teaching materials worked best when students were supported in locally based groups by a part-time tutor, who would conduct face-to-face

teaching sessions, give students detailed, individual feedback on their written work, and provide general academic counselling support to them.

At that time the OU did not offer degrees in named subjects. The system was an entirely modular one, in which students chose the courses that interested them and combined these to gain the credit points needed for the degree of 'BA Open'. There was a strongly 'interdisciplinary' ethos, and students were at that time required to take first-year courses from at least two Faculties. In the English department,[3] however, we knew that many students focused very strongly on our subject. They took as many courses in literature as we offered, and indeed clamoured for more. It was also obvious that some of these students were extremely able and were producing excellent undergraduate work. This led to a group of us within the department to think in the early 1980s about whether we could offer a taught Master's degree in Literature. Our thought was initially directed at our own OU graduates, and our main idea was that by offering a taught Master's we could give our best students the chance to develop a more specialized knowledge of literature, in areas we had not covered in great depth in our undergraduate curriculum, which would be sufficient to enable some of them to go on to PhD work.

To begin with, we faced a lot of scepticism, if not outright opposition, even within the OU. The taught MA degree was at that time relatively rare in conventional universities, and it was doubted whether there would be a 'market' for such a degree among OU graduates. Furthermore, there seemed to be formidable challenges in offering MA-level study using open and distance teaching methods. How, for example, could we teach part-time students like ours about research methodologies and techniques when they were dispersed throughout the UK and had no automatic right of access to a university library? Our undergraduate-level teaching was a success precisely because we could guarantee to provide every student with all the study materials they needed to pass the course without having to leave their own homes. A few courses included week-long residential schools where students could be introduced to the use of a library, but essentially OU students studied the materials we provided and the set books we prescribed. Clearly, this would never work for a taught MA, where students should not be relying on discursive teaching material provided by us, but should be pursuing in-depth, independent study of scholarly work in the field.

How, then, did we set about meeting these pedagogical challenges? The first thing we decided was that we had to face the problem of library access head-on. In all the promotional material about the MA we made it clear that prospective students would have to take the initiative in organizing their own access to a decent-sized research library. This would be an essential part of their study for an OU MA. Fortunately, there was a national agreement among university libraries in the UK that OU students should be given reading, and in some cases borrowing rights at university libraries near the place where they lived. We were also determined from the start that we would not make any assumptions about a student's previous experience of using a library. We would *teach* students

how to go about making the best use of libraries and their resources. So, among the printed course material was a quite extensive section that described how libraries were organized, identified some of the key reference works in English studies, and explained how to track down books (fairly easy) and articles in journals (not so easy in those largely pre-computer days). Then, drawing on basic open and distance learning pedagogy which emphasizes the need for students to take an active part in their learning, we set them a series of practical library exercises – a list of questions to answer which would force them to find their way around an actual library. In other words, they would learn about library use not in the abstract, but by *doing* it.

This idea that MA students simply had to get to a library and learn how to use it was for us an absolutely fundamental part of what distinguished postgraduate from undergraduate study in open and distance education. The doubters and sceptics continually raised questions about inequalities in student access to libraries. What about the fact that some students would have to travel for miles to a library, while others might only have to go round the corner? But we stuck to our guns, insisting that if students wanted an OU MA they would simply have to find a way. And, of course, students did find ways. We encouraged them to be inventive, to make use of local libraries which might offer interlibrary loan facilities, to plan carefully in advance to make the best use of their precious time in large research libraries; and, with the support and encouragement of their part-time tutors they rose to the challenge magnificently.

Once we could assume that students would be able to search out both primary and secondary materials in libraries, we were able to develop a new variety of correspondence teaching, which we called, quite simply, 'Guided Reading'. What we meant by this was that, although we might include some discursive teaching text, the main purpose of MA teaching material was not to offer students lengthy explications of literary subjects or texts, in the manner of our undergraduate teaching. Instead, we concentrated on providing brief outlines of key issues, together with suggestions about the most useful books and articles discussing these issues, and, crucially, sets of further questions and exercises the students could choose to work on quite independently, so that they could practise skills and develop understanding of the topics that were most relevant to their interests.

In planning the overall structure of the MA, we came up with a tripartite, cumulative scheme. First, we would introduce students to some basic 'tools of the trade', and to some more advanced issues in literary study, such as bibliographical and textual scholarship and the history of the book, the practice of textual editing, the role of theory in literary research, and how to go about planning, writing, and presenting a postgraduate dissertation. This was material that would obviously be of value to postgraduate students in other institutions, and in fact this section of the MA was externally published by Routledge as *A Handbook to Literary Research* (Eliot and Owens, 1998), and has been widely included on MA reading lists throughout the UK. Once students had been

introduced to these basic research methodologies and advanced issues in literary scholarship, they would proceed to study a defined area of literature in some depth. They had only two options to choose between: 'The Eighteenth-Century Novel' or 'Nineteenth-Century Poetry and Criticism'. Finally, they would round off their studies by writing a 20,000–25,000 word dissertation on a self-chosen topic related to their previous area of study.

As will be seen from the progressive structure of the programme, all the previous taught material, while a coherent body of study in its own right, was designed to prepare students for work on their dissertation. The earlier study was assessed, and students had to pass in order to proceed to the dissertation. But the earlier marks were not counted towards the final result: the MA was awarded *solely* on the dissertation itself. A key factor in the success of the degree was our decision to follow the OU undergraduate model of allocating the students to tutors who were able to guide them through their studies, mark their written work, and provide the kinds of general academic counselling support adult students need. Nevertheless, looking back on it now, it seems a very demanding programme of study. We restricted the intake to no more than 80 students, carefully selected by us from the several hundreds who applied. In those far-off, long ago days we had students queuing up, and were under no pressure to increase numbers. There was little by way of competition for MA students, and we presented this pioneering MA very successfully for about ten years. Quite a number of the students went on to complete PhDs, with us or with other institutions.

During the 1990s all this began to change. Other universities were by now offering their own taught MAs, and with steadily rising numbers of graduates it was clear that taught postgraduate degrees were becoming valuable qualifications in their own right, and not merely stepping stones to PhD study. The OU had by now produced something like 100,000 graduates, and it had become enthusiastic about developing a taught postgraduate programme. In the mid-1990s we set about revising the MA in Literature, fitting it into a new modular structure that had been agreed to enable all departments in the Arts Faculty to offer MA study. Our original MA in Literature structure was modified so that students could take three equal-length modules of study, each one counting for 60 points at Master's level, and each assessed separately. A 'foundation' module included revised versions of the original material on methodology, textual scholarship and history of the book, and literary theory, but also now included a case study of 'The Novel from 1880–1930', in which students would practise and develop the skills acquired in the earlier part of the module. We kept updated versions of the 'Eighteenth-Century Novel' and 'Nineteenth-Century Poetry and Criticism' as 'subject' modules, but were able to add to these a third module entitled 'Literature and Nation: Britain and India 1800–1990',[4] thus giving students a wider chronological and thematic choice of subject study. The dissertation now became the final module, with the length reduced to 16,000–18,000 words. This new modular structure allowed us to

introduce a range of intermediate postgraduate qualifications leading up to the full MA. If students passed the foundation module and did not wish to proceed further, they could be awarded a Postgraduate Certificate. If they passed the foundation and one subject module they could be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma. Only by completing the dissertation, and gaining the full 180 points, could they be awarded the MA in Literature.

On the whole this modular MA worked well. We decided when we launched it that we would no longer select students, but would admit any applicant with an honours degree. We made it clear that the honours degree should have included a substantial amount of study of literature, and provided 'self-assessment' questions to help students determine for themselves whether they were ready to embark on postgraduate study of literature. Ultimately, however, if they possessed an honours degree they were entitled to register for the MA. The intake was very large indeed by the standards of conventional institutions, with over 400 students registering for the foundation module within a few years. What we found was that only about half the students were OU graduates: the other half were students who had graduated from other institutions, and who saw the OU MA as a way of carrying on their studies while earning a living, or, if they had graduated some considerable time ago, as an opportunity to re-engage with the subject at this higher level. Despite the diversity of the intake, retention rates on the foundation module were good. The figure varied a little from year to year, but between 65 and 70 per cent of students who registered for it completed the course and sat the examination. Obviously we would have liked these retention figures to be even higher, but we know from surveys of students who dropped out that the main reasons for non-completion were to do with personal circumstances, work pressures and the like. Among students who completed the foundation module and moved on to subject and then dissertation study retention rates were very high indeed – well over 80 per cent.

Over the years, in response to student feedback, we made significant changes to the programme. For example, we reduced the number of set books to remove expensive texts that were not being heavily used. We also changed the assessment pattern, to remove an examination on subject modules and replace it with extended project work. These and other changes were welcomed by students. In a large-scale student survey carried out in 2001, which collected and analysed the views of about 200 students across the programme, approval ratings were very high. Asked how satisfied they were with the overall quality of the module they were studying, 95 per cent of those surveyed said they were 'fairly' or 'very' satisfied, with the majority, 66 per cent, saying that they were 'very' satisfied. On the whole, too, the work produced by students, particularly on dissertations, was of a remarkably high standard. This was regularly commented upon by our external examiners, and it may have been related to the fact that students took three years of part-time study to gain the MA with us, and that our part-time Associate Lecturer colleagues provided a high level of

tuition and support. Students were able to focus for about nine months part-time on the dissertation and had the opportunity to submit five pieces of draft written work for comment by the tutor before they sent in the final version. The result was that over 20 per cent of these dissertations were awarded a distinction each year.

Unfortunately, however, numbers registering for the MA began falling over a number of years, and indeed the intake on the foundation module dropped below 200 for the first time in 2006. We had been planning anyway to remake the programme for a new presentation to begin in 2009, but this evidence of falling numbers caused us to begin thinking more radically about ways of restructuring and reinvigorating the MA to make it more attractive to a new generation of students. Our discussions took place in the context of a national debate about the function of the MA degree, and in particular the extent to which it should be seen as a compulsory qualification for students wishing to proceed to PhD study. In 2006 the UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) began discussion about the development of benchmarks for academic programmes at Master's level, and it also published a consultation paper about doctoral programmes which included a question seeking views on whether Master's degrees should become necessary entry qualifications for doctoral degrees (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2006a and 2006b). In August 2007 the UK Higher Education Academy English Subject Centre published a detailed report on the taught MA in English, giving an overview of current provision of MA study in English, discussing some of the wider issues about the function and delivery of MAs in English Studies, and setting out evidence about the perceptions of both staff and students of the costs and benefits of a taught MA in English.[5]

One of the things we were prompted to consider very carefully was the length of time it was taking OU students to complete the degree. To gain a taught MA by full-time study at a conventional university takes one year. On the face of it, the same work by part-time students should only take them two years. Instinct told us that there must be students who were put off registering for our MA simply because they could see from the brochure that it would mean three years of part-time study. Fortunately for us, a quite separate development in the OU made it possible for us to see how to restructure our new MA into two years. In the past, most courses at the OU started in February and ended in October. These dates had been chosen because quite a few courses had embedded residential schools, and we needed to use teaching and student accommodation at campus universities over their summer break. Now, though, there are many fewer residential schools, and the university has introduced other start dates, including the more conventional academic start date of October, with students finishing in June. What we are planning for our new MA is a 'stretched' two-year study structure, taking advantage of these new start dates. Decisions have not yet been completely finalized, but the plan currently is that students will register for a 120-point 'taught' module studied over a year and a half, starting in October, carrying on through the following year, and ending in the

following January. They will then have a break in study of three months, up to May, after which, assuming they have passed the taught module, they will embark on a 60-point 'dissertation' module, having until the following January to submit the 12,000–15,000 word dissertation. This new structure will match quite closely the structure of both full-time and part-time MAs in other institutions, where students begin in September, follow a 'taught' programme of study up until June, and then typically write their dissertations over the summer and submit them in September.

As well as changing the structure, we have almost completely changed the content of the MA. One of the major weaknesses of the previous programme was that research techniques and other methodological issues were all placed right at the start of the first module. This was not in itself wholly illogical, but it had three major practical disadvantages. First, it meant that students had to plough through what for many of them was quite daunting and indigestible material right at the outset of their study, while some of them were still finding their feet. Second, it did not take account of the fact that some of these study and research skills really only become significant for students later on in their studies, when they are moving towards much more independent work on their dissertations. Third, placing all this material right at the start took little account of the diversity of the student intake, and the need for some of them to have time to 'get up to speed' with graduate-level study. We now think that it is better to begin with some more familiar area of literature, which would allow students who may have graduated some considerable time ago more of a chance to get back into academic study and writing. The aim now is to introduce them to research techniques, develop their understanding of theoretical issues, and introduce new areas such as textual scholarship and the history of the book in a more graduated, timely, and digestible way.

We have also thought long and hard about the choice of study material we should offer students. Amazing as it may now seem, when we planned our original MA we chose the 'Eighteenth-Century Novel' and 'Nineteenth-Century Poetry and Criticism' precisely because we thought they were relatively unpopular areas of study. We didn't want to attract too many students, and we thought that only really determined characters would sign up for such out-of-the-way subjects! The situation is now completely different, and we are under pressure to devise an MA in English that will attract as many students as possible. Unlike in conventional universities, where MA teaching can be offered in a lot of subject areas even though only a few students sign up, the number of separate courses we can offer is severely restricted, because each additional module offered involves significant additional administrative costs, and we lose economies of scale. Even at MA level, the OU structure is such that we have to produce a relatively small number of modules that must be taken by large numbers of students to be financially viable.

For the new MA in English we will be presenting only two modules: the 120-point 'taught' module, and the 60-point 'dissertation' module. We have had to come up with a way of providing students with an experience of study of

literary study at Master's level that would be broad enough to attract students with widely differing interests, and yet would have the intellectual coherence and depth appropriate to this academic level. What we have decided to focus on is the way in which certain personae, narratives or themes have been expressed and reworked repeatedly in literary texts and other cultural media in very different contexts and periods, and how they circulate in a field of literary and literary critical production and reception. Students will study 'clusters' of texts that exemplify a variety of intertextual and cross-contextual connections. They begin by studying in turn three 'pairs' of linked texts: Sophocles' *Antigone* and Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*; Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*; Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* and Brecht's *Coriolan*. They then move on to two clusters of three texts each. The first brings together examples of Bushman folklore, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and Coetzee's *Foe*, and the second brings together the first three chapters of Genesis, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Blake's *Milton*. Their work on this 120-point 'taught' module ends with an intensive study of literary history and book history, based, respectively, around Byron's *Don Juan* and Kipling's *Kim*.[6]

We are hoping that by drawing on major literary texts from different genres, periods, and contexts across world literature, and by offering rich opportunities to explore relationships between literature and other media, we will attract a wide range of students to the new MA. We continue to regard it as essential that we provide students with training in advanced methods of research in literature, and we have just produced a new and completely revised edition of the *Handbook to Literary Research*.[7] This includes a section with chapters on 'Bibliography', 'History of the Book', and 'Editing Literary Texts' – subjects new to students – and a section on 'Planning and Completing a Research Project', including advice on how to decide on a topic, work out a structure, prepare a research proposal, and then how to present a dissertation in a scholarly fashion. It also includes a section on 'Issues and Approaches in Literary Study', including chapters on 'Institutional Histories of Literary Disciplines', 'The Place of Theory in Literary Disciplines', 'Literary Research and Interdisciplinarity', 'Literary Research and Other Media', and 'Literary Research and Translation'. The overall emphasis of these chapters is on how an awareness of literary history, critical theory, interdisciplinarity, other media, and issues of translation can productively inform students' own research in literature. The approach is one that accords with the expansion of the discipline of English to encompass work in other disciplinary areas including Media Studies, Cultural Studies, Linguistics, Philosophy, Sociology and Politics, Music, and Fine Arts.

One of the most striking ways in which the second edition of the *Handbook to Literary Research* differs from the previous one is in registering the impact of digitization, hypertext, and the development of electronic resources for the study of literature. When we revised the MA in Literature in the 1990s we introduced whole new sections teaching students how to use electronic library catalogues and other bibliographical databases. We also introduced material

on the use of the internet for research purposes. There is now a wealth of additional electronic information available to those who know how to search it out, and the second edition of the *Handbook* includes a discussion of the general principles of carrying out literary research using largely electronic resources, and an introduction to some of the most important types of this material. This discussion is supplemented by an up-to-date 'Checklist of Print, Online and Other Research Resources'. The explosion of electronic resources in the last 10 or 15 years has in many ways revolutionized the study of literature, with students now having easy access to virtually everything published in English from 1450 to 1900, via Early English Books Online (EEBO) and Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO). This opens up enormous possibilities for students at MA level to carry out quite original research on little-known texts, authors, and themes. The OU Library has invested heavily in electronic resources of all kinds, to the point where we can now claim that OU MA students do have access to their own university library.[8]

The other way in which information and communication technologies (ICT) has changed the pedagogic landscape is in the potential it offers for easier and faster communication between tutors and students. Some of the other MA programmes in the OU Faculty of Arts have decided to rely entirely on computer conferencing facilities, and have abandoned any element of face-to-face contact as part of the teaching mix. Clearly electronic conferencing systems can offer convenient and effective ways of teaching and learning, particularly in situations where student numbers are low and therefore students are very widely dispersed geographically. In the case of the new MA in English, however, student numbers should be large enough to make some provision for face-to-face meetings possible, and colleagues who have devised the MA believe that there are a number of specific aspects of face-to-face teaching and learning in our subject that cannot be replicated electronically. It is worth saying a word in conclusion about why we continue to believe that it is important to include face-to-face contact in the mix of teaching methods at this level of study.

One simple reason is that we know from feedback that MA in Literature students regarded face-to-face contact as a very important part of their OU study. According to the 2001 survey, over 40 per cent of MA students attended 'most' of the face-to-face seminars provided, and a further 30 per cent attended them all. About 90 per cent of those who attended seminars rated them as 'fairly' or 'very' helpful, with the majority, over 60 per cent, rating them as 'very' helpful. These responses are not surprising. As teachers of literature, we know from our own experience how important it is to have opportunities to engage in debate and argument about the subject. It is true that online conferences can offer valuable opportunities for students to discuss and debate issues, and indeed it is likely that the asynchronous nature of the medium can enable students to produce more measured and thoughtful contributions. The 'anonymity' of the conference can also make it easier for some students to participate. But online communication is, essentially, a form of writing, and it is

important at MA level that students are given experience in presenting work orally as well as in written form, and in engaging in oral debate and discussion. The face-to-face teaching situation enables students to get to know each other, and to get to know the teacher, and to form relationships that can play a major part in sustaining their interest and motivation for study. By engaging in oral discussion, students can develop the confidence to take a more critical and questioning approach to the materials they are studying, and to formulate and defend their own opinions. This is important in all postgraduate-level work, but it is particularly important in open and distance learning, where the study materials, just because they are printed, acquire an authority that students are perhaps less ready to challenge than when the teacher is physically present to be questioned. All this may be summed up in the recognition that learning involves human relationships, and engages the emotions as well as cognitive processes, which means that face-to-face contact remains important even in – and perhaps especially in – open and distance teaching of literature.

Notes

[1] For a valuable comparative account of undergraduate teaching of literature in open and distance universities, see Natsina, 2007.

[2] In 2004 the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) introduced a framework of skills training requirements for PhD students. Departments with AHRC-funded doctoral students had to demonstrate that suitable training was provided, and the inclusion of a 'research methodology' component within taught MAs was seen as part of this provision.

[3] At that time called the Literature department. The name was changed to English in 2008.

[4] This module included an externally published course book: *Literature and Nation: Britain and India 1800–1990*, ed. Richard Allen and Harish Trivedi (London: Routledge, 2000).

[5] See Samantha Smith, *The Taught MA in English*, The Higher Education Academy English Subject Centre Report Number 15, October 2007, available from the English Subject Centre website: http://www.english.heacademy.ac.uk/explore/resources/postgraduate/report.php.

[6] For details of the MA in English, visit the website http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/ma.

[7] This is published as *The Handbook to Literary Research*, second edition, ed. Delia da Sousa Correa and W. R. Owens (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).

[8] For information about the Open University Library, visit the website at http://www.open.ac.uk/library.

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Chapter 4

Decolonizing the Distance Curriculum

Dennis Walder

In this chapter I want to address the question of how literary theory has impacted upon the distance curriculum, going on to suggest the kind of demand it can and should make upon all of us engaged in Distance Higher Education. I would like to do this by very briefly tracing how I initiated the inclusion of one specific and still live area of theory, namely Postcolonial Studies, within the curriculum of the Literature (now English) department at the UK Open University (OU). I call this still a live area of theory, because of the lack of new theoretical advances on the scale of what emerged during the 1980s and 1990s, a situation that has led some (such as Terry Eagleton, 2004) to claim that theory is dead – or if not dead, only half alive, a kind of zombie of the intellect, wandering unhappily down the corridors of English departments, vainly searching for new young blood upon which to feast.

But it is not yet time for the funeral rites of postcolonial theory to be celebrated: much is still being written and taught under that rubric, although even this has led theorists such as Graham Huggan (in *The Postcolonial Exotic*) to worry that its continuing institutional and consumer appeal is turning it into some kind of fetish (2001, pp. 20–8). It is easy to find examples of the commodification to which Huggan refers ('marketing the margins' he calls it), and not just within the groves of academe. For example, not long ago the *Guardian* newspaper *Travel Supplement* recommended readers to a hotel in London's Earl's Court where the 'post-colonial décor looks fantastic, with Indian wood carvings, a sculpted waterfall, stone bathrooms, wicker chairs and ceiling fans' (2006).

Thus the trappings of Indian colonial life are brought back into the present as an exotic comfort zone, appealing to imperial nostalgia, and adding to the confusion supposedly produced by the widespread popularization of the term postcolonial. But in my view postcolonial doesn't have to be any more confusing or difficult to define than, say, the word Romantic, although of course it is more recent. A glance at the OED reveals that the hyphenated term post-colonial first appeared in a British newspaper article of 1959 to describe the situation after the granting of formal independence to India, the jewel in the British imperial crown, in 1947, a year which marked the beginning of the formal dissolution of the European colonial empires worldwide. But, as

I point out in my book on *Post-colonial Literatures in English*, when you consider a country like South Africa, where the granting of formal independence by the British in 1910 left a situation so profoundly unjust for the majority of the population, to call the country post-colonial before the arrival of democracy would be a mockery (1998, pp. 153–4). Only during the 1980s did South Africans themselves begin using the term to describe their situation and their cultural practices, although many continued to resist its use (see Visser, 1997).

South Africa is just one extreme example of the extent to which colonial structures and attitudes may grip a country long after the disappearance of imperial control. And so, I would distinguish between post-colonial (as a hyphenated term) denoting the formal or political condition of independence, and the (unhyphenated) term postcolonial to refer to a condition in which the grip of colonialism remains strong, whatever the formal situation. Having made this distinction clear, it's necessary to make another: and that is, between the postcolonial as an historically defined *condition*, and contemporary post-colonial *discourse*. It is generally agreed that postcolonial discourse emerged with Edward Said's groundbreaking 1978 book *Orientalism*, in which he analysed those forms of Western scholarship and cultural representation which made colonial control possible if not also desirable. Said claimed that the metropolitan construction of the Other as exotically attractive but simultaneously lazy and duplicitous, provided a paradigm for both understanding and critiquing imperial hegemony; an analysis which soon led to a rereading of canonical English literary texts from Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in order to uncover their colonial connections and ideology. Said's work also led to a new exploration of cultural texts more generally, by later theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, seeking to discover how far the individual subject constructed by those texts might resist or undermine negative colonial assumptions.

During the 1980s and 1990s these developments raised postcolonial discourse to levels of subtlety and abstraction which earned for its champions labels such as elitist and obscurantist and, worst of all, despite their overt politics, Eurocentric. Yet a decade before all this happened, and even before Said's book appeared, I was myself working in an English department where students were, remarkably, invited to study the writings of authors from some former colonized territories simply as a final year Honours option on 'Caribbean and West African Literature'. This was in the University of Edinburgh, where the option was taught by two subsequently influential figures – Paul Edwards, a nineteenth-century specialist from Birmingham who had been an English lecturer at Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, and Kenneth Ramchand, a scholarship student from Trinidad whose Edinburgh PhD became the first book on West Indian fiction, which he produced while Edwards was editing the writings of a former West African slave from the eighteenth century, Olaudah Equiano. Edwards and Ramchand were thus bringing into the light hitherto unknown texts by black slaves and colonized subjects from Africa and the

Caribbean, helping in a small way to create what has since become a global cultural industry, promoting a greater awareness of the experiences and reflections of peoples formerly invisible to mainstream, Western literary curricula, such as that obtaining at Edinburgh at the time.

For Edwards and Ramchand the texts came first, although the texts inevitably pulled along in their wake the concerns which have since become codified as postcolonial: concerns to do with history, language, identity, voice, and migration. Many of the texts foregrounding these concerns are now very familiar, through the publicity generated by writers such as Nadine Gordimer and Salman Rushdie; as well as through all those readers of works like Chinua Achebe's classic novel *Things Fall Apart* (2001), which has sold many millions of copies worldwide, and been translated into over 45 languages. It is almost irrelevant that theorists such as Terry Eagleton – who has long challenged the orthodoxy of literary studies – still barely mention, much less try and analyse, a single text from Africa, Asia or the Caribbean; although of course in Eagleton's case, being of Irish origin, writings from *that* former colony do feature in his work, if not as postcolonial, a term he ignores or dismisses (1996, pp. 205–6).

It is surprising that Eagleton should so neglect postcolonial theory, given its generally progressive politics. But if the field has lost some of its original impetus through the recent silence of Said, Bhabha, and Spivak, in fact more damaging in some respects have been the attacks by neo-Marxist critics such as Benita Parry and Neil Lazarus on postcolonial theorizing for its alleged reinscription of the capitalist West as the sovereign subject of the contemporary world. Whether or not you are a Marxist, however, there is to my mind no doubt that the postcolonial approach is more than simply another way of reading and interpretation. Why? Because it continues to offer a real opportunity for readers and critics to apprehend and even to bear witness to the gross inequalities of the world we live in, inequalities to a greater or lesser extent determined by the historic inequities of colonialism and its more recent counterpart, economic neo-colonialism.

It is as a way of bearing witness that I myself have come to be most engaged by the literatures that fall within the category of postcolonial, since it seems to me that if you think literature is worth studying, rather than simply enjoying – although I don't underestimate enjoyment – then you need to ask yourself what relevance it has in the contemporary world; in other words, how do you justify spending time on literature when there is so much else of more importance requiring your attention? Well, as the South African Arthur Nortje said, in a poem written in exile at the time of the height of apartheid, 'some of us must storm the castles / some define the happening' ('Native's letter', 1999, p. 30).

Defining the happening was not what I thought literature was doing when I first engaged in serious and extended literary study, as a Research Fellow at the University of Edinburgh in the 1970s. Trained in a predominantly traditional critical and scholarly environment, such as Edinburgh University, where I did my PhD on no less a traditional literary figure than Dickens, I was myself

resolutely untheorized, a former colonial trying to engage with English literary culture through a writer who, however, *was* at least driven by a radical urge to challenge the status quo. While working on Dickens, I was also reading the writings of former colonials, writings which were then rapidly increasing in volume, although I always had some difficulty with the fact that if their work spoke about places I still wanted to hear from and know about, so much of it was, as fellow exile Lewis Nkosi demonstrated (in *Home and Exile*, 1965), a literature of protest and commitment, in which neither was done well.

But then one day, a play by a South African hit me like a blow to the head (as Kafka once said a literary work should) when I saw it in an out-of-the-way venue in London, and I realized that here was a writer from my own background whose work I could and indeed should espouse. With this realization came a new sense of the power of literature, and especially drama, as a medium with the potential to bear witness. I had seen a play by Athol Fugard called *Boesman and Lena* (1971) about a pair of mixed-race derelicts struggling to survive as they are continually moved on by the authorities (just as Dickens's crossing-sweeper Jo is moved on in *Bleak House*); and it showed me that it *was* possible to marry art of a high order with serious politics in the contemporary context. The idea of bearing witness, derived by Fugard from the Algerian writer-activist Albert Camus, struck me as a fitting concept to address many current concerns, especially the problem later highlighted by Gayatri Spivak's 1988 essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' – the problem of who speaks, and on whose behalf, in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

One answer to this problem was provided by a play that followed *Boesman and Lena*, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1973), devised by Fugard in workshops with black performers John Kani and Winston Ntshona whose own words and memories bore witness to the injustices they had experienced. This inspired me to write a book on Fugard (1984) and to edit his work, and further to promote his work by arguing for his inclusion in the syllabus of what had become my academic home, the OU.

Despite the OU's radical agenda, aimed at providing the best university education for anyone who can handle it, whatever their qualifications or age or background – despite this, the OU literature syllabus was in many respects distinctly familiar, if not downright conservative, at the time, the mid-1970s, when the 'new' universities, such as Sussex, had already introduced new disciplinary formations. The two major differences from a traditional English syllabus such as that at Edinburgh – or London or Oxford – were, first, that like Sussex we had interdisciplinary courses; and secondly, that we studied literature in translation as part of the normal fare. But I found a crucial ally in Arnold Kettle, the founding professor of the department, who had arrived after a year teaching at the University of Nairobi and a long spell at Leeds (where Commonwealth Literature had become part of the curriculum), and whose vision helped me to get Fugard onto our syllabus in 1977, before anywhere else. Although, ironically, it was not as a postcolonial text that *Sizwe Bansi* won a place

on our 'Modern European Drama' course, but rather as an example of contemporary political theatre, alongside plays by Bertolt Brecht and Edward Bond.

The student and staff response to Fugard, and especially to the TV version of *Sizwe Bansi* that we broadcast every year for the ten-year life of the course, was such that it became easier to persuade colleagues to accept more writings from abroad in later courses, in particular the 1990 'Literature in the Modern World' course. It is enlightening to look back upon that course's growth now, given that the team chair Graham Martin originally intended it should be centrally about Englishness – a theme which ended up as only one of seven major strands running through it. As most people are aware, OU courses are constructed by teams of academics, editors, TV producers and external assessors, with everyone submitting their ideas and work to the team in a process of often harrowing self-criticism, which has resulted in materials of world quality and cutting-edge relevance. And it was on this issue of relevance that I proposed the inclusion of two whole blocks of teaching material, or eight weeks of part-time work amounting to a quarter of the course, on texts under the headings of 'The End of Empire' and 'New Writings in English'. Two colleagues with interests in empire, Richard Allen and Angus Calder, were easily persuaded to support and contribute to 'The End of Empire' block, which included a study of E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* as well as poetry and drama by writers like Tony Harrison and John Arden, reflecting Britain's changing position in the world.

So far, so canonical. But I also initiated a 'New Writings' block, for which I persuaded colleagues such as the Victorian specialist Dinah Birch, to join Angus Calder and myself in challenging the canon by writing teaching material that introduced a group of texts by authors then hardly known outside specialist circles, and certainly not by the vast majority of our students or colleagues. These authors ranged from Achebe and Soyinka to V. S. Naipaul, Derek Walcott, R. K. Narayan and Grace Nichols, representing respectively West Africa, the Caribbean, India and the migrant presence in Britain. Further postcolonial writings were included elsewhere on the course, such as J. G. Ballard's *Empire of the Sun*, but under different thematic headings, so as to discourage the idea that they were only worth discussing in terms of New Writing. Yet these New Writings all nonetheless represented a provocation to prevailing views of what counted in English studies; and their presence reinforced our aim of shifting what was called the study of English literature towards the study of literatures in English, including translated literatures, from around the world.

I should say that although 'New Writings' was a useful label that had already displaced the more patronizing 'Commonwealth Literatures' label, it was itself already being displaced by the more theoretically powerful term postcolonial, a term I went on to use for a half-course on 'Postcolonial Literatures' I introduced two years later and which, as a project course, enabled students to do independent work on texts of their own choice – resulting in publishable work

and over 20 per cent first-class passes in the first few years. The popularity of this course was enhanced by supplementing the more theoretical printed materials with cassette recordings of live performances by a South African dramatist (Gcina Mhlophe) and Caribbean poets such as James Berry. And before long, the OU's Singapore cohort of students were arguing that by definition our 'metropolitan' view of what they should study was contradicted by the course's own assumption of the importance of literary texts from former colonial territories such as theirs – with the result that, in collaboration with local academics Ban Kah Choon and Rajeev Patke, we developed a Singapore version consisting mainly of Singapore-Malaysian texts, still being taught there when our own UK-based offering came to an end on cost grounds 16 years after the initial post-colonial course had begun, despite having been substantially revised to reflect recent advances in postcolonial theory towards, for example, diaspora issues.

But if such as 'specialist' course may now be a luxury in our terms (course numbers reached only 150 p.a. at most), there is a strong argument for keeping postcolonial texts and issues within the mainstream literature curriculum anyway, as in the 'Literature in the Modern World' course. And in fact I avoided the term postcolonial as I avoided its theory for 'Literature in the Modern World', under pressure from colleagues who felt that would make the course too demanding. The team argued that by introducing our students to structuralism, ideology and feminism we were already asking them to do enough theory, and indeed we encountered strong opposition from a vocal minority of our part-time tutors as well as quite a few students in the first couple of years of the course, against what they perceived as the difficulty as well as the politics of theory. This opposition, although from a handful of the 700–1,000 students a year, and only some dozen of the 50 part-time tutors around the country, brought a diminution of 'theory', since we, as an OU course team, were obliged to respond to feedback, which normally includes regular surveys conducted by teams of education specialists within the university.

It was easier to give way on this point about 'theory' because I was also editing the course reader, entitled *Literature in the Modern World*, which included much more material than any single student or group could handle over the year, and some of which was designed to appeal only to the more confident and able minority. The result, published by Oxford University Press, struck a fair balance between accessibility and difficulty, making it attractive to other universities as well, until in 2001, after sales worldwide of over 45,000, I revised it for a second edition (2003), aimed entirely at a non-OU market, since by then the course itself was ending its prescribed ten-year life, having had an impact not only on thousands of our own students, but many others as well.

'Distance' for this course implied reaching well beyond our own widely spread and signed-up students, wherever they were – which by then meant well beyond Europe, for example, Singapore, where the OU model was taken up enthusiastically and where I was engaged to mediate and revise our materials

for local face-to-face teaching – most radically in the development mentioned above, of a fully Singapore version of the postcolonial project course.

The 'Literature in the Modern World' course was four years in the making, came out in 1990, and served some 10,000 students before we replaced it with another Twentieth-Century Literature course in 2005, chaired by Suman Gupta. This 2005 course continues to highlight current theoretical debates, while incorporating texts dealing with the postcolonial condition, such as Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise,* in a way that no longer requires the special pleading I provided over 15 years before: partly because of a shift towards appointing postcolonial specialists (such as Susheila Nasta) within the department under my headship, but also because of the widespread acceptance of postcolonial theory within literary and cultural studies, itself a reflection of the changing world.

I now see the Modern World course as a successful response to a change in global politics at the time that involved not just Britain's imperial role, but also the collapse of the Soviet empire. Indeed, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 took place just as we were putting the finishing touches to the course, and writing the last four-week block, called, appropriately enough, 'Literature and History'. As a colleague on an interfaculty course being produced at the same time, on 'Third World Studies', remarked, 'World politics appears to be in transition, rapidly being divested of old enemies, alignments and modes of thinking but confronting an uncertain and unpredictable future' (McGrew, 1991, p. 2). To create a literature course that bore witness to all this was to acknowledge the contemporary sense of – not the end of history, as Francis Fukuyama put it, but the end of one global order and the beginning of another.

Probably the New Writings text that best caught this sense of large-scale changes was Naipaul's *In a Free State*, a collection of stories centring on an unnamed post-independence African state, but ranging in locale from Piraeus to Luxor, from Washington to London. Insofar as the central story consciously harked back to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, this was a classic example of postcolonial 'writing back', as it has been called (Ashcroft et al., 2002) and indeed Conrad haunts Naipaul's writings. The novel took as its starting point the end of empire, and then raised the question of what kinds of freedom the departure of the colonizer left, in the First World as well as the so-called Third, the past as well as the present. I found writing about this text a challenge: not only because of the largeness of its themes, but also because, like the course team as a whole, I remained committed to simultaneously teaching students how to analyse the effects of particular scenes, passages, and even specific words, the key one being the multivalent word 'free'.

This commitment to creating skilled close reading, or practical criticism as it used to be called, was a feature of the assignments we set, and the teaching we expected of our part-time tutors. Yet, as John Barrell points out in one of the extracts included in my course reader (2003, pp. 146–52), the notion of competence underlying close reading implies an idea of language as simply expressive or referential, while at the same time somehow beyond history and politics. But

that is to refuse the different situations and experiences of different readers, especially, as Barrell argues, of those whose class and gender (and I would add, ethnic identity) defines them as different. In other words, whatever the benefits of a traditional, formalist approach to teaching literature, it should be continuously informed by an awareness of context – historical and ideological – if it is not to become an implicit, ritual confirmation of the status quo.

Adopting a postcolonial theoretical or critical position is a powerful aid in this direction, because it inevitably highlights the issues raised on the course by texts suggestive of experiences outside the awareness of the majority of students within specific European cultures. This is sometimes used as an argument in favour of increasing the diversity of students potentially taking a course. But that is too simple. Several students from ex-colonial or migrant backgrounds who identified closely with the texts and issues raised, also sometimes said they wanted us not to forget their desire to be taught the familiar classics of the old traditions too, traditions from which they felt they had been excluded.

So it is vitally important to remain aware of the institutional power of the teacher (or teacher-text, in the distance situation) and to encourage continuous feedback. For some students, reforming the curriculum may not be as empowering as it seems at first to their teachers. All of us are responsible for canonization, not some transcendent, unreachable authority. It is therefore up to all of us to ensure that what we teach engages with our students' as well as our own sense of what matters to us today, which may not always be what is simply challenging because it is unknown or neglected. Some things deserve their obscurity, and if we need to be aware of our own preconceptions in this respect, we also need to maintain our sense of the need to exercise responsible judgement. Only in that way might we truly radicalize the curriculum.

In conclusion: if, as some would argue, the global market for the subject of literary studies is shrinking, one reason will be because it is not sufficiently grounded in real life situations, such as those that beset us in a new Europe of changing boundaries and mass migration. As teachers, we have a responsibility towards the community in which we find ourselves, *near or at a distance*, a responsibility to be aware of the pressing issues and concerns of the time, while maintaining that element of detachment that allows us to think of ourselves as scholars, or even academics. The value of postcolonial theory and criticism lies in its attention to forms of cultural representation, especially literary representation, in a way that is alive to the claims of contemporary history and politics, thus enabling us to relate our own analyses of aesthetic practices to our being-in-the world as citizens as well as teachers.

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Chapter 5

The Need for a Community: A Case for World Literature in Open and Distance Learning

Takis Kayalis

An overview of literary studies programmes at open universities and distance education consortia operating across Europe (Natsina, 2007) reveals a striking diversity of pedagogical practices and curricular objectives. This is partly due to broader institutional contingencies, which determine such issues as the modes of production and delivery of educational material; the means, frequency, and purpose of students' contact with instructors; or the extent to which technology (and, in some cases, face-to-face teaching) is integrated in distance pedagogy. But diversity is also amply manifest at the level of specific disciplinary configurations, from the different types of 'pedagogical canons' (Gallagher, 2001, p. 54) reflected in syllabi and curricula to the distinct aims and methods that shape each programme's material. Some programmes offer broad surveys of the national literary tradition, while others focus on selected periods, genres or themes and sometimes add a few foreign works to their predominantly local syllabi. Educational material is in some cases based on the old-fashioned lecture model, but in others it reflects a serious effort to engage students in critical thinking and to empower them as active readers. Theory may be absent from literature syllabi and curricula, or presented as an autonomous subject or, in some cases, it may be incorporated in interpretative discussions of literary texts. Such differences between Open and Distance Learning (ODL) programmes grow sharper when we consider more subtle parameters, such as the use of contextual materials, the degree of interdisciplinary integration or the connection of literary training to the broader frame of cultural studies.

Ironically, this rich diversity is produced by the most conspicuously uniform feature of ODL literature programmes: their heavy concentration on their respective national canons. National canons, we must recall, are not manifest only in the form of syllabi or authoritative anthologies, but also as framing pedagogies and established teaching protocols: 'the reproduction of a canon occurs not only through our repeated assignment of particular texts but through the methods we employ to teach them' (Meyer, 2003, p. 22). In this respect, each ODL Literature Programme would appear to mirror some version of the traditional organization of face-to-face literary study available in its local (national) context. Their diversity reflects the variety of canonical field definitions

and overarching pedagogic frames which determine the construction of literary study at different national and cultural settings.

That an Open University's literature programme should model its aims and its procedures on canonical configurations embedded in its local academic culture comes as no surprise; as has been noted, 'the study of literature almost everywhere in the world is organized along national lines' (Casanova, 2004, p. xi), while 'the critique of nationalism has turned out to coexist quite comfortably with a continuing nationalism in academic practice' (Damrosch, 2003, p. 285).[1] But this modelling also appears to circumscribe the potential of ODL literary teaching, by obscuring what literature scholars have in common with their colleagues who practice distance education in other countries, even though they may be engaged with different national canons and writing in other languages. As I will argue here, what we do have in common, although this has seldom been acknowledged, is a commitment in making literary teaching in distance education competent and meaningful, through constant experimentation and improvisation with all aspects of literature pedagogy, including the use of digital tools. The archive of insights, creative possibilities and innovative techniques resulting from our collective response to this challenge is what we need to share with colleagues at other Open Universities around the world. And in order for this to happen, we need to locate a space that will allow us to engage in meaningful, productive, and collaborative exchange.

Academic Practice in an As Yet Unrecognized Field

Literary studies in ODL have never claimed recognition as a distinct field or a community of scholars, which might establish its own channels for reflective exchange or stimulate transnational cooperation. Consequently, literature scholars at Open Universities around the world are accustomed to developing their educational material and pedagogic methodologies on their own resources, with little awareness of the similar work produced by their colleagues abroad. In fact, research conducted in this as yet unrecognized field is usually perceived as a peculiarly 'internal' institutional affair; such research is actually unpublished methodological work, focused exclusively on the development of each particular programme's material, which in itself is usually not publicly available and is thereby inaccessible for critique and review by colleagues from other institutions. But research that is developed intermittently, through isolated efforts and in insulated clusters of unpublished findings, is not only deprived of the benefits of knowledge from previous experience and of any prospect for wider application, but also bound to yield uneven educational outcomes. The question of how a student of literature may attain sophisticated conceptual skills, such as an ability for active reading, interpretative competence and a measure of sensitivity to theoretical reflection, by means other than traditional

face-to-face training, cannot be tackled on the sole basis of intuition by an individual scholar, or small group of scholars, practising at an Open University somewhere in the world.

Engulfment in national canons and their concomitant teaching paradigms is not the only reason for our failure to see that the questions we are commonly but separately trying to address constitute a cardinal space for academic exchange and pedagogical collaboration. An equally important cause for this is the traditional antipathy of the general literary studies community to 'the very idea of pedagogy' (Guillory, 2002, p. 169). Nourished on the old humanist assumption that '*literature teaches itself*' (Graff, 2007, pp. 9–10) and accustomed to the reduction of pedagogical methodology to 'what worked for me in my class' (Guillory, 2002, p. 165), the broader community has often stigmatized scholarship focused on teaching as an inferior intellectual engagement and sometimes even as a betrayal of the academic discipline. This age-old attitude underrates the pedagogical challenges faced by literature scholars at Open Universities as mere trivialities, prompting them to downplay their own involvement with questions of teaching methodology and emphasize their profile as 'pure' academic researchers. For all its absurdity, the anticipation of some colleagues that web interfaces and various types of digital gadgetry may in themselves substitute for systematic pedagogical work in ODL demonstrates quite clearly the widespread desire for such a dissociation from pedagogy.

Facing such pressures, and at the same time the marginalization of literary studies at conventional as well as Open Universities, a literature scholar may well be tempted to conceive of ODL pedagogy as a rough approximation of what he/she would do teaching a class, only written on paper or in hypertext. If this mode of intuitional transference from face-to-face to ODL actually worked, we might not need a networked community of ODL scholars, the exchange of insights, the development of collaborative experiments or a definition of good practices in literary distance education. But this is certainly not the case.

Let us consider for a moment just what our intuitive faculties would need to accomplish for ODL material to approximate good face-to-face literature teaching. For the purpose of this argument we may assume that what we teach aims to help students learn 'how to read literature critically and culturally', that is, that we want them 'to learn to ask good questions about texts, make inferences and connections, develop interpretations, use research and critical thinking effectively to develop their own answers, and write essays that engage with the critical conversation of the field' (Linkon, 2005, pp. 271, 247). We would also probably agree that in face-to-face teaching 'most of the time, we teach these skills and ways of thinking through demonstration. Through a combination of presentation and dialogue with our students, we model the process of critical cultural reading, weaving together inquiry, evidence, and theory' (Linkon, 2005, p. 247). Such teaching practice is actually modelled on 'cognitive apprenticeship' (Collins et al., 1991): a scheme 'in which the expert

shows the student how to do something, then guides the student through the process, providing decreasing levels of assistance and coaching as the apprentice gains facility' (Linkon, 2005, p. 257). Moreover, the reciprocity that is essential to this type of teaching is not likely to take place in lectures to large student audiences, but in a variety of other situations, which range from the 'main teaching methods' of 'the seminar, tutorial and workshop' (Chambers and Marshall, 2006, p. 3) to small peer groups, discussion groups and even individual coaching.

To say that anyone might find ways to approximate such complicated practice efficiently, in written or digital ODL material, by virtue of their personal experience and intuition seems an unpromising prospect. But even if this could somehow be achieved, the result of such an approximation would still lack a lot of the breadth and richness of the original. Students at conventional universities will always be exposed to an abundance of stimuli, from the many more electives to which they have access, including some in foreign and even minor literatures; from occasional lectures and seminars by visiting and foreign scholars; from the international exchange of students and instructors and the availability of transnational cooperative degree programmes; and even from those minute excitements, frustrations and off-topic diversions that frequently register at seminars and tutorials, all of which contribute to a richness too elusive to be captured in educational material for ODL courses. No matter how good this material is, it will always carry with it a sense of stricture, a sense of exclusion from that surplus of less canonical and foreign works and of unfamiliar modes of thinking which has so much value in the educational process, especially in the context of literary and cultural studies.

The configuration of ODL literary studies as an intuitive approximation of what goes on in face-to-face teaching seems to assign to ODL scholars an impossible task and at the same time to curtail the exposure of ODL students to a wider framework of texts, interpretative modalities and cultural glosses. Undertaking this task and compared to the chaotic richness of face-to-face practice, ODL is bound to assume a subordinate role as an inherently inferior (or, in a sense, aberrant) mode of teaching. This role would seem to confirm the old platitude that what ODL students really need, or at least what they should be content with, is a no-frills literary education, an acceptable but summary version of what a proper literature student might get at a non-ODL institution. But even at its best moments, ODL as 'written equivalent' of face-to-face teaching will always strive to capture a flow of spontaneous remarks and creative responses that are happening elsewhere and which somehow feel dated and even quaint as soon as they are set in the fixity of written material.

To overcome these constraints we need to look for alternative models, that is, for ways that will allow us to reconceptualize ODL literary studies at some degree of independence from face-to-face teaching, to build on its specific advantages and maybe even turn into an asset what is commonly perceived as its limitation. To be able to collaborate with colleagues from different linguistic

and cultural backgrounds who specialize in different national literatures we obviously need to move beyond 'the traditional organization of literary study according to the presumed separateness and monolithic unity of nation-states and their literatures' (Miller, 2001, p. 65) and 'to rediscover a lost transnational dimension of literature' (Casanova, 2004, p. xi). As I will argue below, recent conceptualizations of world literature offer precisely such an alternative model for literary education as an open-ended, reflective, collaborative, and experimental practice.

World Literature as Space for Collaborative Experimentation

As Fredric Jameson noted in 1987, world literature 'never found concrete fulfillment, either in intellectual life or in the development of the educational system' (Jameson, 1987, p. 17). The main reason for this is the direct challenge world literature poses to canonical configurations of literary study, a tension that has manifest itself in several ways. One such manifestation is the taming of world literature effected by its presentation as synonymous to the Western canon, with the optional addition of a short selection of 'exotic' masterpieces in the 'logic of imperialist "expansion"' (Hassan, 2000, p. 42). Magill's *Masterpieces of World Literature in Digest Form*, also known as *Masterplots*, published in four volumes between 1949 and 1969, included summaries and brief analyses of over 2,000 works by a total of 1,008 authors, of whom only 23 are non-Western (Damrosch, 2003, p. 124). In a similar fashion, *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces*, 'the single most authoritative and widely used textbook in world literature courses in the United States' (Hassan, 2000, p. 38), was until recently strictly limited to authors from Western Europe and the United States (Damrosch, 2003, pp. 127–9). Although the representation of world literature in textbooks and anthologies has significantly improved in the last 15 years or so, its perception as an exotically scented version of the Western canon is still very much with us. For example, the 73 volumes published in the American Modern Language Association's 'Approaches to Teaching World Literature' Series until 2002 feature 33 volumes on British authors, 16 on American and 19 on authors from other European countries, thus allocating just 5 volumes to writers outside Europe and the United States (Meyer, 2003, p. 23). Obviously affiliated with a certain conception of global relations, this exclusion of most of the world from 'world literature' has sometimes been justified with astonishingly vindictive dismissals of writing from non-Western cultures; in 1966, for example, an eminent German comparatist would argue that

> world literature is not some UN General Assembly where, absurdly, the vote of a previous colony that has only recently been given its independence and is in lack of any intellectual or economic resources is taken as equal to that of

> a superpower or of a people whose cultural heritage extends to thousands of years. (Rüdiger, 1990, p. 276, my translation)

If this rather inhospitable perception of world literature is in the decline, its replacement has already emerged triumphantly in the commodified shape of international best-sellers, a '"global literature" that might be read solely in airline terminals, unaffected by any specific context whatever' (Damrosch, 2003, p. 25). Both constructions are homogenizing, heavily predicated on Western values, and equally trivializing in their effect on teaching. The old version of world literature as a supply of 'snippets from famous authors and great books' of the Western Tradition promoted a casual style of Great Books pedagogy which, as Wellek and Warren once wrote, encouraged 'an indiscriminate smattering, a vague, sentimental cosmopolitanism' (1962, p. 41). The new travesty that has come about with the advent of corporate globalization trivializes teaching as 'a consumerist tour through other cultures, histories, and languages' (Agathocleous and Gosselink, 2006, p. 471) or 'a leisurely stroll in a global literary mall that is structured at once to satisfy and to reinforce Western modes of consumption and interpretation: Western periodization, Western thematic, and Western postmodern sensibilities' (Hassan, 2000, p. 42).

On the other hand, when perceived through a more inclusive lens and with less domesticating fervour, world literature often assumes the inhibiting image of a vast archive of unmanageable and unappraisable material that could not possibly sustain serious scholarly treatment and whose 'sheer scope [. . .] can breed a kind of scholarly panic' (Damrosch, 2003, p. 5). The prospect of engaging in such a 'vast and daunting undertaking' (Agathocleous and Gosselink, 2006, p. 459) is often met with painful expressions of disciplinary embarrassment, such as 'how are we, and our students, to study such an unwieldy entity as "world literature"?'; 'What will our canon look like and how can we be responsible to it?'; 'how do we read with only partial knowledge of the history, culture, language, and literary tradition that have shaped a given text?'; 'How do we become responsible readers of these texts?' (Agathocleous and Gosselink, 2006, pp. 457, 463, 471). And this professional embarrassment has led eminent critics to question whether world literature could ever be competently taught:

> It is unlikely that anyone will ever be competent in 'world literature,' that is, know enough languages, literatures, and cultures to be competent in all the literatures of the world, even just the major ones. The most likely form such courses will take, even if they are taught by people who have the best will in the world, is an invidious selection of old or new chestnuts, taught in English translation by people who do not know all the original languages. (Miller, 2001, p. 64)

This awkwardness is clearly related to the challenge world literature poses to four pillars of the canonical configuration of literature as an academic subject.

It goes contrary to (a) the representation of literature as a set of major authors and important works,[2] (b) the assumption that critical reading depends on expertise in all aspects of the canon to which the text at hand belongs, (c) the essentialist bias that prioritizes original texts in their linguistic particularity and looks down on translations as 'echoes of a masterpiece [. . .] frequently by second-rate authors' (Wellek and Warren, 1962, p. 48), and (d) the assumption that any approach which does not abide by these criteria is amateurish, therefore improper for competent academic teaching. As Franco Moretti observed, this entails that world literature cannot be studied on the grounds of existing canonical categories, but requires a shift in the form of a new methodology: 'the literature around us is now unmistakably a planetary system. The question is not really *what* we should do – the question is *how*. What does it mean, studying world literature? How do we do it?' (Moretti, 2004, p. 148). This shift of canonical categories has been elaborated as a new configuration of world literature, which I want to recommend here as prime space for collaborative practice and experimentation in the context of ODL literary studies.

Since Fredric Jameson's much debated essay 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', with its call for 'the reinvention, in a new situation, of what Goethe long ago theorized as "world literature"' (Jameson, 1986, p. 68), criticism has recognized that 'world literature cannot be literature, bigger; what we are already doing, just more of it. It has to be different. [. . .]. [It] is not an object, it's a *problem*, and a problem that asks for a new critical method' (Moretti, 2004, p. 149). Drawing from Goethe's original inspiration of world literature as 'less a set of works than a network' (Damrosch, 2003, p. 4), and arguing for 'a comparatism in which we are ourselves "compared" and relativised along with everyone else', Jameson set out a new conceptualization of world literature as

> *an internationalism of national situations* – a cultural internationalism which, owing to its keener sense of its own internal national situation, is first and foremost attentive to the structural and historical *difference* of the national situation of other countries, and reads their culture off that, just as its therapeutic distance from its own culture is acquired by its recognition of its own structural limits and peculiarities. This programme also includes a healthy curiosity about the projects and priorities of intellectuals in other countries (along with a healthy relativism with respect to our own), which is a form of recognition and respect. (Jameson, 1987, p. 25)

Further developments in this line of thinking clarify that 'world literature is not an infinite, ungraspable canon of works but rather a mode of circulation and of reading, a mode that is as applicable to individual works as to bodies of material, available for reading established classics and new discoveries alike' (Damrosch, 2003, p. 5). It is, furthermore, 'reading without an attempt to exert

mastery' (Agathocleous and Gosselink, 2006, p. 464), 'a mode of reading that can be experienced *intensively* with a few works just as effectively as it can be explored *extensively* with a large number' (Damrosch, 2003, p. 299). World literature thus emerges as a way of thinking about literature and a mode of reading literature; not an attempt to represent or organize global literary production, but rather a determination to *read globally*; not a set of 'universal' texts existing in some sort of celestial harmony, but an attempt to think about culture 'both nationally and transnationally, locally and globally, through the particular and towards the universal in its reconceptualized form as network, intersection, routes' (Cooppan, 2004, p. 20). In its commitment to relativize and in its emphasis on process and transport, world literature recaptures the utopian force of Goethe's original vision, which, as Erich Auerbach wrote, 'considers humanity to be the product of fruitful intercourse between its members' (quoted in Madsen, 2004, p. 54). By the same virtues, it inevitably confronts fixed canonical constructions and thus it is bound to act as 'a thorn in the side, a permanent intellectual challenge to national literatures – especially the local literature' (Moretti, 2004, p. 162) and the latter's set rules for literary instruction.

Along with a new ethos for dealing with the cultural production of selves and others, this new perception of world literature issues a call for a new pedagogy which, in affirming world literature as '*different in kind* from work within a national tradition' (Damrosch, 2003, p. 286), would challenge canonical authority as precondition for competent literary study. In line with its content, this pedagogy should be 'impure and multivocal' (Agathocleous and Gosselink, 2006, p. 472), willing to 'encounter the work not at the heart of its source culture but in the field of force generated among works that may come from very different cultures and eras' (Damrosch, 2003, p. 300). In other words, world literature pedagogy would demonstrate in exemplary manner 'that no text is an island, that every work of literature is a rejoinder in a conversation or dialogue', a lesson that, as Gerald Graff noted in 1987, 'literary studies have not yet found a way to institutionalize' (2007, p. 10).

Such an 'impure' pedagogy for world literature may be established on three principles, which actually constitute a major revision of the canonical framework of literary teaching:

- A new perception of translations, as cultural products whose discrepancies from the original text are not to be seen as shortcomings but as alternative readings, inscribed in the text and signifying the trail of its reception from different cultural and historical viewpoints, much in the way that critical commentaries and textual editions do. This premise would allow translation to 'become part of the object of study itself' (Agathocleous and Gosselink, 2006, p. 458) and also ground the study of literature to the hard truth that, as in all aspects of our work, in using translations 'we necessarily work in collaboration with others who have shaped what we read and how we read it' (Damrosch, 2003, p. 295).

- A new approach to reading as a distant, migrational, and reciprocal practice. As Moretti has argued, close reading 'necessarily depends on a very small canon' (2004, p. 151), which makes it impractical for world literature. Hybridity and reciprocity have been offered as more apt paradigms. In the words of Stephen Heath, 'the very idea of the study *now* of *world literature* is involved in the hybrid: reading [. . .] migrationally and impurely, writings intermingled with one another, against the grain of ready – legitimate – identities' (2004, p. 174). Intermingling obviously entails reciprocal exchange between texts, and thus world literature emerges as 'a mode of reading that regularly places its readers in the unnerving moment in which a strange text is made at least partially familiar and the familiar canonical is made at least partially strange, by virtue of their mutual contact' (Cooppan, 2004, p. 29). In fact, the new mode of reading that enters academic formal practice with world literature seems to reclaim the age-old and silent practice of reading outside the canon (and the academia); as we all know from experience, literary works read for pleasure by individual readers 'meet and interact in ways that may have little to do with cultural and historical proximity' and which 'may diverge dramatically from the social goals that usually underlie the defining and formal transmission of a literary heritage' (Damrosch, 2003, p. 298).
- Finally, a pedagogy for world literature depends strongly on the evolution of a culture of collaboration to supplement (and also to appease) canonical insistence on specialization and personal expertise. Team-teaching of world literature courses, which is becoming common in academic practice (Damrosch, 2003, p. 286), is often recommended as minimal guarantee of scholarly competence; as J. Hillis Miller suggests, 'if there are to be courses in world literature they should be team-taught, even if entirely in translation, by those who, in each case, are expert in the language, literature, and culture of the original text' (2001, p. 65). But aside from combating 'the specter of amateurism' (Damrosch, 2003, p. 284), team-teaching and other forms of academic collaboration springing from world literature modify the common framework of literary instruction in a number of significant ways: by encouraging reciprocity, exchange and experimentation among instructors, by situating students as participants in a shared experience rather than receptors of expert knowledge, by turning teaching into a wide-ranging 'conversation with other readers, texts, and contexts' and also by effecting a broader 'disciplinary and psychological boundary crossing' and establishing 'a classroom open to other presences, as well as a willingness to cede authority and to forfeit authoritative readings' (Agathocleous and Gosselink, 2006, pp. 464, 472).[3]

Addressed as a collaborative project, based on a new appraisal of translation and at the same time legitimating hybridity and migratory readings, world literature presents a valuable space that can support the fostering of a community

of scholars in ODL literary studies with a commitment to reflect, share, and experiment. At a practical level, world literature solves the puzzle of how scholars who work in different countries, speak and write in different languages, are experts on different literary canons, and are also formed by different cultural and instructional traditions can engage in productive collaboration. In fact, such collaboration can be achieved more easily and efficiently in ODL than at conventional universities, since team-writing can bring together more scholars and from more diverse backgrounds than team-teaching, which is often circumscribed by the material presence of few foreign-literature experts at the same institution. On the other hand, and perceived as a mode of reading, with works from different national/cultural origins interacting and resonating together at some distance from strict canonical imperatives, world literature would probably also be more appealing to ODL students of literature, who tend to be adult learners with some personal experience in reading.

Experimental collaborative work in ODL can obviously take many shapes and forms which need not be prefigured in detail here. A simple project that may serve as an example would be the collective production of experimental material for ODL literary studies, which could subsequently be translated and used at several distance universities, exposing students not only to texts and modes of writing outside their own tradition, but also to foreign perspectives and alien modes of thinking about literature. If we envision this project as commentary by many different literature experts focused on a common anthology of literary texts (themselves translated in a number of languages), it seems important that this material is not organized on the basis of national canonizations, that is, with each participant commenting on texts from his/her own tradition. Rather, it should be structured in a truly polyvocal fashion, with each text gathering several responses from different national/cultural viewpoints, which would in themselves exhibit various degrees of expertise, a wealth of identities and associations, a large spectrum of interchanging degrees of familiarity and strangeness and also a multitude of reflective approaches to teaching at a distance. Apart from their great value as a resource for ODL students, such collaborative experiments would create, in a very concrete way, a community and a common field of practice – what literary studies in distance education are presently lacking.

If 'world literature is the newness *its study makes*' (Heath, 2004, p. 174), this newness can be precious for practitioners in distance education. In fact, this challenge is what we need to take up, as ODL literature scholars, in order to affirm our work's intellectual potency, to establish grounds for transnational collaboration and collective experimentation among us and, also, to assure our students that what they are learning as literature with us is not a condensed and sterilized version of the actual thing, which is taught properly elsewhere. A creative engagement with world literature may contribute significantly towards the empowerment of ODL literary studies by inspiring us: to craft a community out of our solitary practices and to start working together; to turn

ODL literature into a workshop for research on methods and techniques, canonical practices and curriculum design, the use of digital technologies and good practices in textbook writing; to collaborate in order to produce experimental material which can be shared by students at several ODL programmes, operating in different countries; and also, to share our reflections on every aspect of literary education and to attempt to produce, out of our specific experience of teaching literature in ODL, original insights which eventually may come to influence the way in which literature is taught at other educational settings as well.

Notes

[1] As Emily Apter comments, 'National character ghosts theories and approaches even in an era of cultural anti-essentialism. English departments are identified with a heritage of pragmatism, from practical criticism to the new historicism. Reception and discourse theory are naturalized within German studies. French is associated with deconstruction even after deconstruction's migration elsewhere. Slavic languages retain morphology and dialogism as their theoretical calling cards. "Third World allegory" lingers as an *appellation contrôlée* in classifying third world literatures, and so on' (2004, p. 77).

[2] In the words of David Damrosch, 'When we are presenting a single national tradition, there is still a logic to giving some sense of most of the currently acknowledged major authors, particularly as time and space generally allow the inclusion of a range of less-known figures as well. The task becomes impossible with any truly global vision of world literature, and other approaches are plainly needed' (2003, p. 299).

[3] See Vilashini Cooppan (2004) for a detailed account of team-teaching world literature courses at Yale University.

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Part Two

Pedagogical Challenges in Online and Blended Learning

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Chapter 6

Delivering Literary Studies in the Twenty-first Century: The Relevance of Online Pedagogies

Kristine L. Blair

Within both academic and cultural contexts, the relevance of literary studies is often challenged (Showalter, 2003) by students and university administrators alike within a larger culture that has increasingly defined education as a commodity, a means to a financial end in terms of both enrolments and students' professional success. In this shift to a customer-service model of higher education, English departments have been forced to consider the role that distance delivery plays in curriculum development and student recruitment, to sustain relevance by acknowledging the need to extend the curriculum through delivery systems that meet the needs of non-traditional learners, often a primary audience for distance education. The phrase 'forced to' may seem a harsh assessment of English faculty, but admittedly it is still difficult for many university faculty to acknowledge that the critical reading and writing practices of the liberal arts are often perceived by students as subordinate to twentieth-century literacy practices that include text messaging, YouTube, Facebook, and other forms of social networking and digital entertainment. For Marc Prensky (2001), such a gap represents a void between students as 'digital natives' and educators as 'digital immigrants', with the latter typically lacking the training to integrate technology into their pedagogies. Moreover, many faculty view much of this technology as a distraction from their preconceived understanding of what it means to read, write, and communicate in academic settings, rather than as a vital component of the curriculum in a twenty-first-century university where, as Jay David Bolter (2001) has suggested, print is not dead but is instead 'remediated' through a range of technologies (p. 26).

Regardless of the resistance to technology among some academics, in her chapter 'The pleasures of digital discussions: lessons, challenges, recommendations, and reflection', Kathleen Blake Yancey (2003) asserts that 'It's not a question of whether you'll use technology to help students learn. It's a question of what kind of technology you will include and when' (p. 105). Inevitably, both new media technologies and increasingly diverse student populations are changing understanding of what English studies is or can be in the twenty-first

century, as more and more programmes go virtual to remain competitive in an era of 24/7 learning for the over 3.9 million students who took an online course in the fall of 2007 (Allen and Seaman, 2008). This chapter contextualizes these shifts in both student population and pedagogical delivery around my own English department's efforts to develop a master's degree for completely online delivery, considering possibilities and constraints that include larger economic trends impacting higher education, student success, and the continuing need for training that enables faculty to critically select and integrate a range of digital tools that preserve various curricular and pedagogical outcomes central to literary and textual studies. Writing from my perspective as both a department chair and a specialist in teaching in digital spaces, I argue not only that the future of literary studies rests in its ability to successfully integrate online pedagogies but also that the success of future faculty in our discipline rests in their training to adopt such pedagogies in both undergraduate and graduate education.

Changing a Department Culture

As English studies struggles with the question of making the curriculum relevant for internal and external audiences concerned with enhancing economic development through job placement, the range of students pursuing higher education in general and English studies in particular has broadened. Whether it be in a community college or University setting, the changing demography of today's student has significantly impacted the manner in which a liberal studies curriculum should be delivered, moving away from the established pedagogies of the lecture to include more student-centred emphasis on collaboration, presentation, and interactive discussion that encourage a stronger sense of student accountability for their own success. This is especially true at the graduate level, as master's-level courses help prepare students to see themselves as faculty colleagues who contribute to the knowledge-making of the discipline.

The decision to pursue a graduate degree in English or any other discipline, however, is an expensive prospect in a larger economic context for today's US students, and at my own university as with others, both undergraduate and unfunded graduate students spend a larger percentage of their time than ever working through their studies. As I have documented elsewhere (Alvarez et al., 2005), our own graduate-level offerings provide students with an opportunity to combine critical theory and research methodology, as well as cultural studies analyses of literary and popular texts. The programme has suffered losses in enrolment in recent years due in part to fewer numbers of traditional undergraduates pursuing the MA immediately after completion of the bachelor's degree. Despite these declining numbers, many English faculty have continued

to target their curriculum towards an ideal – but not necessarily real – student population of those planning for careers in higher education and looking towards the PhD, as opposed to a population that is more hybrid with differing degree tracks and differing career goals, including public school teachers and working professionals.

As online course development has gained momentum across campus, our own department has experienced significant success with the delivery of online graduate courses to non-residential populations in Northwest Ohio. In summer 2002, we began by piloting five fully online graduate seminars across programmes (linguistics, literature, rhetoric and writing, and scientific and technical communication), hoping to attract a middle and secondary school teacher audience in need of generalist training in English studies. Because this group is required to seek certification beyond the bachelor's degree, they are often the group from whom our graduate office receives the most queries about online courses. Since these initial online offerings, we have regularly scheduled online graduate seminars each summer, and these courses have consistently had high numbers of students enrolled. A consequence of this consistency is that the department has a small cohort of faculty across programmes experienced in online course delivery, notably through the Blackboard course management system (CMS).

Based on these changing economics and demographic contexts, the department revised its English MA Plan II, a 33-credit hour, non-thesis option with only three specific course requirements, into a more defined degree option with several tracks, including one that allows students to complete the degree in a fully online sequence of courses primarily in literature and language, including courses on Theory and Methods of Literary Criticism, the Teaching of Literature, and Modern English Linguistics, along with special topics literature seminars. Although the majority of the courses are in English studies, the emphasis on a primary audience of public school language arts teachers has also led to interdisciplinary elective options in units such as American Culture Studies, Women's Studies, Theatre and Film, and others within the College of Arts and Sciences. Unlike some other residential degree programmes in English, our MA Plan II is one that attracts a range of non-residential populations, including those whose finances, work, and/or family responsibilities do not always allow full-time study during the standard academic year. Equally important, these students often are not pursuing the doctorate; thus a non-thesis degree that offers breadth of training in English studies is an appropriate option for fully online delivery. Instead of the thesis, the culminating requirement for the degree is a Portfolio Capstone course in which students revise and reflect upon four seminar papers or other curricular projects they developed through the typically two-year degree sequence and then submit this material electronically to our graduate office for virtual review by two members of the literary studies graduate faculty.

To conclude, however, that our faculty are automatic converts to digital delivery of the English curriculum just because they have taught online or that the programme exists in digital form would be overstating the case. Carsten and Knowles (2000) caution that online education may be at odds with our understanding of liberal learning, or the 'give and take of communication', and for many teachers may be perceived to contribute to both a lack of interpersonal communication and a limited acquisition of academic literacy. My own English department colleagues have been no different; indeed, they have raised similar concerns about the fit between online learning and the liberal arts curriculum. Stanley Fish's (2008) recent commentary in the *New York Times* summarizes this view; speaking of the corporate university, Fish notes that 'In this latter model, the mode of delivery – a disc, a computer screen, a video hook-up – doesn't matter so long as delivery occurs. Insofar as there are real-life faculty in the picture, their credentials and publications (if they have any) are beside the point, for they are just "delivery people"' (online). Notably, Fish's commentary is disseminated through the blog section of the *Times*, an irony that suggests that while technology may suffice in non-academic venues, including popular media, its transference into the literary studies curriculum is suspect. Admittedly, many English faculty are unfamiliar with interdisciplinary research suggesting that online learning has the potential to increase student responsibility and student interaction (Palloff and Pratt, 1999) as opposed to the traditional lecture model of both undergraduate and graduate classes; the latter could foster as much student passivity in an online setting as it can in a face-to-face one. It would of course be remiss of me to attribute some of the dilemmas of digital delivery to the faculty alone. Thus in the remainder of this chapter, I will outline a number of ideological and material variables that impact our ability to sustain such online course development, particularly among literary studies faculty.

Student Accountability

The type of student typically identified as the 'ideal' distance student tends to be the adult learner, someone presumably more motivated to pursue online education because of work and family responsibilities and someone better able to take responsibility for her/his success. Yet it is important for English faculty to remember that the factors that cause students to pursue an online degree may also be the very same factors impacting students' ability to complete courses or programmes in a consistent or reliable way, and certainly retention is an important variable in online student success. Just as we acknowledge that English faculty are not necessarily perceived as the most technologically savvy and need time to learn to teach online, our students themselves also need time to understand how they learn and how that learning translates into an online

setting that for many is a first-time experience. To assist in both student and faculty adjustment, I have developed the following student success guidelines and have shared them with faculty in both our literary studies and creative writing programmes:

- Regularly login to the course several times per week and check for announcements and ongoing bulletin board discussions.
- Expect to spend at least six to eight hours per week on the course. This includes completing readings, posting to the assigned discussion forum (and in some cases chat) on a regular basis, and developing your written projects.
- Devote specific periods of time to the course and block out your calendar for this purpose. Although the class does not meet face to face, research has shown that those students who schedule in this way are more consistent in participation and ultimately more successful in an online course. This is true for teachers as well; thus, you can expect to receive responses to email and phone inquiries within almost any 12–24-hour period (and likely sooner), unless otherwise announced.
- Don't just disappear. Failure to complete assignments by the deadline, participate in online discussions, and so forth will negatively impact your success in the course in that your final grade will be affected if you fail to participate. Life gets in the way for all of us; if you have a personal or professional conflict, communicate with the instructor as soon as possible via private email.
- Determine how you learn best. Some of us learn more effectively through visual aids, or through hands-on training and other forms of applied learning. Others need to listen and hear lectures and discussions, synthesizing ideas in order to apply them. If you are having difficulty with some aspect of the course, the instructor is available via telephone or face to face by appointment. Always feel free to ask for help or clarification of assignments, deadlines, and document submission procedures. In addition, there is a learning style inventory you will be asked to complete during our orientation phase to help you self-assess your learning needs.
- View your classmates as a valuable source of feedback on your work. The instructor is a guide, and one source of professional expertise. Others, including you, will also have experiences and have ideas that are useful to the group. Feel free to share, to exchange email and ideas. Your participation is vital to the success of everyone in the course. Although there may be a prompt related to the specific module, feel free to start a new thread based on ideas that interest you, or to share resources that you find on the web or through other research methods.
- Avoid having the course become a mere 'email correspondence course' between you and the instructor; unless it is a personal matter, any question or comment you are likely to have will be of relevance to the group.

Although these guidelines certainly convey a sense of expectations faculty will have of students, faculty may also need to reconsider the important role they play in student success. While in a face-to-face class, an instructor may not always reach out to the student who suddenly develops attendance problems, Palloff and Pratt (1999) stress this as an important task in an online course. Rather than faculty presuming that student silence or inactivity is due to some academic deficiency, these online experts encourage as much instructor interaction as possible through email and other activities that keep students connected to the course. One way to accomplish this goal is to foster more meta-discourse about the class itself and students' roles. For that reason, I often encourage our faculty to include such elements as a required learning styles inventory (Fleming, 2001) that measures preferences for visual, auditory, reading, or kinaesthetic learning environments and allows students to introduce themselves to each other and to the instructor in light of these preferences and their needs within the course. Because the reading and writing activities in a graduate seminar can be a somewhat isolated process for students, determining which individuals may have difficulty with such learning modes and considering both pedagogical and technological options to vary the learning environment are important in fostering more student accountability. As I shall stress in the following section, tapping a range of technological literacies common to many students but less common to faculty is a significant part of fostering such success.

(Re)Training and (Re)Tooling

In my role as a department chair, I have often talked with faculty about their perceptions of difference between online and face-to-face teaching, hoping to counter the lack of motivation that Allen and Seaman (2008) note is common among university faculty when administrators attempt to recruit them for distance learning initiatives. While very few faculty members reject online teaching out of hand, many discussions are imbued with what I refer to as the 'presumption of loss', for example, while online teaching may be a necessary evil to ensure enrolments, there will always be something missing in terms of course quality and interaction among the students as well as between the students and the instructor. The content delivery will never be as clear, the discussions never as meaningful, and the ability of students to meet learning outcomes in terms of critical reading and writing never as strong. Because of this scepticism, faculty often fail to grasp their role in making online teaching successful and their resulting need to move beyond an 'add technology and stir' model of instruction, or one that presumes that their own pedagogical approaches shouldn't change in an online setting. In some ways, the English graduate seminar may seem conducive to online delivery in part because of the standard approach to graduate-level teaching: intense reading, intense writing,

and intense dialogue among scholarly peers. Thus the transition may appear more seamless to students and faculty because of the primarily text-based nature of pedagogies delivered through CMSs such as Blackboard, the system in place at our institution. To enable literature faculty and other colleagues to reflect upon the appropriate alignment between technology and pedagogy within their own courses, I often ask the following questions:

- How do you typically deliver content to students?
- How do you communicate with students?
- How are students expected to demonstrate understanding and mastery of the material?
- How do students work together?
- How do you assess students' success?
- How do the technologies of online learning foster these pedagogical practices?

Addressing these questions involves identifying various digital tools within the CMS, including discussion boards, chat rooms, surveys and testing instruments, and virtual whiteboards. But as I have argued elsewhere (Blair, 2007), the limited opportunity for faculty to experiment with a broader range of digital tools beyond the CMS is perhaps the greatest drawback to fostering innovative pedagogies in the English curriculum and causes faculty to maintain the assumption that online teaching can never approximate the interaction of a face-to-face classroom.

Indeed, there are a plethora of digital tools that exist with a Web 2.0 era: weblog tools for student journaling about readings, instant messaging software for virtual office hours and smaller group chatting, wiki tools for student collaborating on presentations and other projects, podcasting tools for recording instructors' lectures in audio and video format, YouTube for storing or accessing relevant video footage that can include dramatic adaptations, and image storing services such as Flickr or Picassa that can be useful when making connections between literature and art. Granted, most faculty – not only those in literary studies – are unfamiliar with these options and question their relevance in the university classroom. Yet faculty should question, as the faculty featured in this collection clearly do, how these tools may allow students to access and respond to course material and ultimately enrich the experience of both students and teachers, heeding the call of Showalter (2003) to 'make our teaching as intellectually challenging and as much a topic of professional critique and review as our research' (p. 8). One innovative example of the role technology can play in fostering these and other important traits comes from TeacherTube.com, a site that mimics YouTube in its emphasis on video-based lesson plans and student-produced media projects on everything from Shakespeare's *Othello* to identifying sentence fragments. Although lessons are geared towards both university and public school settings, English lessons geared for middle- and

high-school audiences seem more prevalent, likely because of a presumption that teaching with technology is a vital part of the content standards, outlined by the National Council of Teachers of English (1996), for US language arts instruction, something that is rarely addressed in the training of university-level literature faculty.

Despite the potential of these tools to engage student learners in digital spaces, the constraints sometimes outweigh the possibilities, particularly in the area of institutional support. Typically, information technology services on most campuses support proprietary software for which they have a site licence and are often ill equipped to deal with a wide range of open source tools. Hence the CMS becomes the tool of choice. The CMS certainly provides a sense of clarity about where students should be going online to access course material. Yet the continued emphasis on texts as opposed to the more multimodal processes students may be used to suggests that literary studies continues to privilege traditional concepts of textuality and authorship, regardless of larger cultural shifts that have challenged what it means to be both functionally and critically literate (Selber, 2004).

Another significant limitation of the role technology may actually play in creating course content is the lack of technological training, not merely a functional *how to*, but a more critical *why to* in terms of exploring how more multimodal tools may alleviate the concerns literature faculty may have about the loss of connection with their students. Yet for Baldwin (1998), failure to integrate technology successfully is tied not only to 'insufficient or obsolete hardware or software, inadequate facilities and support services [but also to] lack of time . . . lack of information about good practice, and underestimation of the difficulty in adopting new technologies' (p. 13). In previous work (Alvarez et al., 2005), I have overviewed the problems in relying on university-level faculty training programmes in terms of sustaining faculty growth and interest in integrating a broader range of technologies beyond what is comfortable and convenient at the time. Our own university has developed a fully online training course for current distance instructors that not only includes an overview of Blackboard but also introduction to blogs and social networking tools. And while it is certainly important for online teachers to be online students, other forms of sustaining technological training include unit-specific educational technology assistance programmes, such as the programme I developed in English for several years titled Digital Language and Literacy. This programme paired graduate students in technical communication and composition studies who had completed an online course titled 'Online Learning for English Educators' with first-time online instructors in literature, linguistics, and rhetoric to migrate existing graduate seminars into digital spaces, beginning with our first set of courses in 2002. Overall, the participating graduate students functioned less as technology specialists and more as faculty development specialists and instructional designers, a beneficial situation for both the students and faculty participating in the programme, as both groups grew to

understand that technology should not be integrated into the curriculum for its own sake but rather should be aligned with curricular goals and pedagogical practices.

Conclusion

Literary studies faculty should rightly question what role technology plays in curricular objectives. Yet they should equally question the curricular objectives that often emphasize theoretical frameworks from which to *consume* literary and cultural texts (both print- and media-based), as opposed to activities that enable students to *produce* critical responses to those texts in a range of media, a 'multimodality' that as Selber and others have suggested, has the potential to foster a range of digital literacies that might make online learning a more engaging and creative process for students and faculty alike. Granted, there have been discussions of the positive impact of hypertext on the critical reading processes of students; George Landow (1992) has been an early literary proponent of hypertext as empowering in its collapse of the binary between writers and readers. Still, many of these discussions tend to privilege the mere consumption of texts, with much less emphasis on the role technology can play in modelling effective pedagogy and innovative scholarship for graduate students in particular as future faculty in English studies. Such a modelling may help teachers sustain literary studies by delivering it through new technologies that will be commonplace to many of our students.

As undergraduate language arts students for whom university faculty across the disciplines are encouraged to develop technology-infused curricula in order for such students to observe models of effective teaching in these contexts, English graduate students – and by extension, the undergraduates they may later serve as future faculty – need just as much of a modelling process that online delivery can provide. This is an especially important consideration given current academic job-market constraints for students in literary studies, a dilemma extensively documented by the Modern Language Association, and something the organization has more recently addressed with regard to master's candidates (Steward, 2004) and their ability to find jobs after graduation. Moreover, as community colleges and increasing numbers of four-year universities heed the call to provide more fully online courses to meet changing undergraduate populations requiring a broader range of entry points into higher education, the ability of graduate students to deliver English courses in hybrid and fully online formats will be not only crucial to their marketability but also vital to the sustainability of the English curriculum in the twenty-first century. With this future scenario for higher education looming, it is vital that literary studies specialists in university settings question their own desire and ability to deliver their pedagogies digitally, something all of our literature faculty are beginning to do at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Inevitably, English department chairs must encourage faculty to explore the role of technology in delivering the graduate and undergraduate English curriculum beyond courses in technical communication or those for current and future public-school educators. A positive step in such a direction is evident through a forthcoming MLA collection edited by Ian Lancashire (in press), *Teaching Language and Literature Online*, which provides a range of case studies and best practices in literature, linguistics, ESL, foreign languages, and composition. With a range of institutions represented in the collection, there is ample evidence that digital pedagogies can foster the curricular agenda of respective programmes and individual courses within language and literature programmes. Thus the question remains how these valuable discussions represented in the collection can be extended to all programmes within English studies. In light of the ideological and curricular constraints I have outlined in this chapter, it may not seem possible to find opportunities to more fully integrate technology into the professional development experiences of graduate students, to create the type of comfort level with using technology that will translate to future classroom experiences with undergraduates.

My department's shift to an online degree in English was more than about bolstering enrolments; rather, it was about maintaining the relevance of literary studies in the twenty-first century by working to create delivery systems that seemed conducive to the curriculum and the signature pedagogies (Shulman, 2005) upon which literature faculty can and should rely while simultaneously meeting the needs of both residential and commuter students, groups with different career goals and differing learning styles. For Lawrence Ragan (2000), 'good teaching is good teaching' and many of the principles of good teaching in face-to-face settings are ones that should transfer to online spaces, though the way in which these practices manifest themselves may differ significantly. I am often reminded of this point when I talk to literature faculty who have developed online pedagogies that place student response and project production at the centre of the curriculum, rather than reinforce the traditional role of the faculty member as the singular expert behind the virtual lectern. In his recent opinion piece in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* Bruce Fleming (2008) reminds his literary colleagues of the need to emphasize student experience:

> We professors just have to remember that the books are the point, not us. We need, in short, to get beyond literary studies. We're not scientists, we're coaches. We're not transmitting information, at least not in the sense of teaching a discipline. But we do get to see our students react, question, develop, and grow. If you like life, that's satisfaction enough. (online)

Although Fleming is not addressing technology, my challenge to those same literary colleagues is to question what role technology can play in fostering student-centred pedagogies. As the various sections of this chapter suggest,

good teaching is as possible within a range of digital environments as it is within our traditional education spaces where, as Michael Wresch and the Kansas State group (2007) suggest in their popular video 'A vision of students today', the chalkboard was touted as the technology that would 'be ranked among the best contributors in learning and science' [online]. In his recent article 'Is google making us stupid', Nicholas Carr (2008) concedes that the use of many tools of the digital age is an integral part of the history of literacy in Western culture, from the book to the website to the podcast, something affirmed not only by the Wresch video but also by the video (Lowell 2008, online) of a 55-year-old man's chronicle of the role modern technologies play in his own life as a twenty-first-century learner. Such a chronicle suggests, as does Prensky (2001), that the gap between students as digital natives and teachers as digital immigrants may not be so hard to bridge if we could acknowledge the importance of these literacies in both the face-to-face and the virtual classroom. Just as with Bolter's call to acknowledge the remediation of print in the digital age, we must similarly acknowledge the remediation of literary studies in online teaching and learning spaces, relying on digital tools to deliver our curriculum and sustain the relevance of English studies not only for twenty-first-century students but also for the current and future faculty who will educate them.

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Chapter 7

Digital Pedagogy: Taming the Palantíri

Ian Lancashire

J. R. R. Tolkien's palantíri are not crystal balls to foresee the future.[1] The elves in *The Lord of the Rings* originally made these seeing-stones to observe and communicate at a distance in the present time. Afterwards Sauron corrupted some of the palantíri. He seeded them into the hands of creatures he wished to dominate, including the dark wizard Saruman. When his adversary Gandalf, the hobbits Gandalf defended, and the Ents defeated Saruman's forces and flooded his stronghold at Isengard, he and his sorcerer's apprentice Wormtongue found themselves trapped there in the great tower Orthanc. As Saruman and Gandalf traded insults, Wormtongue threw Saruman's palantír down from the tower at their enemies, but he missed his target in more than one sense. It was Saruman who was outraged at this act, which put a tool of power into the hands of those who had defeated him. Wormtongue's rashness, moreover, unwittingly led the hobbit Peregrin to look into the palantír and almost speechlessly to fall under Sauron's control. As disastrous as this appeared to be at the moment, it was a lucky turn-of-events because it distracted Sauron from Frodo's quest, to destroy the great ring of power at Mount Doom in the core of Sauron's realm, Mordor.

We have palantíri today. One is a workstation running Skype, an Internet-based telephone technology (cf. *OED*, 'skip', v., 3.a), with a Web-cam. Like J. R. R. Tolkien's magic orbs, our digital palantíri have shrunk the world onto a screen. While risky, they are rewarding, inescapable magic. They are not going away.

Computational advances, digital pedagogy among them, are reshaping education. I taught a fully online credit course in reading English poetry, 2001–4, in the first year with the American poet Molly Peacock. This grew out of my editorial work with *Representative Poetry Online* (*RPO*) from 1994 to the present. I came to this field ten years after I was promoted to full professor; there were consequently few career risks for me. Young faculty still may feel such risks. Recently I edited a forthcoming book collection on *Teaching Literature and Language Online* for MLA's Options in Teaching series. It was directed at novitiates in research and teaching. I brought to the editing task a quarter-century's experience in digital text analysis, database development, and corpus linguistics, all digital palantíri-taming disciplines.

Although dwarfed by digital cyberinfrastructure, a lobbyist's delight, digital pedagogy will ultimately determine how well used that superstructure is. Hardware and software abound, but best teaching practices in this fundamentally altered educational environment are more important. Martha Nell Smith says, 'Today, I cannot imagine offering a successful course – whether a small graduate seminar or a large lecture course – bereft of thoughtful application of technology' (forthcoming). Most face-to-face (f2f) courses today for this reason blend classroom and Web instruction. Students go online to course Web pages for course descriptions and schedules, lecture notes, readings, bibliographical links, discussion board, chatroom, and sometimes grades. Libraries now deliver millions of periodical articles and books online. Almost every significant literary text in my discipline, English studies, can be read online. Fifteen years ago young graduate students in the digital humanities were caught up by an opportunity to steal a march on academe: they created scholarly journals, databases, literature libraries, and portals. It was as exciting and challenging for them to move research globally online as it was exhilarating for me to edit *RPO*. To teach digitally today is hardly new, but the resources open to it, that is, the cyberinfrastructure, are radically greater than anything before available.

Subtract the physical classroom from a blended course, and we have distance education. It is a sorcerer's palantír, some believe. Here is what one (anonymous) administrator writes of the impact of her campus-wide portfolio, distance education:

> There is enormous demand for online courses and programs; proprietary colleges are increasingly serving under-served populations – students who work full-time, students who have dependants, or those who are willing to pay more for on-line offerings and better student services. . . . For instance, the University of Phoenix's on-line degree program advertises with these slogans: 'One university understands how you live today;' 'University of . . . Boundaries are Nothing;' 'University of . . . Class is in session when I so Choose.'

The Sloan Consortium (2007) reports that nearly 3.9 million students, over 20 per cent of the US higher-education population, took 'at least one online course during the fall 2007 term'. This is a 12 per cent increase over the 2006 statistics, when overall enrolments grew only by 1.2 per cent. The Pew Internet 'Latest Trends' surveys (2009) conducted in September 2005 report that 12 per cent of American internet users took a class online for credit towards a degree. Seventy-four per cent of American adults used the internet as of December 2008. Social and economic choices are changing education as much as research cyberinfrastructure. Transporting a student's electronic avatar to school is a greener and more cost-effective technology than cars.

Online teaching, whether blended or distance, gives new doctorates valuable job opportunities. Online courses meet the needs of those who cannot get to a

physical classroom regularly because they work, or care for others, or are disabled. Undergraduates are now born-digital and they dominate the active Facebook population, which is greater than countries like Russia. This kind of social technology is an asset for education if it can also be tamed. A student's gender, sexual orientation, race, colour, appearance, and age are often apparent in a classroom but can be invisible in online courses. Cyborgs enjoy a comparatively level playing field.

Is it really level, or is there, potentially, a Sauron at the other end? We know the misuses of digital magic. They include identity theft, plagiarism, copyright infringement, and the proliferation of hate literature, images, and software. These are human failings most incident to information technology. The programming imagination becomes prey to visions of unbridled power by such as the hackers described vividly in Joseph Weizenbaum's great book, *Computer Power and Human Reason* (1976), or the geneticist Frankenstein of Margaret Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003), or even the well-meaning Director of the National Science Foundation, who reportedly said – a rhetoric that Tolkien gave Saruman – that the cyberinfrastructure revolution at hand 'is expected to usher in a technological age that dwarfs everything we have yet experienced in its sheer scope and power' (Green, 2007). The humanities teacher has traditionally enjoyed respect and had power over grades, but she was expected to exercise it not just fairly, but kindly, a lesson taught for example by Emma Thompson's painful portrayal of the teacher Vivian Bearing in Mike Nichols' film *Wit* (2001). Online teachers, so intimate with the academic resources that truly dwarf any single reader, any young mind, can become saturated with the new medium. It is easier to teach magic lessons, to enter into the trance of new digital forms, than to attend to our true business, which is to teach students' minds.

Online teaching, blended or distance, is not to everyone's taste. Here are some questions to think about when it comes to taming this palantír. First comes emotional stability. Will you feel a sense of deep loss by having few in-person contacts? Do you have the energy to lead a 50-minute chatroom discussion without making eye contact or hearing another's voice? Are you unflappable when your computer screen freezes, the power goes off, or the network collapses? Can you handle, politely, persistent email requests from students who expect a quick reply? Secondly, are you a very subtle reader? You will have to sacrifice what David Olson, in *The World on Paper* (1994), says is lost in writing, indeed by literacy itself: 'illocutionary force', which guides us to a speaker's attitude to his subject (pp. 91, 121). This loss explains why we accept so readily the idea of Roland Barthes's 'The death of the author' (1967) and prefer talking to students face to face. Then there is time. Can you spare three months to invest in online teaching preparation? You will have to learn your institution's educational software, assemble online e-texts and criticism, and convert your mental, penned, or typed notes to electronic form. Finally, your privacy will be breached. Are you prepared to see your latest course blog entry copied

by an indignant reader to every member of your department, the dean, the provost, and the president?

Many people will be able to get jobs in online teaching. On the other hand, the voice of Saruman may conjure Faustian images of power to entice you, possibly, only to a life in the castle basement burning trees and hatching artificial creatures for war – unless you remember the pedagogical best practices that inform our disciplines. Your professional organizations inculcate best practices to civilize the digital wild. The Counsel of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP, 2000) has published legal advice on faculty rights and responsibilities in online teaching, which MLA has seconded. It advises you to protect yourself against exploitation:

> The fundamental difficulty with institutions that rely heavily, or exclusively, on distance education is that they are characterized by a practice called 'unbundling.' In that practice, course materials are prepared by a 'content expert' and delivered by a 'faculty facilitator,' in a uniform manner, producing predictable and measurable 'outcomes' that fit uniform assessment tools. Such a process of turning education into modular units represents a basic change in an essential characteristic of higher education.

To cope with unbundling, the open-access movement has one solution: publish your teaching materials freely online. Merlot, NINCH, Educause, ACTFL, MLA, and other professional associations usefully publish cautionary literature, instructional resources, model courses, and best practices for online teachers. Why? Because, unless public demand for convenient online programmes lessens, ten per cent of us may be teaching online soon.

Here are three digital best practices to keep in mind: (a) regular teacher–student interaction, (b) personal security, and (c) a vision of how educational technology can serve teaching. First, interaction: do not confuse online teaching with a Fedex bundle-delivery service. Devote 75 per cent of a typical e-course workload to online teacher–student communication by means of email, discussion board, chatroom, blog, or even social utility. I have taught for 40 years, but I came to know my undergraduates' minds better online than in a physical classroom. And they knew me much better: in a chatroom, like the students, I was called by my first name. Second, personal security: take steps to protect personal student information in digital media: let no student be identified in any digital course-work that may accidentally go public, whether a bulletin-board contribution or a course blog. What students say at 17 may haunt them at a job interview at 24. My country, Canada, legislates such protection: students have a right to keep even their own names a secret to other students in the same courses. Third, vision: educate students that the Web is a technology that can bring us thrillingly, almost safely mind-to-mind with millions of people – authors, researchers, and teachers, alive and dead, important and not. The palantír

works in all places, at all times of the day and night, but to teach and to learn, we must be free to disengage.

Since 1995 I have edited *RPO* freely for educational usage. It currently includes 3,600 English poems by 526 poets from Caedmon, in the Old English period, to the work of living poets today on four continents. Its 16,700 notes, 48 commentaries and works of criticism, and nine indexes serve many thousands of readers worldwide each week. *RPO* is based on *Representative Poetry*, established by Professor W. J. Alexander of University College, University of Toronto in 1912, one of the first books published by the University of Toronto Press. Two dozen teachers at Toronto, including Northrop Frye and Marshall McLuhan, helped produce successive editions of *RPO* until the early 1960s. New and revised editions are now added every few months. Recently I contributed Shakespeare's 154 sonnets, and my colleague John Baird added full editions of Samuel Johnson's poems 'London' and 'The Vanity of Human Wishes'. We are now working towards a centenary edition of *RPO* in 2012. How has what I learned about online teaching affected our plans for this new edition? How am I going to keep to the best practices recommended here?

I have always interacted with individual readers. They have sent me email inquiries almost daily for the past dozen years (Lancashire, 2002). They come from many places. For example, in the nine months between January and September 2008, 134,000 unique visitors from 186 countries accessed four million *RPO* pages, from Albania (394 pages) to the USA (2,130,000) and Zimbabwe (189). Our readers are far-flung from the Faroe Islands, the Seychelles, Andorra, and Benin. Cities from around the world consistently appear in the top ten each month, from Makati in the Philippines to Los Angeles, Denver, Houston, and Washington, from Toronto to Rome, Beijing, New Delhi, and Bombay. At the beginning, readers bridled at the word 'Representative' because the last printed version, which came out in the early 1960s, neglected American, Canadian, female, non-white, and all living poets. I gradually made good these omissions as well as I could in an age of copyright and in the absence of any funds. *RPO* readers still notify me of mistakes or new information and ask for help in estimating the financial value of an old book, and in locating a passage or a poem. Students sometimes beg for a critical commentary on a poem. Occasionally they alert me to a neglected poet and ask *RPO* to publicize that poet's work. These one-on-one exchanges are of course old-fashioned. The World Wide Web 1.0 distributed information and texts, but Web 2.0 creates social networks where people can interact with each other independent of a moderator.

My Advisory Board has been thinking about how to increase interaction with readers in general without losing the quietude of an anthology. We will begin with a simple online questionnaire that asks readers what they would like of *RPO* that is not yet in it. The associate editor and chief programmer of *RPO*, Marc Plamondon, suggests that we enable teachers and readers-for-pleasure to

create their own anthologies of poems and, copyright permitting, to download that anthology to their own Blackberry or iPhone. I am interested in allowing readers to tell their own stories of how a poem or a poet has been important to them. The most moving and inspiring emails I have received as *RPO* editor have all described a personal life-event associated with a poem. A mother on her hospital bed, recovering from an operation, speaks to her daughter by phone and utters lines from Charles Kingsley's 'A Farewell' ('Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever'). A soldier asks for W. H. Auden's 'Stop all the clocks' from *Four Weddings and a Funeral* to read at a national ceremony. A daughter needs Mary Elizabeth Frye's 'Do not Stand at My Grave and Weep' for her father's funeral. A nurse in England asks me to identify some fragments of verse that stirred a patient bedridden with Alzheimer's disease to speak briefly. Many individuals want to find a poem that they once knew, in their youth, and that now means more to them than they expected.

Their messages have kept me editing *RPO* far longer than I would have managed as academic duty alone. Our culture owes much more to poetry than we admit. Ezra Pound promises in his *Pisan Cantos*, LXXXI: 'What thou lovest well is thy true heritage / What thou lov'st well shall not be reft from thee.' This passage introduces *RPO* and explains why it exists.

Personal security may seem to be a non-starter of an issue, but when I make a correction in *RPO*, thanks to an email note, I offer to identify the reader by name but will not give her or his address, email, or postal. Only occasionally do I link to another poetry site, never to publicize one to obtain reciprocal treatment for *RPO*. If we put in place a mechanism to allow readers to tell their own stories, only their names will be included. Comments on individual stories might be allowed, but only with the editor's and the reader's approval.

A vision may be too grand a term for *RPO*, but I had four goals. I originally wanted a place where anyone, anywhere, could read the best English poetry without having to take a course or buy something. The Web, still experimental in 1994, seemed a plausible place. Now the Web overflows with verse, new and old. Although every poem-edition I have placed in *RPO* has been copied many times and put online elsewhere, I thought that the main site should never be allowed to fail. The University of Toronto Library, and Libraries and Archives in the federal government of Canada, have guaranteed that. Second, I wanted *RPO* to frame each poem with sufficient apparatus – notes, commentaries, indexes, search engine – so that every reader would know who wrote the poem, when and where the poet published it, which printed scholarly edition was the most reliable, and what the poem's esoteric words and allusions meant. Third, I believed that living poets should be invited to help shape *RPO*. They have already been very generous with their work. The first living poet who donated her works was Marge Piercy, to whom I am deeply grateful for her faith in the anthology. After the Poetry Foundation of Chicago purchased a perpetual license to *RPO*, and we had a modest budget, my Advisory Board urged us to acquire more living poets, and to pay copyright fees for the privilege. (We will

do so until our modest funds disappear.) It is a special honour to have two fine poets on our Board, Molly Peacock and Al Moritz. Last, I wanted *RPO* to express the affection that all English students and teachers have for poets, past and present, whose works enrich and restore our lives. What we have to teach in English literature begins with love for its works.[2]

RPO might have become an untamed, threatening palantír if different decisions had been made. It might have aspired to be J. R. R. Tolkien's 'One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, / One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them.' Asking readers to pay fees or to give money, accepting advertising and refusing to give readers permission to republish *RPO* editions online would have set a bad example. If the makers themselves donate their work, why should educators not do the same?

That the Web flows inexhaustibly with resources by open-source teachers, researchers, and Web enterprises at the Library of Congress, the National Endowment for the Humanities, Project Gutenberg, and academic libraries everywhere is a source of pride to educators. The World Lecture Hall at the University of Texas at Austin offers an archive for online courses. Like works on a bookshelf, online ideas can mislead and misinform, but unlike printed works, we can expose online errors as soon as we recognize them. The Web is a revolutionary educational playground that unfetters restless young minds. The fundamental virtue of cyberinfrastructure is to enable us to teach and learn from one another. It is a palantír, usable for better or worse, but wonderfully tamable by best practices.

Notes

[1] An earlier version of this essay was delivered at a forum on 'Professionalization in a Digital Age', 28 December 2007, at the annual Modern Language Association of America Convention meetings in Chicago.

[2] One potential purpose missing from my foursome is research that makes discoveries about poetry. I found some neglected poets and poems, to be sure. A recent essay (Lancashire, 2006) also draws attention to parody as a mechanism that determines what the touchstones of great poetry are.

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Chapter 8

Teaching Literature in a Virtual Campus: Uses of Hypertext

Laura Borràs-Castanyer

The introduction of digital technologies in the learning process has revealed that the internet revolution, that is, the change of mentality produced by the use of digital technologies in the global contemporary world, also affects the ways in which education can be organized and delivered. One aspect of this change is the creation of new educational spaces which, when they operate through the internet and are characterized by non-presentiality and asynchrony, are known as Virtual Learning Environments (VLE). This new reality has reconfigured higher education, offering to some universities a way to diversify their academic activity and to others a way to exist. These are the cases of, on the one hand, the University of Barcelona (UB),[1] an institution with more than 550 years of history that is increasingly turning to blended learning through the introduction of new technologies and, on the other, the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), inaugurated in Spain in 1995 as the first completely virtual university in the world.

The entirely novel context of asynchronous interaction, where the classroom is substituted by the virtual space of a computer screen and the potential range of transmitted knowledge is greatly increased, posed a number of questions which may redefine the cardinal concepts of teaching, learning and studying at the beginning of the twenty-first century. As lecturer on literature for the last 15 years (simultaneously teaching at UB and at UOC), I was compelled to reflect on the premises on which education and its assessment methods have always been based and to consider new possibilities and alternatives, in tune with the new era. In this new context, the lecturer's duty can no longer be the *transmission* of knowledge, but rather a contribution to the *generation* of this knowledge and the provision of the necessary intellectual tools that will allow students to think critically. To put it in a different way: teaching is a global activity that provokes interest among the students, but at the same time it allows the transmission and the critical evaluation of information and develops the capacity for reflection, the ability to relate ideas or to make connections, to integrate, to detail, to clarify, to absorb, to reject, to make choices, and to try out ideas, to decide what is important and what is not. In a word, teaching means interaction in a holistic sense. VLEs offer magnificent possibilities to this end, but,

this said, it must be stressed that they are only as good or as bad as the ways in which they are used; a prerequisite for their successful implementation is that equal attention is paid to the design and management of the virtual class and to the development of educational material.

In what follows I will mainly focus on the design of the educational material for the degree of Catalan Studies at the UOC that I developed during the last decade. The use of hypertext or hypermedia challenged conventional assumptions about literary education, its agents and institutions.[2] This change is more dramatically felt in a country like Spain, where Literary Studies have always been historically oriented. The incorporation of new technologies in the teaching (as well as the writing) of literature has allowed us to reread the past from a standpoint in which the literary work is more than ever an open device, freed from hierarchical structures and belonging to an infinite net of hypertexts. We can now rethink the literary phenomenon from new textual, critical, and hermeneutical perspectives. The digital environment can exhibit in a physical way the inscription of a literary work in an intertextual framework. On the other hand, the extreme fluidity of hypertext forces us to rethink one of the main preoccupations of the person who is writing: directing or controlling how the reader reads. Indeed, the creative act of the author-professor requires an interpretative act on the part of the user-student and also some 'wandering' around the text. Hypertext presents a new form of 'textuality' based on the ability to 'penetrate' a text marked with all the links that open doors to new sense horizons. In hypertext, any illusion of control vanishes: seduction is the only motivation towards hypertextual wander. If knowledge spreads by provoking an infinite virtuality of intertextual connections, which represent the infinite ways of the discursive configuration of the self, then everything might be interconnected (Pinto, 2002, p. 175).

In the face of this challenge, my attempt at the UOC was to promote a digital working environment that makes the literary work appear in a textual, physical way which allows interaction, interrelation, and linking. Me and my team[3] always tried to practise a kind of literary instruction that is much more attentive to the subject that has to interpret than to the text that has to be interpreted (or to the latter's objective historical dimension). This suggests a method more focused on the learner than on the lecturer, a focus which is completely different from that of many traditional models of academic study and which might even be conceived as a Copernican revolution in literary education, promoted by the use of new technologies.

When I started designing our Programme of Catalan Studies in the academic year 1998/1999, I realized that we had to provide our students with a syllabus that started in a simple way and progressed in complexity, in terms of both its contents and the media involved, so much so that anyone unfamiliar with digital technologies should not be deterred from attending. Literary studies courses often follow the linear, chronological order of literary history, but seldom reach the present day. In our case, the first contact that students of

Catalan Studies have with the subject is through contemporary literature. Hypertext favours the view of literature as a network, with both chronological and cultural dimensions; it is often more effective for students to start from a node in the network that is chronologically closer to them and then follow different threads and links that lead to what is more remote.

Overall, this Program was made up of two basic types of courses: (a) panoramic and (b) theoretical, with a strong applied component. A third type (excluded from the present discussion) features optional courses mostly related to contemporary literature.

Panoramic Courses

These courses aim to give an overview of a long period in the history of literature and always include a strong comparative component. Our effort was to avoid the traditional view of the history of Catalan literature as linear and unconnected with other literatures in Spain or abroad.

Our understanding of the study of literature is often conditioned by our previous education. In Spanish schools and universities, particularly in Philology and Catalan Studies programs, literary analysis has long been dominated by the historico-positivist method. Taking this into consideration, our approach in these panoramic courses is to offer materials that may resemble traditional textbooks, in the sense that they follow a linear path, while also laying emphasis on direct acquaintance with literary works through close reading and intensive study. This is especially true of the initial courses of the Program, Contemporary Catalan Literature I and II, where we also arrange face-to-face meetings with contemporary writers whose works are studied during the semester. These courses also aim to provide a methodological base that remains valid throughout the rest of the Program. Assignments helped students to learn how to deal with the analytical and critical dimensions of literary study and also to acquire skills of exposition and synthesis through text commentaries, reviews, and formal analyses of literary works.[4]

In these introductory courses, it was important to promote the students' participation in discussions of some of the works or of certain key literary issues. First, and bearing in mind that we are practising distance learning, I would like to say that this active involvement works against the feeling of isolation and loneliness that some students experience. Second, the very act of expressing their doubts, their worries, their hopes, and their aspirations helped them see things more clearly; when students formulate in writing a query or a comment, they often are already close to the answers they are seeking. Third, if we manage to promote dialogue and communicative exchange in the virtual classroom from the very start, we accustom our students to the benefits of 'participatory democracy', and this fosters an attentive, critical view over their entire learning process.

Gradually, and as students grow more familiar with the virtual environment and accustomed to working with hypertext, we can offer them material that is more daring, complex, and suggestive. 'Medieval Romance Literature' is one of these courses and here I will use it to present some of the guiding principles in the construction of our educational material. For this course we have developed an itinerary, based on the concept of the medieval pilgrimage, where students have to 'travel' through the different medieval genres (epic, poetry – the troubadours – and romance) as well as their respective theories and scholarship. In organizing our teaching approach, we took into account the following principles:

1. To avoid a cumulative and decontextualized conception of the topics to be covered.
2. To take a constructivist approach to learning, building on concepts that are already familiar to students from their previous studies.
3. To make maximum use of the freely accessible World Wide Web resources.
4. To exploit the possibilities of multimedia, combining text (and hypertext), image (both stills and videos), and sound.
5. To complement educational materials with the expert guidance, motivation, and attention to individual student needs provided by tutors.
6. To allow the recognition of links between the work under study and other literary works (previous and contemporary but also subsequent to it).
7. Likewise, to reveal links between the work under study and other artistic, or more largely cultural, works.
8. Throughout the course, to maintain our chief aim, which is for students to read and understand the original works.

These considerations have formulated the general aims of this specific course, as presented in the syllabus. Hence, its basic aims are:

- To provide direct contact with the works of the period, while also making use of critical approaches to them.
- To teach the contemporary political and cultural situation that influenced the production of medieval Romance literature.
- To distinguish the main medieval literary genres and the sources that nourished them, and to recognize the thematic and stylistic interrelationships that arose between them.
- To recognize elements in Western culture that can be traced back to medieval literature.

To fulfil these aims, study material is divided into four large blocks: (a) 'European culture in the Middle Ages', where orality and writing provide the socio-historical, and medieval literary genres the methodological, framework for the other three blocks; (b) 'The study of the French epic', with an

analysis of *La Chanson de Roland* as the central text; (c) a block divided in two parts: (i) the first troubadours and (ii) the classical period, with reference to the production of Provençal poetry and its reception in Italy and the Iberian Peninsula; and finally (d) the largest block, which is devoted to a study of the romance, from the ancient romances (Thebes, Aeneas, and Troy) via the myth of Tristan and the lays of Marie de France to the Arthurian legend and the works of Chrétien de Troyes, culminating in a comparison of verse romance with the prose romance of the thirteenth century.

Multimedia Material: A Formal Approach

The educational material for this course (Borràs and Cirlot, 2004), conceived and designed by me[5] and written and compiled by Prof. Victoria Cirlot (Universitat Pompeu Fabra) and myself is in web format, available on a CD published by the UOC University Press and sent to students by conventional mail. It can also be consulted online from the course's web page. After the frontispiece, there is an index showing the modules of the course. The first two modules correspond to the socio-historical and to the methodological context. The core information here is divided thematically in sub-sections and is mainly in textual form, accompanied by a great number of images and sound clips. This block also includes self-assessment exercises.

The course recommends a certain sequence for studying the different blocks, modules, and sub-sections but naturally students are free to navigate the material in any way they see fit. Each study unit has been prepared with a view to enriching as far as possible the 'journey' that the students take through the material. As an example, let us consider the introductory module, which has three sections: 'The Birth of Europe', 'The Idea of the Book', and 'Otherness and Modernity'.

The first section – 'The Birth of Europe' – has several windows: the initial one contains an audio-visual introduction to the Middle Ages. This is followed by a printable text where we also find the original image of the Oath of Strasbourg, with an animation that allows us to use the cursor to follow the paleographic reading while simultaneously we may be looking at a transcription of the text and hearing it read in one of the original languages: Latin, Old French, and Old German. In the other windows, there are also complementary images of the birth of Europe, reinforced by a sample of medieval *mapa mundi*. The texts that accompany these world maps, like other texts throughout the material, contain links to different sites on the World Wide Web and also to samples of the students' own work.

However, as stated in the course aims, students must have direct contact with the works of the period, while also making use of critical approaches to them; so the material also includes literary texts and complete articles written by specialists, usually in portable document format. All this material is to be

consulted as needed throughout the course – always within the university's asynchronous study model – and it accompanies the reading of the original works, in the following time sequence:

Week	Module	Suggested timing
1	Introduction	Face-to-face meeting
	Surfing through the material	4 hours of study, surfing the educational material
2 3	European culture in the Middle Ages: orality and writing	5 hours of educational material study, completion of the first assignment
4	The literary genres in the Middle Ages	3 hours of educational material study
5 6 7	The medieval French epic: the Chanson de Roland	20 hours of educational material and complementary works' study, completion of the second assignment, 2 hours of debate
8	Provençal poetry: the first troubadours	4 hours of educational material study, incl. a selection of troubadour poems
9	Provençal poetry: the classical period	6 hours of educational material and complementary works' study, completion of the third assignment, 2 hours of debate
10	The courtly romance	4 hours of educational material and complementary works' study
11	The Tristan legend	10 hours of educational material and complementary works' study
12 13	The Arthurian romance: Chrétien de Troyes	20 hours of educational material and complementary works' study, completion of the fourth assignment
14	The prose romance in the 13th century	10 hours of educational material and complementary works' study, round-up meeting

The assignments referred to in this proposed timetable are

1. a written critique of the material and the course in general,
2. an essay on aspects of the *Chanson de Roland*,
3. a piece of commentary on troubadour poetry, and
4. an essay comparing various romances.

The students are also encouraged to take part in one of two proposed debates:

- 'The medieval world and its culture', or
- 'The main themes of troubadour poetry'.

However, the resources at the disposal of the students are not restricted to the CD and the original works. The course's virtual classroom also contains a section entitled 'Sources of Information', which is linked to the university library and its store of documents, as well as a 'disk space' where lecturers can place material to be consulted (archival images, sound recordings, and texts). All this complementary material serves to enrich contributions to the debates.

As the course progresses, new contributions appear – sometimes instigated by the instructor, sometimes by students – deriving from newspaper or academic articles, conferences, historical novels, films, exhibitions, music, opera, plays, etc. All these contributions are collected by the instructor on a CD, which is given to all the students at the end of the course. The CD does not only contain what has been produced during the past term but also a collection of the contributions made during preceding terms. We can thus speak of a constantly growing resource.

Theoretical Courses with a Strong Applied Component

Early on in their studies, students come into contact with certain courses involving Literary Theory. In this type of course, they gain a more profound understanding of the history of Literary Theory (from Plato and Aristotle to contemporary theories) and familiarize themselves with the conceptual tools that allow them to make detailed analyses of various kinds of texts. Our central aim is to trace connections between different critical tendencies, methods and theoretical models. A consideration of political, cultural, and ideological debates of great historical interest or of current concern can provide students with conceptual frameworks that are as useful as those derived from literature itself. This is why, in this type of course, we did not focus exclusively on creating hypertext learning material where students can find a particular text analysed from different critical perspectives. Students were also provided with the opportunity to participate in a collective 'workshop', a place for critical experimentation, where the lecturer posts corrected students' assignments (including comments and advices), as well as a bank of commentaries which accumulate from term to term and is one of the most visited areas of the classroom. In my experience, this type of practical collective workshop promotes both critical discussion and learning from each other.

Once students had acquired significant exposure to the history of Catalan literature, as well as a good understanding of certain theories, conceptualizations, and methods of textual analysis, they were considered equipped for the second level, that is, ready to deal with material of greater complexity. For example, at a second level of conceptual and technological complexity, we offered a compulsory course entitled 'The Study of Catalan Literature: Theory and Criticism', with the subtitle 'Twentieth Century Poetics' (Borràs and Malé (coords), 2002). This course aimed to provide an approach to various recent Catalan writers, where analysis of literary works is combined with attention to

the authors' own poetics or theoretical assumptions. To this end we also made use of non-literary texts (prefaces, essays, speeches, etc.), where writers reflect and comment on their view of literature. The course's web page also contained complementary bibliographical references as well as recorded interviews with some of the authors.

At a third level of complexity we offered a variety of courses, including 'Avant-gardes and Literature in Europe and Catalonia', 'Comparative Literature' (Borràs and Bou (coords), 2003), and 'Universal Literary Themes' (Borràs, 2001). The first of these provided an introduction to the concept of the 'avant-garde' and to the historical development of the main European avant-gardes up to the present day, including the main Catalan manifestations and their relationship with the avant-gardes in the rest of Europe. The course seeks to generate interest in the reading of both Catalan and European avant-garde texts, from manifestos to literary works, and to relate them to their contexts. Lastly, we relate the literary avant-garde to other artistic manifestations and try to make evident the ties that bind literature and the visual arts in these movements. This involves understanding the notion of breaking down the barriers between the various languages of artistic creation, which is a main goal of avant-garde movements, and getting students to appreciate the notion of play that lies behind the whole of the avant-garde by trying to compose some calligrams or visual poems of their own.[6]

The course on 'Comparative Literature' is a theoretical and applied introduction to comparison. Its first part presents the history of the discipline and some of the relevant theoretical issues, while the second part combines theoretical analysis and explanation of critical concepts with some actual practice in comparison. Course assignments are designed to cover both the theoretical and the applied aspect. This course is also connected to the country's current literary production and to various cultural activities which can be studied throughout the term from a comparative perspective. In one case we went to see two performances of the opera *Don Giovanni* (one classical, the other modern) in order to study it comparatively, while in another occasion we arranged for a cabaret performance to be shown at the university during one of our few face-to-face meetings with the students. All the material deriving from such activities is incorporated in the course's web page, together with samples of students' assignments, current news related to the topics under study, newspaper articles, etc.

Let me elaborate a little on the case of the *Diabolical Cabaret*, which presents a selection of women, both mythical and historical, who had to apologize – whether repentant or not, sincerely or cynically – for their thoughts, words or actions. In this case the course's web page contained both the text and a digitalized video of the show (the show had its premiere in July 2003 at the Sitges International Theatre Festival; in September 2003 it was performed at the university and became the object of analysis for the whole term). Scenes in the *Diabolical Cabaret* are inspired by the languages of the cabaret and music

hall, including ventriloquism, juggling, transformations, striptease, legerdemain, escapology, and other metaphors of illusion. It thus constitutes a good sample of the genres and registers of a semiotic terrain like theatre, and also allows us to discuss several important issues, such as the use of irony as indirect criticism, the technique of collage, and the gender approach to literary criticism. This provided a wonderful opportunity to examine some of the theoretical contents of the course in a practical fashion, focusing on contemporary culture and the current season's theatrical productions, which allowed students to realize that contemporary life need not be excluded from academic analysis and study.

As for 'Universal Literary Themes' (Borràs, 2001), given that there are already several published articles about it (Pinto, 2002 and Borràs, 2005; 2007b), I will only point out here that it has a markedly experimental character, since it strives to be a course that explores all of the teaching possibilities of hypertext in the teaching of literature from a comparative perspective. When we set out to design the course's material we tried to make exhaustive use of the features of the digital medium: plurality of viewpoints, openness, multi-linear organization, greater inclusion of non-textual information and a fundamental reconfiguration of access to academic discourse. This choice, however, entails the risk of falling into a 'traditionalist fallacy', that is, of turning educational material into a storeroom of contextual information or a kind of encyclopaedic compendium. If we constructed a simple, easily navigable hypertext, with unmarked reading paths that allow the possibility of 'getting lost', would that actually foster or hinder the learning process? In teaching students how to read literature from a comparative perspective, what should our aim be? To set up fixed buoys in the middle of the sea of navigation so that the students must inevitably follow a marked route or, on the contrary, to make them aware that 'getting lost' is inevitable in any reading process, including criticism itself? This dilemma recalls the reflections of Mireille Rosello (1997, pp. 147–88), who maintains that there are basically two ways for a user to tackle a hypertextual space: either you trace a route where previously there wasn't one or you use a previously prepared map. One can therefore distinguish between two paradigms for travellers: those who follow the first will come across discoveries, new frontiers, the attraction of adventure, but also the traumatic meeting with civilization and everyone being fit into the same straitjacket; the second kind of travel will be a process of decisions and selections, where the traveller chooses his/her own route in a network of pre-existing connections and nodes (Rosello, 1997, p. 156).

In preparing our course material we attempted to allow these two paradigms to coexist, since we feel that both are essential to the learning process. The critical-didactical texts incorporated in this course allow for multiple readings that exceed the principle of linearity and thus offer the possibility of combining analytical and hermeneutic discourses. They thus encourage the design of a literary map with multiple interconnected itineraries, while at the same time

allowing students to conceive and try out multiple routes in their critical reading and writing.

In a course like this, where students have access to abundant information (in hypertext materials and also virtual and printed resources), the role of the tutor is not so much to transmit information as to help the students deal with all the information available to them. As we point out to our students, right at the start of the course, our teaching philosophy promotes active and personalized criticism, tending more to the construction of individual reading routes than to the assimilation of pre-defined canons (Pinto, 2001 online). Consequently, the course draws the students' attention to certain themes that are amply represented in modern literature (such as travel, desire, and the identity/otherness dialectic, although of course there are many others) and to texts that serve as symptomatic instances of these themes. From our point of view, what is important is not a compulsory set of literary readings and theoretical and critical references, but rather the teaching of a way of reading. As is well known, one of the greatest discursive possibilities of hypertext is its potential to combine both a syntagmatic and a paradigmatic level of reading. We therefore always have a literary text that is considered as a discursive model and that serves as a matrix to introduce the theme that is being analysed. The texts are continually 'interrupted', annotated, 'reread' in order to offer commentaries and allusions to other possible reading routes, thus opening new interpretative perspectives, connections with conceptual associations and analogies, and also direct references to other texts (literary, cinematographic, pictorial, critical). All of this undoubtedly offers new ways to interact with literary texts and to make them meaningful. As Raffaele Pinto (2001, online) puts it, in addressing the students in the virtual classroom:

> By following the intertextual connections (both of a genetic and of an analogical type), which mark the route through a hypertext corpus, one traces reading routes that are fortuitous and totally subjective but at the same time illustrate the diffusion and articulation of the theme in the literary tradition. After familiarising themselves with the texts presented in the materials, and with the navigation tools that these materials offer, the students' main task in the course is to select some subjectively relevant themes and construct their own (hyper-) textual corpus. The development of both the earlier, more receptive, part of the course and the subsequent, more active, part involves a constant dialogue between the tutor and the students.

Thinking about the way in which we transmit information for educational purposes is never a neutral activity. The new digital paradigm invites us to reflect on the tactical decisions that we must adopt and, of course, on the way we transmit knowledge or foster its generation in the era of media literacy. Teaching in a virtual university entails a need to reformulate and reorganize the relationship between sources, information, and the modalities of its transmission

despite the fact that there may be lecturers at virtual universities who tend to just imitate old ways of teaching and use the virtual campus merely as a medium, without exploring the new possibilities it offers. In our day-to-day work as teachers of literature we cannot avoid dealing with electronic educational materials, online resources, digital libraries, websites of reference, virtual exhibitions, etc., as well as virtual workshops that are highly valued by students, as they allow them to compare their exercises with those of their colleagues and benefit from their criticism. The ways of testing 'validity' in a literary analysis have also been deeply modified, since we can now develop our critical discourse according to a logic that is no longer linear and deductive, but open and relational. We must react to the mere 'transfer of knowledge' by accompanying our students in their process of intellectual maturation, helping them learn how to organize and build their own learning process in a radically individualized way and to use their own initiative and capabilities. This amounts to a new approach to philology, which is clearly more attuned to the subject that has to interpret than the text that has to be interpreted, more focused on the person that is learning than on the one who is teaching. This does not entail a shrinking of the instructor's role but, on the contrary, a return to a more humanized and personalized education in which the teacher acts fully as a guide, as a critic, as a stimulus and as an agent of dialogue.

Notes

[1] According to recent data (September 2008), the University of Barcelona is again the only university in Spain to figure among the world's top 200 universities, based on the *Academic Ranking of World Universities 2008*. This international table, published annually by Shanghai Jiao Tong University, ranks the University of Barcelona in the 167th position, up three places from its 2007 standing.

[2] See Koskimaa, 2007 and Borràs, 2005; 2007a.

[3] Colleagues in the team which developed new methods and material for literature courses included Professors Joan Elies Adell, Raffaele Pinto, Carles Lindín, Isabel Moll, Victoria Cirlot, Enric Bou, Sam Abrams, Roger Canadell and Neus Rotger.

[4] A template is available at: http://www.uoc.es/humfil/ct/Hiper_educatius/itaca/talleritaca.htm [24 April 2009].

[5] I would like to acknowledge here the help of Francesc Tataret, editor of Eureca Media.

[6] This material is available at: http://www.hermeneia.net/exemples/avantguardes/index.htm [23 March 2009].

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Chapter 9

From Passive to Active Voices: Technology, Community, and Literary Studies

Louise Marshall and Will Slocombe

Perhaps one of the biggest barriers to the integration of technology into 'traditional' teaching and learning contexts is the way in which e-learning is perceived. For campus-based teachers and learners, used to face-to-face interactions, e-learning seems to add more distance, in the assumption that its adoption will automatically decrease face-to-face contact time. Open and distance teachers and learners, familiar with sporadic face-to-face contact and many of the mechanisms inherent to e-learning, question its value for campus-based learners – they have unmediated access to their teachers after all. These perceptions, despite gross inaccuracy in many respects, mean that those who advocate e-learning, or what is increasingly becoming known as 'technology-enhanced learning', face at best a lukewarm reception. In the context of our own experiences of 'advocating' e-learning, this chapter challenges some of these preconceptions by discussing how technology can bridge the divide between conceptual figurations of 'learning' and 'teaching' and, in so doing, empower students to steer their own learning.

We began the process of advocating e-learning during a project run by the UK's Higher Education Academy English Subject Centre. The 'E-learning Advocates Project' was intended to integrate e-learning practice into departmental culture by giving members of staff the opportunity to develop, in conjunction with colleagues, specific e-learning tools and solutions, and to establish a network of Advocates, across the subject, who could share ideas and practices. Over the two years in which the e-learning Advocacy project ran, activities ranged from individual experiments with discussion boards and wikis to the creation of technology-enhanced learning spaces, and from there to broader explorations of the ways in which technology can facilitate more efficient communication and enhance student learning experiences at a departmental level.[1] The notion of community was an integral component of this project, inasmuch as it not only created a group of literary studies scholars who could share experiences of using technological interventions, but also promoted the notion of departmental community, through the use of current department members to advocate the use of e-learning.

Our project concerned the principles of blended learning, that is, as Randy Garrison and Heather Kanuka have defined it 'the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences' (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004, p. 96). In contrast to e-learning, blended learning is concerned with the principle of 'the right tool for the job', and thus integrates and aligns numerous resources into the design and delivery of modules. To ameliorate possible confusion between the types of learning discussed in this chapter, it is worth noting the term 'technology-enhanced learning' has been coined, a neologism that emphasizes the role of technology in *enhancing* learning. Such a term adumbrates some of the principles of both e-learning and blended learning, in the sense that it deals with technological interventions in both teaching and learning support, but also in departmental administrative processes and, for us, in the types of skills we encourage our learners to acquire.[2]

To provide more detail on our project, we endeavoured to identify the most effective areas for the inclusion of technological provision into the department; most often, these were in the area of learning support. More broadly, however, our aim was to foster a sense of exploration of the potential rewards that technology could bring to learning environments, and specifically with regards to the skills students could develop through the use of technological interventions. Aside from staff and student consultations, a number of documents were generated, concerned with enhancing current use of the Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) within modules; devising new 'virtual' modules for PhD students to signpost teaching, research, and careers; and creating a 'skills scaffold' that would serve to identify the appropriate uses of technologies at the various levels of the department's programmes. The aim in these activities was always to ensure that the use of technology and technological support was always appropriate to the needs of the department. As such, the 'blend' of learning that we explored was intended to facilitate the successful integration of technology into staff and student practice, and to establish the ways in which such integration would benefit both learning and teaching support.

In exploring this concept of integration, our chapter focuses on one specific example of the way in which the integration of technology into the teaching of literary studies might promote and foster 'communities of learning' that, like our own communities of academic practice, are process- rather than goal-oriented. The example we have selected, bibliographies, is in many respects central to this concept of community. A bibliography is, after all, defined as 'the literature of a subject' (*OED*). Yet how many of us have provided students with a list of sources to read, assuming that students would manage to navigate the knowledge contained therein on their own? Does transferring the responsibility of reading 'the literature of a subject' to our students really constitute an effective teaching strategy? The simple answer, we feel, is no. Bibliographies do not, in themselves, engage students in the ongoing dialogues concerning a specific topic or concept. One of the aims of this chapter, therefore, is to explore

the role technology can play in transforming students from passive recipients to active participants in a community. The shift from tutor-authored bibliographies to technology-enhanced, student-centred research serves as an exemplar of the ways in which technology-enhanced learning can promote active engagement and enable students and tutors to participate in the co-creation of knowledge. Not only can a technology-enhanced literary studies curriculum facilitate deeper (as opposed to surface or strategic) learning, it can also serve a much broader purpose in enhancing the generation and transfer of knowledge across academic communities.

This is not to suggest that our approach is an original departure from existing pedagogic practice; rather, it attempts to blend existing methods with effective pedagogic strategies. In addressing literary studies as a technology-enhanced subject, we obviously need to acknowledge its status as a pedagogic community engaged in the co-creation of knowledge. But we also need to realize that the move away from independent scholarly activity towards networks or communities of scholars engaged in technology-enhanced research needs to be reflected in the pedagogy of our subject, particularly if one of our aims is to prepare our students for a workplace that is increasingly dependant upon and embedded within rapidly regenerating technologies.

Advocacy and Community

The rhetoric of *augmenting*, *enhancing*, *empowering*, *transforming*, and *facilitating* is often connected with e-learning in pedagogic discourse; it is important to note, however, that this rhetoric is fundamentally empty without sufficient care in the implementation of e-learning tools and specific strategies. Moving lecture timetables from a departmental notice board to an online Managed Learning Environment (MLE) is obviously not enough to 'empower' learners or teachers, just as uploading a lecture presentation to a VLE may not 'facilitate' learning more than a traditional paper-based lecture handout. One of the first points to emphasize, therefore, is that e-learning *has no inherent superiority over any other form of learning*. As ever, best practice dictates that technology should be utilized only where it can serve to enhance a learning environment (in the sense of 'the Bransford model' of student-centred, goal-oriented, knowledge-rich, and community-valued learning environments; see Chapter 6 of Bransford et al., 1999, pp. 117–42) or facilitate one of its key activities (support, delivery, or assessment).[3] In simply transplanting already successful techniques into an online environment we may gain wider access or enhanced administrative functionality, but no pedagogic benefit. A key issue in this discussion is therefore 'integration', whereby technology is seamlessly integrated into learning environments.

One of the primary barriers to the successful integration of technology into educational environments is the perceived appropriateness of technology as a teaching and learning tool.[4] Classroom take-up of technology may be slower

than its social usage, for pedagogic reasons ('Will this technology assist my students?') and also for pedagogic and personal beliefs ('Social networking has no place in a classroom'); learners may also resent the pedagogic adoption of these technologies, especially those, such as 'viral' technologies, that they perceive as 'theirs'. By 'viral', we mean those social environments that are both rapidly adopted and which serve to define communities of users; the most obvious examples would be Twitter or Facebook. For some teachers, such environments are seen as alien, vaguely threatening, and of limited use to their teaching. For students, having these environments appropriated by teachers may seem an oxymoronic encroachment on a personal social space, and this is a distinction that teachers might do well to preserve rather than blur, particularly as it tends to emphasize the differences between professional and private personae in other respects. However teachers and students might resist the integration of read/write web technologies into their pedagogic practices and experiences, we must note that the rapid spread of technology-enabled communities and online collaboration suggests a narrowing of the margins, in cyberspace at least, between the professional and the private spheres. Teaching students to exploit such communities in an informed way and towards academic goals seems a necessary research skill for the twenty-first-century literary studies environment.

Interestingly, in the course of our project we found that the notion of advocacy could be construed as detrimental to the sense of community. Although advocacy is not about 'top-down' directives from funding bodies or the institutional hierarchy, it can create divides between those who 'e-teach' and those who do not. The very notion of advocating technology was, for some, synonymous with enforcing the use of technology. Such misconceptions are often predicated upon Jürgen Habermas's notion of the public sphere in that, for many practitioners, pedagogy belongs to the private and only exists within the public sphere in terms of institutional- or governmental-level interventions (see Habermas, 1991). In this sense 'advocacy' appears to privilege the 'public' sphere and to question the value of personal pedagogic determinations. For many of us, 'pedagogy is personal' and the anxieties located within such a statement counterpoint the basic principles of community. That is, as much as students are wary of 'us' impinging upon 'their' social networking spaces we, as a collective subject, are also wary of a wider community impinging upon 'our' teaching environments.

In addition, many of us who have an interest in e-learning, technology-enhanced learning, or blended learning participate in communities of practice that traverse the divides between subjects or even educational settings. However, there is a need to develop communities of blended-practice that facilitate the development of technology-enhanced learning within the specific context of our own subject. In fact, such mechanisms already exist and should be actively exploited for the benefit of the community as a whole, its learners, and its teachers. The sharing of best practice (and even the reflective sharing of practice

that turned out not to be 'best' after all) *is* best practice. In a subject community that shares its blended-practice, ongoing transitions such as pedagogic developments, new technologies, and academic advances can easily filter into individual teaching strategies, strengthening the subject as a whole while broadening our own approaches and the experiences of our students. Advocacy projects can, therefore, act as a powerful stimulus in establishing communities that offer opportunities for the dissemination of practice, support pedagogic development, and act as a springboard for new ideas. Of course, since advocacy can also be perceived as a barrier to community, the methodology underpinning advocacy needs to be carefully considered. Just as we would never attempt to impose on our students the 'definitive' reading of a given text, we should never attempt to present our peers with a 'definitive' version of best pedagogic practice.

From Technology to 'Teachnology'

As researchers, we are repeatedly reminded of our responsibility for ensuring knowledge transfer and asked to identify the social impact afforded by our research projects. In contrast, as teachers we often oppose calls for an increased emphasis on skills acquisition and development, despite its significance for knowledge transfer and social impact, fearing that this would affect our devotion to content and specialist knowledge. If the oft-repeated mantra of 'research-led teaching' is to have any meaning, however, skills and academic knowledge are not and should not be mutually exclusive, and so we should also teach students about the processes involved in being a literary studies researcher. To facilitate the acquisition of such skills, literary studies pedagogy needs to move away from *attaching* or *adding* skills towards *integrating* them. Technology, and the integration of technology in pedagogy, has suffered from being treated as a virtual limb on the body of literary studies, a seemingly non-essential appendage, which has led to a variety of ironic misunderstandings. One simple, and very familiar, example is when a teacher implements a virtual discussion board as a mode for student interaction between class meetings but when the learners do not use it he/she decides that 'discussion boards don't work'. Such lack of use does not necessarily suggest that the students do not wish to use discussion boards or that they do not wish to engage more fully with their subject, but often that the value of the discussion board to their own learning has not been made clear to them.

As with any teaching strategy, then, technology-enhanced learning does not simply occur once the tools are made available to students. It takes more than a copy of *Tristram Shandy*, even a highly regarded scholarly edition, for students to produce nuanced critical analyses of Sterne's narrative and it likewise takes more than an online discussion board to produce student collaboration. We may expect students to possess the ICT skills required in

order to access and make use of the technologies available to them, in much the same way that we expect them to be able to read and write; but the relationship between technology and learning must be made explicit for skills and knowledge to emerge from any given pedagogic tool or activity. In too many cases, technological interventions are perceived, by both learners and teachers, as prosthetic to the material being studied. As a result, the inclusion of technological 'solutions' adds an insubstantial veneer of progress, and so often promotes a 'tick-box approach' to the integration of e-learning. Technology, however, is not prosthetic, or, more properly, no more prosthetic than any other communication media that we use in teaching.

While technology has thus come to mean something appended or additional, perhaps the neologism 'teachnology' can be used to highlight the goal of integrating teaching and technology. This term links pedagogic activity to technology's definition as dually focused on both skills (implicit in its definition as the 'practical arts collectively') and the more archaic notion of 'technical nomenclature' or the 'terminology of a particular art or subject' (*OED*). Teachnology asks that teachers consider carefully the various skills that they require students to develop in order to progress within the subject, and that they teach the language and rhetoric of the subject – its 'terminology' – through these 'practical arts'. Of course, the transition from technology to teachnology is not simple and requires not only significant investment in infrastructural, professional development, and planning terms, but also extensive consideration of the information literacy skills we want our students to gain, in broad terms (as a subject) and more narrowly (in order to facilitate specialist learning and enquiry). That is, the most effective use of teachnology is seen when the skills literary studies students need to develop are not discernible from those required for effective and informed use of available technologies, digital or otherwise.

In fact, as literary theorists have argued, the distinction between old and new media is already part of our subject. N. Katherine Hayles, for example, argues in her discussion of Media Specific Analysis that 'Literary criticism and theory are shot through with unrecognized assumptions specific to print' and contends that as electronic textuality 'vibrantly asserts its presence' these assumptions come to the fore (Hayles, 2002, pp. 29–30). However, this is not just true of 'born-digital' texts, but of the skills required to read texts in general; literary studies pedagogy, if unchanged, may only reinforce such 'print-based' assumptions. Moreover, not only can new technologies reveal the assumptions of print (such as a unidirectional interface or the material stability of the text), but also its implicit potential. In *Paper Machine*, discussing 'the book to come' and the issues raised by new media, Jacques Derrida states: 'A new economy is being put in place. It brings into coexistence, in a mobile way, a multiplicity of models, and of modes of archiving and accumulation. And that's what the history of the book has always been' (Derrida, 2005a, p. 17). For Derrida, this 'new economy' is paradoxically what 'history of the book has always been': in other words, the new (digital) economy appears to be predicated upon what

has always been the subject of literary studies. We do not need to change our subject to fit into the digital economy; rather, we have to demonstrate the ways in which the digital economy is already an aspect of our subject.

Seen by employers across industries as a subject that 'guarantees' graduates (at all levels) who are effective communicators, can literary studies programmes really afford to neglect new technologies and their communicative capabilities? Literary studies may well claim to comprehend both the '*previously* multimedia vectors' of paper and the fact that new media is not just 'a *development* of paper', that is, 'its virtual or implicit *possibilities*' (Derrida, 2005b, p. 47). In the context of the wider community, however, we are perhaps failing to address how our subject can contribute to the digital economy. Can literary studies enable students to develop the necessary skills to participate in the digital economy while also fulfilling the function of cultural commentator on, and producer of critiques of, this economy? In '*Différance*', Derrida asserts: 'The subject becomes a *speaking* subject only by dealing with the system of linguistic differences; or again, he becomes a *signifying* subject (generally by speech or other signs) only by entering the system of differences' (Derrida, 2004a, p. 289). Clearly, he is talking about language here, but there is something to be learnt about the 'subject' of literary studies itself. If we wish for our subject *to speak* and *to signify*, then rather than entrench ourselves in a position in which we rigorously assert our cultural value while refusing to participate in that culture, perhaps we should demonstrate that concepts such as information literacy, media and mediation, and interpretation and interpretative strategies are inherent to literary studies and always have been. If technology and mediation are 'always already' implicit to literary studies, then technology-enhanced learning and print-mediated pedagogies may not be as distinct or 'alien' to our trade as we usually take them to be.

Technology-enhanced Communities of Learning

When anecdotally discussing his ongoing debates with Meyer Abrams, Stanley Fish reveals something of how the notion of community works in relation to the academic subject. He states that 'a way of thinking, a form of life, shares us', thereby highlighting their mutual membership in a community of literary scholars. According to him, that they 'advance and counter arguments, dispute evidence, concede points and so forth' is only possible because they share 'possible labels of identification within a universe of discourse' (Fish, 1980, pp. 303–4). This is, of course, Fish's well-known concept of an interpretative community, which is not a meaningless interpretative free-for-all but a community that regulates which interpretative strategies are possible or acceptable. Readers do not 'own' their own interpretative strategies, and so however much we discuss promoting the need for students to feel that they 'own' their subject, we must equally realize, to quote Fish, that '[strategies] proceed not from him

[the interpreter] but from the interpretative community of which he is a member' (Fish, 1980, p. 14). In effect, the purpose of literary studies pedagogy is not to teach students 'how to read' but 'how to be a member of a community that reads'.

We can take such concepts further when we consider Randy Garrison and Terry Anderson's 'communities of inquiry' and its corollary, 'communities of practice'.[5] A community of inquiry brings together cognitive, social, and teaching concerns to produce a constructivist model of learning. It is explicitly associated with computer-mediated communication (CMC), and it is through an understanding of the role of CMC that we can understand how a 'technology-enhanced community of learning' can be produced. In fact, the term 'computer-*mediated* communication' reinforces an assumption that haunts e-learning; that it increases the 'distance' between learner and teacher by being mediated through technology. However, such prevailing assumptions seem to miss the point that all communication is mediated, whether by speech, writing, or computers.[6] Rather, we understand the link between Fish's 'interpretative community' and Garrison and Anderson's 'community of inquiry' to be the creation of communities of practice that are (sometimes, but not necessarily always) best facilitated through technology. Thus, perhaps CMC should be defined for our purposes here as 'community-mediated content', whereby the dual concept of community and communication is generated across multiple media, both face-to-face and 'technological'. What we are advocating is the use of technology to facilitate learning predicated upon communication; communication between learners (be they 'students' or 'tutors') whereby communities of learning will reflect the pedagogic practice of the subject, valuing community production alongside individual achievement. To appropriate a famous phrase of Derrida's: 'Teaching is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of materials, some content enclosed in a classroom or MLE, but a differential community, a fabric of discussions referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential discussions'.[7]

Communities of learning thus promote student-centred learning by providing mechanisms through which students can become co-creators of knowledge rather than the recipients of information. Within the community, learners can work to their own strengths in terms of best meeting their own learning styles (however problematic the notion of learning styles might be, we all have preferences in terms of the ways in which we find, organize, and think about information). Both learners and their teachers are not only exposed to a range and variety of learning styles but also engage in active learning through participation, a core requisite of any community activity.

Nevertheless, why is a technology-enhanced community so useful? Technology enables the community to form (in much the same way as academic research networks function), and students are exposed to tools with a purpose, be it for communication within groups, or for locating, storing, analysing, or presenting information. Albeit with some prompting and support, technology

thus acts as both a 'glue' to facilitate cohesion and as a conduit for self-directed community activity. The value of a technology-enhanced community of learning is, of course, genuinely interdisciplinary and there are a myriad of possible responses to the issue of subject specificity. Nevertheless, the following discussion aims to develop one example of a subject-specific benefit, how a technology-enhanced approach to bibliographies, the 'dynamic' bibliography, might usefully enhance our current approach to a core element in the assessed work integral to all literary studies programmes.

Interpretative Communities: The Dynamic Bibliography

As we have mentioned above, the implementation of e-learning tools does not in and of itself necessarily augment or enhance students' learning opportunities. One of the clearest examples of this is the use of the online bibliography, which raises a number of questions, such as: what are the inherent benefits of an online bibliography? How many learners read these sources? How can we, as teachers, ensure that they do? Even if the VLE links to the library Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), a module database, and a reading list, this does not necessarily entail that students will make use of the resource in an effective way. Without mediated interaction, online bibliographies remain static learning support materials, much as their paper-based counterparts.

'Stasis' is one of the reasons why bibliographies, despite their status as 'the literature of a subject', can run counter to the concept of community. A bibliography can be defined as a list of sources that should be consulted and quoted. Nevertheless, the notion of a source from which information can be extracted is very different from a source that is to be engaged with and assimilated. How many students assume that it is enough to state that '*x* says', rather than understanding and critically engaging with not just what was said, but why it was said? How many treat such sources in isolation, rather than in the context of a debate about a particular concept or interpretation? Furthermore, from a pedagogic point of view, some students will – usefully perhaps – abandon the course bibliography and go off to find their own sources; others will not consult it, or any other sources, at all and instead rely on what they are told by the teacher or their peers. There is usually no real feedback, past the nebulous concept of 'external reading' or 'independent research' found in assessment criteria, as to how a bibliography can or should be used.[8] The necessary skills to understand and construct bibliographies, so vital as students move on to higher degrees and increasingly independent research, are often not being effectively conveyed at an early stage. Considering how much time teachers take to assess the usefulness of sources, and to write and update bibliographies, there is clearly an asymmetrical relationship between the energy invested in the bibliography and the pedagogic value it actually has. Nevertheless, there are ways in which bibliographies can be made more valuable.

When teaching critical sources, many teachers use questions to enable students to approach critical resources: 'which aspects of *y* does the author emphasize?' or 'how does the author define *x*?' Such questions can be usefully linked to a bibliographic activity in a virtual 'paper chain'. By getting students to read a 'central' essay, and then asking them to (individually or in groups) follow an especially interesting bibliographic entry and summarize the source (using the form of questions noted above), students can successfully 'backtrack' to understand how that article used its sources. This approach utilizes the principle of hypertextuality, and modular and distributed networks, by producing a hyperlinked bibliography of one article, and then defining the course bibliography from this example. It can also be augmented to incorporate the concept of 'forward tracking', where students are asked to look at the number of citations that a particular article has had (on a database such as ISI Web of Knowledge or SCOPUS), and then follow one of them to analyse the ways in which the original essay was used.[9] Over the duration of a module, and by posting such brief reviews to a dynamic online environment, students gain access to the genealogy of the original source and also make use of the brief peer-produced reviews to decide what might be useful for themselves. Despite its initial centrality, the original essay quickly becomes understood within the context of wider community debate. Moreover, and more importantly, students may come to produce a 'user-defined' module bibliography rather than having one provided for them. Over several iterations of this, or across several groups on the same module, a richly detailed tapestry can emerge from one article, and if different articles are used in subsequent years, a vast array of student-reviewed sources can be generated and made available to the learning community.[10]

In this activity, and there are undoubtedly many more applicable examples that have been and are being explored within the subject community, the primary concern is to promote the concept of the bibliography as a dynamic, rather than static entity, and as an active community product rather than a passive list of isolated entries. Students may use online bibliographies to develop independent research skills alongside increased information literacy. Likewise, our example utilizes the concept of community value to produce a knowledge-rich environment, rather than implying to students that such an environment is 'at a distance' from them. Finally, and perhaps most importantly for a pedagogically sound '(interpretative) community of inquiry', the teacher is no longer the transcendent provider of information, but a co-creator (and co-consumer) – with the students – of the (ongoing) production. Such an example serves to demonstrate how the concept of teachnology can enhance bibliographies to actually promote effective learning of both knowledge and skills. Moreover, it can be scaled up or down to fit any given learning context, and can be employed to address other issues that have significant resonance for researchers such as interdisciplinarity, knowledge transfer, and social impact. Such factors are vital in tracing how technology can be purposefully integrated into the multiplicity of learning environments with which we engage. Not only

can a technology-enhanced literary studies curriculum facilitate successful learning in our students, it can also serve a much broader purpose in enhancing knowledge creation and transfer across academic communities.

The Subject of the Subject? From Passive to Active Voices

In exploring the role that technology has to play within the subject, and seeing the ways in which technology-enhanced learning can facilitate the development of skills alongside the acquisition of knowledge, we have tried to keep the concept of community central throughout. In so doing, we are moving away from the paradigm that 'the teacher teaches the learner' in which the student is positioned as the object, rather than the subject, of his/her learning. What the integrated concepts of teachnology, interpretative communities, communities of learning, and technology-enhanced learning environments (TELEs) demonstrate is that we must provide ways for students to become members of a subject community. Thus, each of these concepts reinforces the distinction between the 'actor' and being 'acted upon', or between 'I was taught' and 'I am learning'. If we want students to engage with the subject, then we must facilitate activities and opportunities in which they are active, not passive, and the subject, not the object. In this sense, and referring back to Derrida's notion of the 'subject', teachnology can be used to enable the student *to speak* and *to signify* within the community of the subject itself, through understanding not just its terminology and knowledge but also how to act as a member of the subject community. The student is, in proper terms, the 'subject' of the subject of literary studies and technology-enhanced learning can promote this community-valued, yet student-centred attitude.

In terms of technology-enhanced learning, there is one important way in which our students are already taking active ownership of their own learning, through the creation of individualized TELEs. With the growth in mobile technologies the decision whether or not to adopt a TELE is, we would argue, no longer a choice made solely by the teacher and, as such, students themselves negotiate the degree of 'blend' realized in their learning environments. Should we not, therefore, be prepared to make best use of the tools that students bring to our teaching environments? Even if our institution does not provide TELEs or if we as practitioners choose to teach in a 'traditional' environment, should we not embed, or at least recognize the value of, our students' choices in shaping their own learning environment? Whether opportunities for creating a TELE are instigated by individual student users or as part of a teacher-devised classroom strategy, our own pedagogic practices need to recognize the potential of the student-directed teaching environment.

A further consideration relating to students acting as 'the subject of the subject' arises in the cultural shift towards collaboration. Given the spread of viral technologies, particularly those that facilitate collaborative working, many

of our students will increasingly have access to a virtual pool of knowledge that further blurs distinctions between teacher and learner. Knowledge-transfer environments (such as Wikipedia) that foster collaboration and rely on peer-review for self-validation are not so dissimilar, in principle, from research environments. In using such tools, students are already demonstrating their engagement with co-created knowledge and their understanding of the benefits of collaboration, already making the transition from 'pupil' to independent scholar that higher education has formally defined as its aim. Community is a principle associated with highly valued learning habits and if such habits are more easily acquired in technology-enhanced learning environments then this in itself is a compelling argument for facilitating our students to determine their own 'blend'.

Hence, what is proposed in this chapter is perhaps best summarized in the notion of communities of learning deconstructing the gap between subject and object, teacher and learner. Derrida writes of deconstruction as a 'double gesture', 'an *overturning* of the classical opposition *and* a general *displacement* of the system' (Derrida, 1982, p. 329), and we can detect a similar gesture occur within communities of learning. Communities of learning *overturn* the hierarchy of teacher/learner, so that the learner becomes the teacher, *and displace* the system in the shared space of the communal learning environment. The experiences of teacher and learner are shared, not because their experiences are the same but because both roles are inextricable. Technology-enhanced learning and emergent cyber-habits act to further this relational symbiosis so that, if 'to teach is to learn' then 'to learn' realizes its full potential as 'to teach'.

Notes

[1] See the ESC website for more information on individual E-learning Advocates projects (http://www.english.heacademy.ac.uk/explore/projects/archive/technology/tech24.php).

[2] The notion of Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) as distinct from e-learning has been the focus of various pedagogic research initiatives since the early 2000s. ProLearn (http://www.prolearn-project.org/) and Kaleidoscope (http://www.noe-kaleidoscope.org/pub/) are two EU-funded initiatives. In 2007, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) embedded TEL at strategic level in their circular, 'Enhancing Learning and Teaching through Technology: a Strategy for Higher Education in Wales', available online (http://194.81.48.132/LearningTeaching_Docs/W0742HE_circ.pdf).

[3] What is commonly termed 'the Bransford model' is in fact 'the Bransford, Brown, and Cocking model' or 'the Committee on Developments in the Science of Learning model', as it was created by this committee, and edited and published by the two co-chairs and the study director (see Bransford et al., 1999, pp. v–vii).

In an article on the importance of community, it is important to note that authorship was communal rather than solitary.

[4] See Joint Information Systems Committee, 'Student expectations survey' (available online at http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/publications/studentexpectations.aspx) for more. See also Ginns and Ellis, 2006, for a discussion of prior research and the importance of student perceptions.

[5] See Garrison and Anderson, 2000, for one of their first definitions of a 'community of inquiry'.

[6] To assume that face-to-face contact is unmediated, and thus automatically more beneficial to students in all circumstances, is to fall prey to the 'myth of presence' and the same phonocentric assumptions through which Derrida deconstructs Saussure's work.

[7] Derrida's original statement reads: 'A text is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces' (Derrida, 2004b, p. 69).

[8] In our experience, one of the most frequent criticisms mentioned by students on module evaluation forms is 'lack of bibliographic information'. Despite lists of tens of sources (and sometimes over a hundred), this criticism clearly reveals that current methods neither enable students to understand the function of bibliographies nor successfully relate their subject knowledge to their information-seeking behaviours.

[9] One way of enhancing this activity can be visualized by picturing within the original article the play of *différance*, as both a chronological and syntagmatic 'deferral' and a paradigmatic 'difference'. This can usefully emphasize various axes – citations within or of an author's works, or across a particular field, debate, or concept – alongside demonstrating how this 'play' functions.

[10] Of course, this activity is equally applicable in an offline environment, using postcards, posters, or folders, but it can be managed much more effectively online. Furthermore, online environments can also enable the use of 'tagging' by students, facilitating ease of use, and generate module folksonomies (user-defined structures) rather than hierarchical taxonomies.

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Chapter 10

Using Technology to Overcome Cultural Restrictions

Ayesha Heble

Introduction

Technology has long been known to enable human beings to overcome physical limitations – of space, time and distance. In fact, technology could be defined as any method used to overcome physical limitations in order to achieve some end. But can technology also help us in overcoming more intangible limitations, such as cultural restrictions? Can it contribute to helping people examine their own attitudes, develop their personalities, question their beliefs? These are some of the questions I asked myself while designing an online course to teach literature to a group of Arab students at Sultan Qaboos University in the Sultanate of Oman, one of the countries in the Arabian peninsula.

Initially I was highly sceptical about using technology to teach a 'touchy-feely' subject such as literature and specifically a course on drama, which seemed to require a more personalized approach. However, having completed a course on e-learning myself, part of which required me to design an online course using WebCT, I decided to implement it in one of the courses I was asked to teach for the semester. Moreover, as I was required to teach two sections of the same course, 'Introduction to Drama', I decided to engage in a small experiment and teach one section entirely face-to-face, while introducing online elements to supplement my classroom teaching in the other section. This article is the result of that experience. I will initially describe the online course I developed, then discuss its merits and demerits, and finally attempt a comparison between the results achieved in each of the two sections. More importantly, I will focus on the success of online teaching in helping students overcome their cultural inhibitions and engage in an active exchange of opinions and ideas across genders, to an extent that would be unthinkable in a face-to-face educational situation in their cultural setting.

Background

I would first like to say a few words about the specific educational situation I will be discussing here. My students at Sultan Qaboos University, where I teach

English, are all Arabs and Muslim. I mention this because religion plays a very important role in any form of social interaction in the Middle East, far more so than it does in most other societies. For example, although the university is co-educational, most of the classes are segregated: female students enter the classroom from separate doors and always sit at the back of the class (this, incidentally, was by their own choice, so that male students cannot look at them). They also eat in separate canteens and walk along separate corridors. Obviously, mixed-gender group work was not an option – although I will say that I succeeded in putting on a production of *Antigone* in which both male and female students took part but with separate scenes for each group. The Greek tradition of using masks has certainly helped in this.

Furthermore, even though I was teaching a course in literature, language development is an unspoken objective in all our courses since English is a foreign language for most of the students. Most of the students have completed one to two years of English at the Language Centre after enrolling at the university, in addition to nine years of compulsory English at school. In spite of this, their level of English, especially in the early semesters, is fairly weak, although, of course, it varies from student to student. Most importantly, they do not seem to have a culture of reading outside the course – although that may be true nowadays of most teenagers – so their critical/literary skills are not well developed. Many of them are first-generation tertiary-level students; in a lot of cases they were the first person in their village to go to university. And certainly, many of the young women in my class are the first females in their families to be educated at all. It is only in the last 40 years or so (since the present Sultan came to power) that schools have been built for girls. The third important consideration to keep in mind is that the educational system these students studied within depends largely on rote-learning rather than encouraging original or critical thinking. At the university we have some of the brightest of Oman's students – young men and women who have scored above 90 per cent in their high-school certificate exams – but unfortunately these exams mainly reflect the ability to memorize and regurgitate whole chunks from textbooks. In fact, many students are shocked to find that this is no longer acceptable at university. From the teachers' point of view, this also means having to deal with the problem of plagiarism – whole assignments that have simply been copied verbatim from their sources – and, of course, with access to the internet it is even possible for students to get ready-made term papers too.

Aims

One of my main aims in the Introduction to Drama course, apart from introducing the students to a new literary genre, was to encourage them to develop their academic skills: to learn how to engage in individual research, analyse

information and compare it to their own experience, and express their own opinions. In addition to this, I was keen to see how they would react to some of the issues raised by the plays we were going to be discussing: a fifth-century BC Greek play, Sophocles' *Antigone*; a nineteenth-century Scandinavian play, Ibsen's *A Doll's House*; and a twentieth-century American play, Susan Glaspel's *Trifles*. All three plays centre around women protagonists and question the male-dominated societies they represent. I was interested in seeing how my students might be able to apply some of the questions being raised in the plays to their own situations, and whether they would be able to identify with characters who came from social backgrounds entirely different from their own.

In more down-to-earth terms, one of my aims was also to get students to improve their language skills in reading and summarizing information from various sources, writing academic papers, correcting their own written work, giving oral presentations and so on. As I said earlier, some of the unwritten aims of all the courses we teach is language development, and helping students to become independent learners. Many students are unwilling to correct their own mistakes in their written work, ignoring the feedback from their teachers and repeating the same mistakes again and again, so I had to find ways to get them to take responsibility for their own work.

Methodology

I introduced students to the course on the first day we met in the laboratory. I got them to look at the various components – the course content (which included the syllabus, the calendar, content modules and a glossary); the communication tools with the discussion board; the study tools, in which I had included the MLA style sheet for them to refer to; and the evaluation tools in which I had included their assignments, a self-test and a quiz. I had designed and entered all these components in the two weeks before the summer holidays, including links to various articles and websites they could refer to. Some options that were included in the WebCT menu I had 'hidden' from the students – such as chat or mail – since I didn't want to have to deal with the possible misuse of them. The whiteboard I had hidden because I didn't know how to use it myself!

My students, like almost anybody under the age of 20, took to the technology like the proverbial ducks to water. One or two of them even obligingly helped me out with some of the instructions, like how to access the list of all the students, which I did not know how to do until then. In fact, the content of the course was almost exactly the same as in my face-to-face class – reading a play in class, writing a report on it – except that this section would have to submit finished reports and other assignments online. I also gave students feedback online and found that this had quite an impact on the follow-up work they did

to improve their writing skills. I had explained that I would be using an elaborate colour code to highlight their language mistakes – yellow for structural errors or grammar mistakes, blue for spelling, green for punctuation and magenta for wrong word choice. Many students were worried that they would end up with multi-coloured assignments, and some of them certainly did. But this seemed to have the desired effect of getting them actually to work on correcting their errors and improving their writing skills.

Findings

In order to assess the effectiveness of online teaching I used the fairly traditional standard of the end of semester exam, comparing the results on the two sections of the course. Although I was rather disappointed with the results of the online group (which will be discussed later), I realized that online teaching was successful in rather more intangible and unforeseen ways.

It was really in the group project that I recognized the full potential of using online tools. The initial part of the project was research oriented. The students had to make group presentations in class, with each member of the group talking about a different aspect of Greek drama. This was very successful and they responded with great enthusiasm. We had Power Point presentations in class showing what Greek theatres looked like, the kind of costumes and masks they wore, a brief comparison of some of the major Greek playwrights, some of the major themes of Greek drama and other aspects. It did not matter that the students had got most of their information from the internet; they had done their own research on a topic that was completely unfamiliar to them, analysed this information, and presented it in their own words in class. One of the groups even put up a short performance of one of the plays, wearing masks that they had made themselves. In fact all the groups prepared short performances at the end of their presentations and, for some of the women especially, this might have been their first experience of performing in front of a mixed audience. So, in terms of developing their language skills and self-confidence, this was a great success.

The other, more traditional face-to-face section of the course also gave the students the opportunity to participate in a performance of the play. In fact, they had the opportunity to do a full-scale production of the play in front of a live audience, though obviously this was only possible for some of the members of the class, not all as in the online section. When I put the idea to them initially, some of the brighter and more articulate students agreed to take part. As mentioned earlier, we had quite a lot of success in putting on a production of *Antigone* in which both female and male students took part but, after a lot of discussion and consultation with parents and guardians, they decided that they would not act in the same scenes together. So we decided to do separate 'females only' and 'males only' scenes, with one of the young women taking on the role

of Creon in the scene in which he and Antigone appear together. Since they wore masks, following the Greek tradition, this did not pose much of a problem, and the traditional Omani dresses for both men (*dishdashas*) and women (*abayas*) were easily adapted to look like flowing Greek robes.

We will now examine the implications of online teaching for developing the students' critical/literary skills. Did it make any difference? Looking at the final exam results of both sections it would seem not; in fact, if anything, the face-to-face section had the better results (see Table 10.1). The face-to-face group (Section 10) had two A's (8 per cent of the class) while the online group (Section 20) did not have any. On the other hand, the percentage of B's in the latter was higher (32 per cent) than in the traditionally taught group (24 per cent). The percentage of students getting C's was marginally higher in the online group (54 per cent) than in the other section (52 per cent), while the percentage of D's was the reverse – 16 per cent in Section 10 as against 12.5 per cent in Section 20. This would seem to suggest that the range of achievement was greater in the traditionally taught group, with more students at either extreme, while there seemed to be more homogeneity in the online group. In general, however, I would say that these differences were not very conclusive, either in favour of online teaching or against it, especially considering the various other factors that came into play – the intellectual and linguistic level of the students, among other things. But again, I think it was in group projects that the success of using online tools was manifest.

I had made it clear from the beginning that students would get marks for their participation in the discussion board, graded according to the quality of their contributions rather than merely the number of 'hits'. I wrote an initial question and the students took over. It was wonderful to see the enthusiasm with which they participated. Sometimes the discussion got quite heated; one of the students, for example, offered a fairly unconventional approach, saying that he sympathized with Creon's character, and was criticized strongly by one

Table 10.1 Comparative results of WebCT class and face-to-face (f-2-f) class

Section 10	**(f-2-f group)**		**Section 20**	**(WebCT group)**	
Grade	**No. of students**	**Percentage**	**Grade**	**No. of students**	**Percentage**
A–	2	8%	A–		
B+	–	–	B+	2	8%
B	5	20%	B	1	4%
B–	1	4%	B–	5	20%
C+	7	28%	C+	–	–
C	1	4%	C	7	29%
C–	5	20%	C–	6	25%
D+	4	4%	D+	3	12.5%
D	3	12%	D	–	–

of the others. This was all taken in the right spirit, however, and one of the students even made an explicit comment about the value of exchanging different opinions about such issues:

> hello, dears, even if we have different opinions we have to accept them and that what makes discussion more interesting. on the other hand it offers and excite more questions around what we have discussed!!

We have to remember that this was happening in a society in which individuals are generally not encouraged to question received wisdom, and education is seen more in terms of transferring knowledge than critically examining it – so this kind of questioning and exploring of unconventional ideas was entirely unexpected.

The other exciting possibility that technology opened up was in allowing students to express themselves without reservation. Again, we have to remember that this is a society in which there is very little interaction between genders, and women are not encouraged to talk with men outside their own families. But, thanks to the relative distance effected by the online medium, the young men and women in the class – especially the women – were able to exchange their views in a fairly uninhibited manner. One of the quieter young women in the class even suggested a game they could play, which she called 'Let's have some fun!' in which one of them would ask a question (about Greek drama) and the first person who answered it correctly would go on to ask the next question, and so on. I doubt whether she would ever have dreamt of doing this in a face-to-face situation. On the whole I tried to keep out of the discussion, except for an occasional posting to acknowledge and encourage the students' enthusiasm and also to provide some feedback on their language skills, though I did not want to cramp their style with too much intervention about spelling and grammar.

I was particularly excited by some of the ideas expressed in the discussion. Khalifa, one of the young men, had this to say:

> How r u brothers and sisters, whenever man manipulate woman, the society become inequal, I mean what happens in the play Antigone is in somehow similar to what happens in Trifles. The man has the power over the woman and that create problems that kept unsolved [*sic*]. Further the women want to emancipate themselves, they fail to do so. However this patriarchal society does not give the women her rights in society.

As a reply we had this from a female student:

> If i am Muna as i am now, I will think deeply how to solve this nation issue. I will always have my dream of being a new WOMAN, on my mind. And I won't

let today's disappointments cast a shadow on tomorrow's dreams. I won't talk or give an idea before I think of it from all sides.

Conclusions

What were my conclusions about the relative merits of online teaching as opposed to the more traditional face-to-face approach? Perhaps the only valid observation I can make is that one cannot make such comparisons! Both experiences were valuable; I enjoyed teaching both sections equally, and I think the students benefited from both, but perhaps in different ways. If any comparison is possible, it would probably show that while the more traditional type of classroom tended to encourage those students who were already brighter and more articulate to excel even more, the online classroom encouraged all the students in the class, even the quieter ones, to participate and express themselves. More importantly, it encouraged them to look outside themselves, to examine their own situation in the light of a broader context, to overcome certain cultural restrictions that they may never have questioned before.

Muslim women in general, and Arab women in particular, are generally thought of as living very restricted lives, entirely dominated by men, and to a certain extent perhaps this is true. Omani women generally do not interact with men outside their own families and, although more and more Omani women are going out to work (indeed, there are a few women in top government positions), in general their place is seen as within the home. However, the young women I came into contact with at the university seemed to represent a new generation of women, articulate, intelligent, aware of their role in society and willing to question some of the restrictions imposed on them. The use of online tools certainly seems to have encouraged them to formulate and express their opinions and to communicate with their male counterparts at a level that would probably be unthinkable in a face-to-face educational situation.

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Part Three

Digital Tools and Web Applications

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Chapter 11

Literature in Digital Culture: Pedagogical Possibilities

Raine Koskimaa

There are two main arguments I want to make as a starting point for this chapter. First, literature in the traditional sense has given way to electronic and, increasingly, digital media in the overall media landscape. Second, literature itself has changed significantly since the birth of electronic media. Both of these arguments bear crucial consequences for the teaching of literature today. What follows is an elaboration of these issues.

Literature and the New Media Landscape

We have been witnessing a fundamental cultural change taking place since the latter part of the twentieth century. The rise of the electronic media has challenged textually and literarily driven cultural formations with ever expanding force, so that theorists such as Marshall McLuhan (1962) have claimed, from the 1960s on, that we have left the 'Gutenberg Galaxy' behind and it is now electronic communication, instead of print media, which drives cultural development. For McLuhan, television was the dominant electronic medium. Since then, the internet and World Wide Web have grown into a global metamedia, for which it is quite hard to find precedents. Thus, Manuel Castells (1999) has named the era we are currently living in as the 'Internet Galaxy'. In addition to altering the roles of already existing media, the rise of the digital new media has brought along the development of new forms of expression. A far-ranging change in media landscape is taking place at the moment and the birth of digital literature in its various forms is indeed part of that change.

Indicators for print literature have been almost surprisingly good so far. In Finland, which serves here as an exemplary case of a Western information society, the amount of books printed and sold is steadily increasing.[1] The average print runs are somewhat diminishing, but the amount of titles published is increasing. Despite the fact that most households have an internet connection, that networked computers have entered nearly all classrooms, that many people spend several hours weekly playing digital games, literature and reading seem to be doing fine. But there are also opposite tendencies to detect. Elementary-school teachers in Finland are increasingly worried because,

according to their testimonies, pupils with limited reading skills are more and more common. Also, the amount of pupils not reading literature at all is increasing. At the same time, these children may be well versed in employing the digital new media for informational as well as entertainment purposes – at least a part of them are compensating with *electracy* (a term coined by Gregory Ulmer, 2002) what they are lacking in literacy.

No matter what the future may hold for the literary world (i.e. writing, publishing and selling books, reading them, authors and books partaking in the public discourse), literature already exists in quite a different cultural context than it did just a few decades ago. Even if certain contemporary works look exactly like older literary pieces in their formal, structural, and semiotic aspects, they are nevertheless written and read in this new context. Writing and reading strategies as well as our cognitive-emotional engagement with literature are quite different today than during previous historical periods. The challenge brought along to teaching literature could be described as a need for a 'media-specific analysis' of literary works, as argued especially by N. Katherine Hayles (2002). This is a two-fold task: first, there is a need to understand the character of literary discourse, based on the material conditions of its existence and on the new conventions developed around it; second, we need to acquire an understanding of the overall media landscape, as well as related user-spectator-audience behaviour, and to see literature as a medium operating among others.

Literary works may also reflect the new media forms in their own structuring. The email novel, for example, is a natural descendant of the traditional epistolary genre, but with the wholly new temporal perspective of real-time, online communication (see e.g. Keskinen, 2004). It is an important task for basic research in literary studies to recognize how notions of everyday life, changing by the growing role of information and communications technologies, are reflected in literature, and what consequences this has for narrative, semiotic, cognitive, etc. structures in literature. To properly address these issues, literary studies needs to apply more cultural context-sensitive approach when analysing contemporary literature.

Finally, we need to recognize that a new kind of literature has emerged out of the digital environment. We may refer to these new kinds of works as 'cybertexts' or 'technotexts' (see Aarseth, 1997, and Hayles, 2002, respectively). No matter what the chosen term, it is important to keep in mind the plurality that is easily forgotten behind the unifying umbrella term: there is a huge variation of possible approaches to the new textuality, and it is easy to forecast that, so far, we have just seen the first glimpses of what is to come.

Pedagogical Possibilities

So far we have mainly dealt with questions which are primarily challenges to literary studies and, consequently, problematic issues in teaching. To face this

type of challenge, pedagogical innovations are not sufficient. Rather, research advancing on this front should also furnish the tools required for pedagogical purposes. There are, however, certain pedagogical possibilities offered by the new digital technology, which may be employed in teaching both traditional and digital literature.

As a first example of this kind of possibilities I would like to mention the role-based online discussion as a method for teaching literary history. This kind of approach, called 'The Ivanhoe Game', is described in detail by Jerome McGann (2001). Whereas 'The Ivanhoe Game' serves both research and pedagogical purposes, a simpler, more clearly pedagogically oriented version of a role-based online discussion has been employed in a course on European literary history at the University of Jyväskylä for a few semesters now with encouraging results. In this version, each student is appointed a certain character from the historical period under scrutiny (e.g. an author) and then seeks information about that character, as well as the historical period in general. Thus equipped, students should be able to conduct online discussions impersonating their assigned characters. For current students, who are often quite well versed in online chat and frequently also experienced in the type of identity play favoured in anonymous chat channels, this should not be that strange an approach.

Another possibility with great pedagogical potential, so far greatly underused, is the application of various visualization methods of literary structures on the computer screen. Some hypertextual scholarly editions of literary classics visualize connections between parts of a certain work, and hypertextual linking is certainly useful in making various intertextual allusions visible; but we should also consider applications like the 'TextArc' (Paley, online) as innovative ways to concretize semantic, syntactic, phonetic, and other structures of literary works. The combination of auditory and visual presentation in an interactive environment may prove to be an efficient way to demonstrate prosodic nuances.

We should also keep in mind that there is a new field of literary discussion in the online world. There are various discussion areas devoted to literary issues, often focusing on particular authors or texts. There are literary web journals publishing articles and literary criticism – as an example we could mention a Finnish webzine, *Kiiltomato*, whose mission is to publish criticism on books which do not gain much attention in the mainstream media.[2] Last but not least, we must mention the blossoming of literary web logs, or 'blogs'. Blogs offer a chance for literary dialogue in the peculiar temporal setting of blog writing, where publishing is instantaneous (after pressing 'Submit' the text being submitted is immediately available for online readers) and almost real-time commenting and discussion are possible. As posts are being maintained in an archive, a certain discussion may continue for a longer period and attract comments long after its initial emergence. Thus, the literary blog is a case of asynchronous communication which now and then comes close to real-time

communication. In literary blogs the discourse is often essayistic or otherwise 'poetic', in sharp contrast to the information-oriented web discourse. Both literary blogs and discussion forums bear a huge potential for literary pedagogy, as they allow students to engage in discussion with the authors whose works they are studying, as well as with specialists or enthusiasts on certain literary topics, and to receive a kind of informal peer-review of their tentative ideas.

What is Digital Literature?

At this point, it is high time to define what we mean by 'digital literature'. We can distinguish at least three quite different meanings for this term:

1. *Digital Publishing.* This is a perspective which focuses on the production and marketing of literature, and books in general, with the aid of digital technology. It includes such publication practices as eBooks, Print On Demand, AudioBooks made available as MP3 files, etc. Content-wise it is literature in the traditional sense, as digital technology here serves mainly packaging and distribution purposes. Even though developments in this field have been much slower than expected, there is still potential for further growth, as people read more and more from computer screens and expectations of online accessibility increase constantly. Literary texts may prove to pose the strongest resistance to this development, but the situation is entirely different when we consider textbooks and other non-fiction works (on these issues see Koskimaa, 2003).

2. *Scholarly literary hypertext editions* for educational and research purposes. This category includes hypertextually annotated literary works, as well as multimedia implementations of literary classics. Due to copyright reasons, these are mainly older works. Early accounts of the pedagogical potential of literary hypertext editions were quite enthusiastic (see e.g. Landow, 1993). Jerome McGann, on the other hand, has strongly advocated the novel possibilities opened up for research by hypertextuality and other digital technologies (McGann, 2001).

3. *Writing for Digital Media.* Digital texts are always *programmed* texts, that is, based on computer code. This opens up a limitless field of literary play and experimentation, as texts can be programmed to behave in more or less dynamic ways. We call this perspective 'cybertextuality' and the works 'cybertexts', following Espen Aarseth (1997). Cybertextuality is an umbrella term for different types of digital texts, such as hypertexts, kinetic texts, generated texts, texts employing agent technologies, etc.[3]

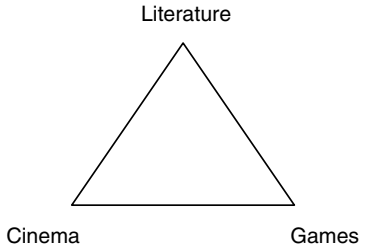
All three categories pose important questions for literary studies research and bear implications for literary pedagogy. In what follows, however, our attention will focus mainly on the third category, cybertextuality.

Cybertexts

Cybertexts, that is, literary works employing networked digital media, are expanding the scope of literary discourse to the fields of 'the artefacts and the systems of signification and communication that most clearly demarcate our contemporary way of life from others' (Gere, 2002, p. 12). Thus, they address what we currently refer to as 'digital culture'. As Adalaide Morris has said in her important essay 'New media poetics: as we may think/how to write', 'what we do and see does not match the inscriptional or representational conventions through which we think' (2006, p. 3). That is, we are dealing with the new digital technology in our daily lives, especially in communications and media use, and that is what we 'do and see'. On a practical level, then, the new media technology is with us in a very fundamental sense. At the same time, however, our conceptual categories and theoretical ways to try and grasp the world, 'the conventions through which we think', are borrowed from the era preceding the digital age. The best way to try and get in terms with 'what we do' in literary studies and pedagogy today is to turn our attention to cybertexts, which reflect, in their digital form, the everyday experience of the digitalized and mediatized world. Turning our attention to works which do not operate on the premises of twentieth-century (or older) literary theory is required before we can hope to remodel our conventions of thinking so that they fit with our current experience.

All cybertextual works are in a very concrete sense *experimental writing*. First of all, the authors are experimenting with the new media, trying to find out what is possible in digital textuality, which are the limits of literary expression in programmable media. This is not so much a question of experimenting to break established conventions, as of experimenting *in an attempt to create new conventions*. Since the new digital technology plays such a crucial role in cybertextuality, works in this emerging field may be considered as a 'technological avant-garde'. Stepping into this new field means that authors have to learn how to write anew, from a novel set of premises; this holds true not only of authors, but also of readers, who have to learn how to read anew. This double challenge is a factor slowing down the development of the cybertextual field, but at the same time it seems to forge a peculiar kind of close connection, a sense of community between the authors and readers of cybertextual literature.

Roughly speaking, cybertexts can be located within the triangle shown in figure on p. 128. They employ techniques such as hypertextuality, interactivity, and programmability, and there is a grey area where literary cybertexts clearly give way to works which might be classified as games or (interactive) cinema. We do think, however, that there is much to gain by keeping the literary world open to these new developments, and thus acknowledge the fact that 'literature' is a historically changing concept, rather than by strictly adhering



to traditional literary forms and genres. This means that 'writing' should be understood today in a broader sense than previously; programming, the writing of computer code, should be included in this expanded notion of writing. For readers, on the other hand, there is a need for what Aarseth has called 'ergodic' activity, the kind of 'nontrivial' action required to traverse the text (1997, pp. 1–2). This ergodic activity may take the form of choosing from available hypertext links, setting the parameters of a text generator, taking an active character-role within the represented fictional world, etc.

Computer code is always involved at some level of the cybertextual work. An interesting question is, then: is the code part of the work? This may be reformulated as: where does one locate the border between text and code? When we look at cybertextual literary works, how 'deep' do we need to look? Even though most cybertexts do not require advanced computer skills from the reader, the situation is somewhat different from the perspective of a researcher or a teacher. In order to understand the specific nature of cybertextuality, one needs to know the basics of programming. This does not necessarily mean the mastery of specific programming languages, but rather a more general understanding of how computer programs are put together and what they are capable of doing. Michael Mateas (2005), for example, has talked about the necessity to teach 'procedural writing and thinking' as part of education in the new media. There is also a special category of works which require a more profound understanding of the software environment. These include, for example, poems which are written in such a way that they work as executable code in a certain programming language; these works can be seen as a literary branch of 'software art' or 'code art'.[4]

The Question of Interpretation

Although the structural analysis of cybertexts is certainly important, it is just a starting point for any attempt to understand them. There is still need for old-fashioned close reading at the textual level, with the added twist of the programmed characteristics of the work. We still need to be able to make the

jump from analysis to interpretation, if we want to make the work *to mean* something for us. Thus, we need to combine the complexity of literary criticism with all the complexities that hyper- and cybertextual programming creates. And if that challenge is not sufficient, we may even raise the question of the extent to which we may be expected to come up with an interpretation at all. That is, *how does one go about interpreting a work which one can never read exhaustively?* From a critical perspective, the answer seems to lie in the attempt to understand the working of the machinery, which would make the search for an exhaustive reading irrelevant; from a reader's perspective, one has to grow accustomed to a new reading attitude, one content with partial but multiple *readings* of a literary work.[5]

This approach may be seen as meta-interpretation, an activity targeted towards the mechanism of meaning production in a particular text-machine, rather than individual instantiations, or readings, of a work. This may take the form of analysing the link structure of a hypertextual work or the procedures employed in a poem generator, which may indeed be the best we can aspire to in certain cases. The risk, however, is that we are limited to talking about the conditions of meaning in a work instead of the meanings themselves. Colin Gardner, in his article 'Meta-interpretation and hypertext fiction: a critical response' (2003) has proposed an interesting alternative concept of meta-interpretation. Gardner takes advantage of the fact that in many cases the reading activity on a digital device can be recorded to some detail, as actions taken by the reader during the reading act may be tracked and saved in a log file. Thus, the readings of several persons may be juxtaposed and compared, and, instead of just one possible reading (that of the researcher herself), an analysis can be based on several alternative readings. To give even more appeal to this approach we should note that, as the recordings are already in a digital format, it is easy to employ statistical or visual methods in analysing them. This means that dealing with bigger sample groups is manageable (Gardner's pilot study was limited to a small group of five readers). Naturally, it is also possible to add to these materials more traditional reader-response methods, such as interviews or questionnaires.

Another option in our attempt to overcome the limitations of meta-interpretation is by expanding the analysis from the machinery of the work and reader–text relationship to a contextualization of the work at hand. Our interpretations will always gain in depth when the work is positioned in the relevant literary traditions and cultural contexts. In the following part I will discuss a specific piece of digital literature, *The Impermanence Agent*, which I consider as an exceptionally significant work. I will try to open up several perspectives from which this work could be dealt with in a classroom. This will hopefully establish that a work of digital literature can be thematically and structurally linked to the previous, non-digital literary tradition, but also addressed as critical reflection upon recent developments in media technology. This kind of contextualization allows us to discuss the meanings and significance of a

particular work, building a kind of bridge between individual readings of it and offering various possible directions for its interpretation.

The Impermanence Agent and Critical Technical Practices

The Impermanence Agent (1999) by Noah Wardrip-Fruin et al. is a very interesting piece of digital literature, which highlights several important aspects of cybertextual writing.[6] Described very shortly, *The Agent* is a combination of a narrative text with illustrations and an agent-programme monitoring the WWW traffic of the machine where the piece is run. The narrative is a biography, the memoirs of Wardrip-Fruin's grandmother written down by himself and illustrated with pictures taken from the family album. This memoir is shown in a small window supposed to be open on top of a web browser and possibly other running applications. The text is proceeding automatically in a quiet pace, with new 'pages' appearing after a set interval. While the programme is running and the text proceeding, the agent-programme is continuously scanning the WWW traffic of the computer. According to a certain procedure, the programme selects some of the web pages the reader/user has recently visited, cuts parts of those pages (fragments of either text or images) and pastes these fragments on the memoir text. Thus, the longer *The Agent* has run, more and more of the original memoir is replaced by materials borrowed from the web pages visited by the reader. At some point, then, all of the original materials appear erased, a collage of borrowed web materials having taken their place (Images 11.1 and 11.2).

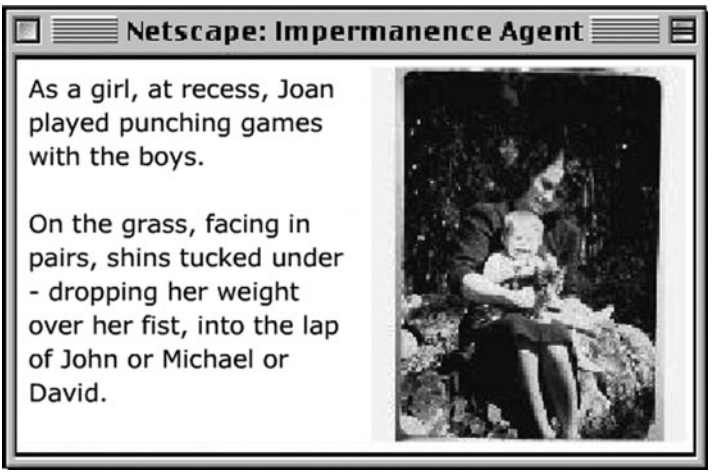


Image 11.1 A screenshot from *The Impermanence Agent*

Image 11.2 A screenshot from *The Impermanence Agent*, after some web browsing

We may observe here some quite obvious intentions. First, there is the issue of memories, how they gradually fade away, as more recent impressions take their place.[7] Also, we can see a juxtaposition of two representational logics, the narrative story giving way to 'sampling', or cutting and pasting, as a dominant mode of digital media communication. And further still, there are the traditional photographs which refer to a certain reality, serving to witness the once-existence of certain persons and events (Roland Barthes has finely discussed this in his *Camera Lucida*, 1981) contrasted with the pixelated digital images, often totally without a referent in the physical world. *The Impermanence Agent*, then, may not be the current world's *Remembrance of Things Past*, but rather the opposite, a demonstration of how the world gone by is quickly being replaced by new cultural formations.

There is another dimension to the work, however, about which its authors have written extensively in an article (Wardrip-Fruin et al., 2002a; 2002b), where they take up the notion of critical technical practices (CTP), a design principle advocated especially by a Swedish designer movement. A central task of CTP it to make the users of a certain technology aware of the technology itself. *The Agent* is employing the CTP approach in at least two ways. First, it makes the reader/user aware of her web browsing routines. It is quite common that much of our daily web browsing is routine-driven, almost unconscious; we are visiting certain news sites and such without paying too much attention to them, not really registering what we are seeing, unless we encounter something specifically interesting. But when *The Agent* cuts fragments out of these pages, and pastes them in a new context, on top of its own original materials, we may pay attention to them in a new way – we may start pondering, for example,

where that fragment is really coming from, what page is it taken from, to what topic is it really connected. Thus, it may make us more conscious of our own web browsing habits and so, in a sense, aware of our own unfolding 'biographies' and the materials by which our memories are being constantly replaced.

The very functioning of the agent-programme, on the other hand, is apt to show us that the monitoring of our web browsing is technically possible and, actually, quite simple. This is something most of us know, in principle, but it is very easy to forget in practice, or at least to comfort ourselves with the notion that nobody would care to spend all the energy required to monitor us, out of all the millions of web users. Experiencing *The Agent* forces us to face the fact that, whatever we do in the Web, we always leave traces of our actions in various servers and caches and it doesn't take more than a relatively simple agent-programme to monitor and filter that data. Here it is used for artistic purposes, just visible to ourselves, but it should help us to recognize the control potential inherent in networked media.

Furthermore, *The Agent* is also connected with the tradition of Dadaistic, surrealistic, and other avant-garde art procedures. This cybertext may be seen as a kind of automatic writing, a kind of semi-automatized 'exquisite corpse', a technological collage, or even as a variation of procedural text production along the lines of the Oulipian strategies, or a descendant of the earlier computer-based story and poem generators (such as the *Racter* by William Chamberlain, see Chamberlain, 1984). Finally, we may see it, following N. Katherine Hayles (1999), as an instantiation of post-human condition, literary production and meaning-making in a complex of human and technological agents. The final product is not the work of Wardrip-Fruin et al., nor of the user/reader, nor of the agent-programme, but of the combined efforts of all of them, with the addition of the unknown authors, designers, and illustrators of websites from which fragments have been cut, and even further, of all the technologies required to make the WWW tick. In Deleuzian terms, the author of this work should be seen as an *assemblage* of several actors, some of them human, some technological.

Works like *The Agent* inspire new insights regarding the possibilities of literary discourse in the digital media, while also commenting on digital media practices. It is an excellent example of a work of art which, to recall Morris' phrase, tries to grasp in aesthetic terms what we 'do and see' daily in the digital world. And it is a strong challenge to literary pedagogy today to try and come to terms with cybertexts or technotexts like this one.

Challenges in the Classroom

When teaching digital literature one faces certain challenges. The fact that there is no commercial publishing in the field poses practical difficulties, as it is

often quite hard to find specific works and there is no guarantee that a certain work will stay accessible for a longer period of time. It is already way too common to see in critical essays from some years back references to works which are nowhere to be found anymore. An advantage, on the other hand, is that most of the works which are available online are free.

There is no established canon of digital literature yet, even though a few works are already recognized as 'classics'. This makes the selection of works to discuss quite hard, and the teacher planning to enter this field has to prepare herself for extensive reading to become familiar with the works. All in all, the works are known by a rather small group of enthusiasts and scholars and it is hard to find out about all the works that exist. There are, however, some initiatives to help with this problem: especially the ELO (Electronic Literature Organization) Directory, the best place to start when looking for digital literature.

There are more pedagogical challenges, in addition to these practical problems. One of the most fundamental is the question of how to demonstrate a work in the classroom. This is closely related to another problem, that of recording and representing a particular reading, for which in many cases there is no functionality available at all. Screenshots from particular passages often are the best a teacher can provide, but with highly dynamic text this gives just a weak impression of how the work actually behaves. This is a real challenge, and one to which every teacher needs to find her own solution and manage the best way she can.

As long as we are talking about literary texts, it must be noted that the reading environment is always a significant issue. That is, how are we to make a work available to our students? If the only place to read digital literature is a computer lab, that certainly has consequences for the reading experience and the aesthetic reception of the work. Laptops with wireless net connections would be the ideal solution, but one that is still often impossible to implement.

We should also pay attention to the fact that most of the works of digital literature discussed in theoretical and critical treatises are written in English, and in many language areas there seems to be no indigenous, local-language digital literature scene to talk about at all. The domination of digital literature by the English language is an issue, but there are also signs of contrary development to detect; especially at the blog scene, there is a striking multilingualism which may be seen as an encouraging sign. A new task for literature teachers may be to support and promote the production of digital literature in their students' native languages.

The final challenge, and probably the biggest of all, is how to interest students in digital literature in the first place. It is very rarely the case that students come to digital literature on their own. Rather, their first contact with digital literature is usually in a classroom, and the teacher has to be particularly careful to avoid making it seem either too complicated or too trivial for students who

are very seriously oriented towards literature (as literature students tend to be). One approach which seems to be working well is to invite cybertext authors to demonstrate and analyse their own work to students, whenever this is possible to arrange.

In virtual learning environments, which are increasingly being used in academic education, some of these problems can turn into advantages. Digital literature is, by its very nature, well suited for virtual learning environments, as there is no need for scanning or other ways of digitalization. Moreover, in this case works, learning environment and their accompanying pedagogical approaches walk hand in hand, as natives of the global network cyberworld; thus there is no need for frequent and awkward mental jumps from the digital domain to the 'Gutenberg Galaxy' of the print world and back.

Today we are realizing in a new way the perennial fact that literature is by no means limited within books. This poses a double challenge for literary teaching: the specific nature of literary discourse should be kept clear, and at the same time the overall media landscape and the sprawl of media forms, old and new, should be acknowledged, with literary discourse seen as an inseparable part of this larger field. From an educational perspective, especially, this should be seen as a positive development, one which helps maintain and even increase the relevance of literature in the contemporary digital world, and also as an opportunity to improve literary research methods as well as literature pedagogy.

Notes

[1] For a thorough discussion of developing trends in the Finnish book trade, see Saarinen, Joensuu and Koskimaa (eds) (2001).

[2] We might mention here the case of Sven Birkerts, a notable literary critic and editor, whose influential book *The Gutenberg Elegies* (1994) lamented the eradication of traditional literary values caused by the superficiality of communication in the networked media. A few years later, the author sold his soul, so to speak, as he started to work for the online complement of a literary magazine, *AGNI Online*, and published a thought-provoking editorial on how his views had changed since the *Gutenberg Elegies* (Birkerts, 2003).

[3] We should note here that Aarseth strongly argues for cybertextuality as a perspective on all texts, both print and digital ones. Similarly Hayles, in her treatise on technotexts, discusses both print texts which comment or reflect upon the 'post-human condition' and digital texts which embody that condition.

[4] John Cayley (2002) has discussed the relation between text and code at length in his essay 'The code is not the text (unless it is the text)'. The essay also includes, as an example, his own code poem.

[5] For a more thorough discussion on the problems of interpretation with regard to hypertext fiction, see Koskimaa (2000, Chapters 6 and 7).

[6] *The Impermanence Agent* is currently not publicly available in the WWW. At the website, http://www.impermanenceagent.com (consulted 12 Feb. 2009) there are two essays describing the project, and other related information (Wardrip-Fruin, 1999; Wardrip-Fruin et al., 2002b). A slightly modified version of the latter essay is also available in the *Cybertext Yearbook 2001* (Wardrip-Fruin et al., 2002a).

[7] We might see here a connection to an earlier work, *Agrippa. The Book of the Dead*, written by the science fiction author William Gibson. *Agrippa* was a work distributed in a computer diskette. After opening the file on the diskette, the text started to scroll on the screen. Once a line of text had scrolled out of the screen, it was encrypted in a way which made it unreadable. In practice, this meant that you could only read the text once.

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Chapter 12

Teaching Poetry with New Media

Rui Torres

Literature and New Media: Preliminary Theoretical Considerations

The potential of computers in the humanities and specifically in literary studies has been widely explored. In their often cited *Hypermedia and Literary Studies*, Landow and Delaney (1991) claimed that '[b]ecause hypertext breaks down our habitual way of understanding and experiencing texts, it radically challenges students, teachers, and theorists of literature' and identified the creative, as well as institutional and intellectual possibilities brought about by the 'new and powerful methods for organizing texts' (pp. 4, 7, 44). Bootz (1996), Barbosa (1996), and Kress (1998) have also claimed the radical transformation of the field brought forward by the new media and made clear that the mingling of theory and practice enacted by digital texts requires new interdisciplinary approaches to both teaching and research in literary studies.

Clearly, computers, new media, and the internet encourage students and teachers to adapt themselves to new cognitive modalities. As Landow has shown, '[o]ne chief effect of electronic hypertext has been the way it challenges nonconventional assumptions about teachers, learners, and the institutions they inhabit. It changes the roles of teacher and student in much the same way it changes those of writer and reader' (1997, p. 219). This empowerment of the reader, and the corresponding change in the role of the author, has been widely discussed, from Wolfgang Iser to Michel Foucault, from Roland Barthes to Umberto Eco. In the case of hypermedia, user/reader collaboration and participation are essential as defining features of the reading experience. In fact, the suggestive term *wreading* (resulting from the fusion of writing and reading) represents a response to the increasingly active role of the reader in modern literature and media.[1]

Indeed, as Peters and Lankshear have observed (1996), reading digital texts implies a type of critical literacy, as it offers new 'possibilities for enlarging and enhancing conceptions and practices of critical literacy through the reflective appropriation of electronic technologies' (p. 52). The progressive complexity of texts, which present an unprecedented set of features such as mobility, temporality, multiplicity, and interactivity, thus entails new literacies that call for a new theoretical vocabulary and a new critical stance. Scholars such as Landow

(1997) and Edward (1994) have identified possible epistemic and historical connections between post-structuralist theory and digital media.

Aarseth's influential contribution to this field (1997) presents and uses refreshing methodologies for the study of literature in electronic and participatory contexts. The transactions between poetry and criticism find in hypermedia a vigorous stimulus; in switching between distinct textual typologies and blurring the boundaries of genres of discourse, cybertext readers can be critical and creative at the same time. Aarseth's proposition of the cybertext as ergodic, that is, as a feedback device machine articulating reader-response into the very architecture of texts, stands as the most relevant theoretical account of this stimulus.

Projecting these notions on literary pedagogy, Marcel Cornis-Pope and Ann Woodlief propose 'a re-creative pedagogical model of literary interpretation based on strategies of rereading/rewriting as part of a community of readers' (2002). This interactive critical pedagogy can provide students with 'ample opportunity to move from reading to writing, and from understanding to reformulation, so as to experience a stronger mode of cultural construction' (2002). Encouraged to engage in the multi-sequential processes of hypertextual criticism, students can benefit from the general advantages of hypertextuality: 'multilinear or networked organization, open-endedness, greater inclusion of nontextual information, interactive authorship' (Cornis-Pope and Woodlief, 2002). These theoretical and pedagogical considerations formulate the basis of our approach towards the teaching of both digital and older experimental poetry with the new media. As we will demonstrate in more detail in the second part of this essay, interactivity as well as creativity are the cornerstones of a teaching that is attuned to this new type of textuality, the empowerment of the reader as *wreader* and the new critical literacy foregrounded by the new media.

On a different level, we must also acknowledge that digital media have enhanced our understanding of the importance of materials (and materiality as such) to writing. Marie-Laure Ryan recognizes that 'we are [now] better aware that the medium (. . .) is affected by its material support' (2001, p. 10). More recently, Katherine Hayles has called for media-specific analysis in the study of code-based works. She understands materiality as 'existing in complex dynamic interplay with content, coming into focus or fading into the background, depending on what performances the work enacts' (2004, p. 71). Hayles lists and discusses nine 'scores' that define electronic hypertexts, claiming that they: (a) are dynamic images; (b) include analogue resemblance and digital coding; (c) are generated through fragmentation and recombination; (d) have depth and operate in three dimensions; (e) are bilingual, written in code as well as natural language; (f) are mutable and transformable; (g) are spaces to navigate; (h) are written and read in distributed cognitive environments; and (i) initiate and demand cyborg reading practices (Hayles, 2004, p. 74). Like many other authors, Hayles does not foresee 'the electronic age as heralding the end of books' (p. 87), because '[b]ooks are far too robust, reliable, long-lived, and versatile to be rendered obsolete by digital media'. On the contrary, she

sees digital media as an opportunity: 'the chance to see print with new eyes and, with that chance, the possibility of understanding how deeply literary theory and criticism have been imbued with assumptions specific to print' (p. 87).

Block (2002), on the other hand, addresses digital poetry as an evolution of experimental media poetry. This seems to echo Barbosa's claim that literary experimentalism was renewed in computer-generated literature (1998). Both Barbosa and Block enunciate electronic textualities within the concept of a digital poesis, understanding the digital medium as particularly apposite for literary creativity and experimentation.

The historical importance of innovative poetry (futurist, experimental, concrete, visual, etc.), which first recognized the significance of the aesthetic function of language, is also a hot topic in recent publications, projects, and conferences on digital literature. Experimental poetry contributed towards the development of new poetic practices based on electronic media, such as e-poetry, cyberpoetry, and digital poetry, leading scholars to consider the systemic affiliations of concrete poetics with digital media. As Lennon put it, 'poets and visual artists working from a tradition of typographic experimentation that reaches back to futurism and Dada, and includes twentieth-century visual and Concrete poetry, are using networked, heterogenetic writing spaces to create and distribute a new electronic visual poetry' (2000, p. 64).

Glazier's *Digital Poetics* also stresses 'the lines of continuity between innovative practice in print and digital media' (2002, p. 10). Admitting that 'there is a curious solidarity between experimental poetry and the possibilities the computer offers', Pedro Reis argues nonetheless that '[W]e have to recognize that many of the operations that the machine provides could already be found in previous poetical practices: collages, automatic writing (such as the surrealistic technique of the "cadavre exquis"), formal games, permutation, as well as the dream of a total poetry, synesthesical and multisensitive, that could become an endless collective text, a work-in-progress always eluding a final shape' (2007, p. 3).

This understanding of the import of the texts' materiality, enhanced by the new media, is one of our cornerstone considerations in the teaching of poetry with new media. Digital poetry is a privileged object for the understanding of the necessity of media-specific analysis and one that enables us to expand this type of study also to its predecessor, older experimental poetry – and to do so, no less, by creatively transferring experimental poetry in the new media.

Teaching Poetry with New Media in Practice

Collaboration and Interdisciplinarity

As we have mentioned in the first part of this essay, the conception, development, and evaluation of hypermedia projects in the field of literature can enhance critical understanding of digital expressiveness, as well as literary

creativity. We have also addressed the interlacing, in hypertext, of theory and praxis, criticism and creativity, as well as the bearing of materiality in the understanding of the working of the literary text. Digital textuality, however, requires the involvement of both teachers and students in interdisciplinary activities. In order to fully comprehend the potential of media-based texts, cybertexts, or virtual works, we need to create new learning conditions – and teachers and students, authors and readers, need to engage in new cognitive modalities.

Clearly, the interdisciplinarity required by new media is not based on juxtaposition or addition processes (Gusdorf, 1986, p. 51). In order to fully achieve the goal of teaching poetry (and more generally literature, or culture) with new media, teachers will have to abandon a pedagogy based on specialization and the separation of knowledge. As Gusdorf also proposes, one should avoid the concentration on memory skills or memorization processes (1991, p. 22), seeking, instead, an open pedagogy, based on creativity, imagination, and invention. Perceived as an area of interdisciplinary collaboration, digital writing may contribute towards the understanding of present and future states of writing and knowledge.

Starting from the presupposition that it is possible to learn and practice a poetic-and-critical discourse using new media tools, we will describe here two projects involving the creation of experimental digital texts in collaboration with research- and undergraduate students respectively. In these cases, as we hope to show, learning is inextricably connected to creativity, which allows students to critically reflect on literature and to enhance their writing through experimentation and research.

Working with Research Students: The PO.EX Project

In the last three years (2005–8), we have been developing a digital archive for the Portuguese Experimental Poetry of the 1960s.[2] Our aim was to gather, classify, digitalize, translate, reproduce, and recreate in electronic formats Portuguese concrete and visual poetry, associated with the movement of Experimental Poetry of the 1960s (known as PO.EX). This led to the production of a CD-ROM, which preserves and makes widely accessible the multiple aspects of PO.EX cultural production, which, apart from poetry, also includes currently hard-to-find magazines, catalogues, and pamphlets. The CD-ROM (freely distributed to schools, universities, and cultural institutions), as well as the online platform (with sources, articles, poems, etc.) has been accessed by many readers, and we have received praise from students around the world, who can now easily access these rare publications.

Research students actively participated in all activities of the project: from the gathering of relevant bibliographies and discussing the theoretical framework to participating in the study, classification, and digitalization of literary material. Students often had to cross research areas, for which their multifaceted

backgrounds were an added value: students with backgrounds in comparative literature, multimedia design, and computer science worked together, sharing their expertise and experiences.

Different media coexist in experimental literature. The audio-visual capturing of images and sound-based texts were particularly important to our students, since they were able to assess and explore the sheer materiality of these texts, which they had previously studied only in theoretical terms. Videorecordings, envelopes, images of all sizes, collages, balloons, and other objects, often combined with each other, were some of the forms that this poetry took. In order to fully comprehend intermediality in contemporary poetics, one must witness migration processes between different media. The digitalization of experimental poetries may well be one way to achieve this. The process of remediation of these texts into digital media offered us an opportunity to understand, in an interdisciplinary manner, the limits and borders of discourses and sign systems.

On the other hand, given the syntactic and semantic complexity of the poems we worked with, we found that common models for electronic publishing were not fully suitable for their reproduction, so we created an interactive interface with different reading options. Concepts such as page or frame, size or volume, no longer served us either: we were dealing with a different type of literary text. Faced with this situation, we decided to start distinguishing between digitalization, which consists of a literal copy of the work, that is, a scan, record or photograph, and digital recreation, a process of complex remediation and rewriting which implies an inter-semiotic translation of distinct languages and semiotic codes. Digitalization was important to help the students develop a relationship to the topic. Gathering texts and thinking about the best way to present them in a digital platform was certainly challenging; however, digital recreations were what incited the students' collective imagination the most and they were absorbed by the possibility of fostering their creativity through experimentation, rereading, and reflexive interpretation. We will briefly discuss one example of this process,[3] focusing on our adaptation of collages developed by António Aragão (1924–2008) in the 1960s.[4]

Aragão's collage-poems (1960s), which he considered cases of 'found poetry', are taken entirely from newspapers of the time. He claims that the 'malleability of the expression allows for several readings', further explaining that '[w]e supply one reading (. . .) [and] we leave also to the reader the possibility to build other readings, in other words, to make, to a certain extent, his/her poem'.[5] This openness of the original text, as well as its projected fragmentation and accepted indeterminacy, can be developed in new ways in digital media (Image 12.1).

Kathleen Vaughan's account of the collage as a method for interdisciplinary research is stimulating. The author, a visual artist, teacher, and writer, defines collage as 'a fine arts practice with a postmodern epistemology' (2004, p. 2). She draws on Gray's concept of practice-led research (1996) as a method to

Image 12.1 'Poema encontrado' ('Found poem') by António Aragão (1964) (first published in *Poesia Experimental: 1º caderno antológico*). Org. António Aragão and Herberto Helder (Lisboa, 1964). Reproduced with permission by the author's son.

initiate and carry out research through practice. She further quotes Picasso's 'form of representation that enabled in the viewer a *trompe l'esprit* – a kind of ontological strangeness – instead of the more familiar, painterly *trompe l'oeil*' (2004, p. 5). Following this line of thinking, we concluded that a recreation of a work with the characteristics of a *found-poem* – impermanence, openness, indeterminacy – can be most fruitfully developed in the new forms of expression offered by the new media.

Researching the possibilities of a digital collage, we discovered, among many others, Jared Tarbel's Actionscript code of *The Emotion Fractal*.[6] Tarbel calls this

code a 'recursive space-filling algorithm'.[7] It places an arbitrarily sized word anywhere within a given rectangular area. The effect is 'a region of space completely filled with increasingly smaller type. (. . .) The actual word placed is randomly determined, taken from a predefined list of English words' (Tarbel). In our case, the list of words included in Tarbel's code was substituted by the text of Aragão's original collages (Image 12.2).

Later, however, we developed a new version of the code, still inspired by, but moving further away from Aragão's work. Adapting Tarbel's programming, we have created a version of the 'found poem' in which the text was dynamically pulled from online newspapers, using their RSS feeds. The result is an ever-changing, dynamic collage, different every time it is accessed and distinct for every user or reader, in both visual and verbal terms (Image 12.3).

Research students who participated in this digital recreation, as in many others, had an opportunity to understand, through practice, important aspects of the coding of visual expressiveness in the language of new media. They also had a chance to discuss concepts such as medial self-reference, process, and openness in literature, and to observe the incomplete and indeterminate nature of texts. Furthermore, the potential of our proposition does not end here; as this procedural work is achieved through real-time networking, the live update from web servers can be transferred to other devices (such as cellular phones, iPods, and PocketPCs) that can receive and display the collage-poem, thus enabling new functions and readings.

Working with Students: Creative Writing and Hypermedia

Operating since 2004 at Fernando Pessoa University, our second project involves workshops on *Creative Writing and Hypermedia*.[8] These workshops are addressed

Image 12.2 Digital recreation of Aragão's poem. Actionscript code by Jared Tarbel.

Image 12.3 Digital recreation of Aragão's poem using RSS newsfeeds of *The New York Times* (22 November 2008). Actionscript code by Jared Tarbel and Nuno F. Ferreira; PHP by Nuno F. Ferreira.

to students, writers, engineers, computer programmers, musicians, teachers, and designers, and can be modified to fit all ages and levels of digital literacy. Participants are asked to write a poem or a short narrative by using new media, that is by communicating through multimedia and hypertext.

Workshops are frequently focused on questions of intertextuality. Selecting one text, or a set of texts by one or more authors, we concentrate on its reading, rewriting, and adaptation. Then we explore how new poems can be written, based on words, sentences, and metaphors taken from short stories; or how stories can evolve from keywords taken from poems. Using digital recording media, students can also create images, sounds (voices, *soundscapes*, or music), and video to use with their texts. Hypertext and hypermedia tools are later used to integrate sound and video, as well as to animate the text and add interactivity and real-time processes.

Collaborative works of this type can foster the integration of criticism into the creative process. Students are able to establish insightful intertextual connections if they are allowed to become part of the authoring process, that is, if they are granted the freedom to interact with the writing and coding. But this process also involves a reflexive aspect. Using new media, students discover and enact for themselves the relationships between criticism and playfulness, theory and creativity. In this way, poems and narratives created in our workshops may contribute to a creative conception of the act of reading, as they involve activities both in programming (authoring) and navigating (reading) texts. In this manner, by means of an interdisciplinary methodological approach, teachers may involve their students in a creative and reflective process that contributes to the study of literature, its semiosis, and poiesis.

It is interesting to note that the activities described above, even though connected to literary study, can also enhance new media literacy. Comparing the new skills proposed by the Project New Media Literacies (NML) (2007),[9] which illustrate the shift of literacy from individual expression to community involvement, the affinities are clear (stressed words correspond to the skills mentioned by the authors: Jenkins et al.): students and readers *play* and participate in *performance* by means of *simulation*. They understand intertextual practices in texts by way of *appropriation*. Their capacity for *multitasking* derives from a new form of *distributed cognition* and *collective intelligence*, which must be stimulated in order to produce critical *judgement*. Finally, they are easily engaged in activities involving *transmedia navigation*, *networking*, *negotiation*, and *visualization*. As such, these new literacies involve social skills developed through collaboration and networking: they 'build on the foundation of traditional literacy, research skills, technical skills, and critical analysis skills taught in the classroom' (Jenkins et al., 2008, online). Teaching poetry with new media thus engages students in a reflexive stance, calling their (and our) attention to the materiality and the ontology of the medium itself, and ultimately allowing them to perceive and experience poetry as the unveiling discourse of all languages.

Notes

[1] Pedro Barbosa used it in Portuguese in 1991 (*escrileitura* = *escrita* and *leitura*), in his PhD thesis, later published as *A Ciberliteratura: Criação Literária e Computador* (1996). At the same time, Joe Amato (1991), in a review of J. David Bolter's *Writing Space* (1991), suggested the English word wreader to describe the 'reader-cum-writer' concept introduced by Bolter in the book. The term was later used in the context of hypertext theory and digital literature by George P. Landow, Jim Rosenberg, Michael Allen, and Roberto Simanowski, as well as many poets and writers.

[2] The project *PO.EX* (*Poesia Experimental Portuguesa, Cadernos e Catálogos*), funded by the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (MCTES, Portugal) and POCI2010 (EU), was conducted by a team at the University Fernando Pessoa between 2005 and 2008 (ref. POCI/ELT/57686/2004). The results of this project are available on the Web at http://www.po-ex.net. The *CD-ROM da PO.EX* can be freely accessed at http://www.po-ex.net/evaluation.

[3] All of the digital recreations of experimental texts are available online (http://www.po-ex.net), with detailed references pertaining to author, type of technology used, as well as methodological propositions. There are also some articles which explain in detail these recreations (see Torres, 2008).

[4] Of course, collage-poetry is not an invention of Aragão, and he was certainly aware of relevant Futurist, Dadaist, and Surrealist experiments.

[5] Our translation. The original was published in the first issue of *Poesia Experimental: Cadernos Antológicos* (Lisbon, 1964).

[6] The author shares a licence based on Creative Commons, which allows others to copy, distribute, display, and perform his work – and derivative works based

upon it – but only if they give credit, and publish their own work under a licence identical to the licence that governs his work.

[7] See http://levitated.net/daily/levEmotionFractal.html.

[8] We have also offered courses within these lines at Universities in Oporto and Lisbon (Portugal), São Paulo (Brazil), and Granada (Spain). These courses are sometimes delivered in blended-learning mode.

[9] Research initiative based within MIT's Comparative Media Studies program. See http://newmedialiteracies.org/.

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Chapter 13

Metamedievalism, Videogaming, and Teaching Medieval Literature in the Digital Age

Daniel T. Kline

It is a commonly held assumption that the humanities are suffering from an identity crisis. In an age where education is too often seen only as a means to gain employment, the humanities are often derided as unnecessary, extravagant, or just plain irrelevant. Even within the humanities, medieval studies is often marginalized, but, paradoxically, contemporary popular culture is rife with medieval tropes, images, and narratives in books and films like the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and the *Harry Potter* series, medieval and Renaissance 'faires', SCA (Society for Creative Anachronism) and LARP (Live Action Role Playing) festivals, or board games like *Dungeons and Dragons*. In the same way that film has taken its place as a legitimate pedagogical tool for teaching medieval studies, so too contemporary video games offer powerful teaching opportunities. When they denigrate videogaming as just 'kids' stuff', medievalists are missing an important pedagogical opportunity to engage contemporary students. In this chapter, I trace the progression of medievalism to the present day and briefly demonstrate how the *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*), an online MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game), might be harnessed in medieval literature classrooms.

The productive tension between the contemporary and the medieval is the central concern of this chapter, which considers the metamedieval image in contemporary videogaming as a theoretical problem, a creative opportunity, and a pedagogical challenge. Videogaming gives many contemporary students their first taste of 'the medieval', and my argument for harnessing videogaming for the study of medieval literature is developed in three parts: the first offers a historical and theoretical orientation to contemporary metamedievalism; the second examines key narrative elements of the *WoW* as an exemplar of digital metamedievalism; the third presents a pedagogical approach to using *WoW* to investigate medieval literature. As James Gee (2003) reminds us in *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Language and Learning*, gaming inculcates students with complex competencies and multiple literacies, and instructors can employ video games (like film) to create new frames of reference for teaching medieval literature.

Eco's Dream and Metamedievalism

The relationship of the medieval to the modern underlines a paradox that Umberto Eco (1986) termed 'Dreaming the Middle Ages', a condition of 'permanent rediscovery' of the medieval. Since each historical period 'messes with' the Middle Ages according to its own needs, 'it was impossible for them to be always messed about in the same way' (p. 68). The study of post-medieval manifestations of the Middle Ages is called *medievalism*, and the 'medieval' thus becomes a site of creative reinterpretation for subsequent eras. Eco classifies as *neomedieval* those cultural products incorporating medieval antecedents without concern for historical accuracy: among others, these include modern pop-cultural manifestations from comic books to the *Excalibur* casino in Las Vegas. In the same work, Eco identifies 'ten little Middle Ages', essentially neomedieval slices through time in which the medieval has served as (a) a *pretext* for modern fiction, (b) a mode of *ironical revisitation*, (c) the archetype of *barbarism*, (d) the setting for *haunted fantasies*, (e) the *philosophia perennis* of theological dogmatism, (f) the source of nostalgic *national identity*, (g) a model of *decadence*, (h) an era of *philological reconstruction*, (i) the foundation of *esoteric and occult traditions*, and (j) the source of fervent *millennial expectations* (pp. 68–72). Eco valorizes the scholarly reconstruction of medieval culture (no. h) because it restrains the uncritical enthusiasm unleashed by neomedievalism. Eco therefore pairs *neomedievalism* (indicating *recent* or *new*) with the derogatory 'pseudo-medieval' (*false*, *counterfeit*, or *fake*) (p. 62). To avoid the potentially confusing and recently overdetermined term 'neomedievalism' (Holsinger, 2007), I turn to *metamedievalism* (Ganim, 2009, p. 180) to describe those contemporary cultural productions, particularly video games, that transcend the stale opposition of true/false by creating a consistent, participatory, three-dimensional world that is far more than just fake or illusory.

Drawing from Eco's account of medievalism, we could provisionally link varieties of medievalism to the *dominant communicative mode* (or media type) in a succession of periods, in order to index different political, cultural, and aesthetic trends. For this purpose we could use representative texts as well as Chaucer's masterwork, *The Canterbury Tales* (see Prendergast, 2004). Generally speaking, medievalism begins with the Renaissance elision of the medieval period in favour of reclaiming the ancient world. At least four different trends are apparent since the Renaissance: *Romantic medievalism*, *modernist medievalism*, *postmodernist medievalism*, and *metamedievalism*.[1]

Romantic medievalism, which spans the long nineteenth century, derives its name from medieval *romance*, initially used to indicate vernacular (rather than Latin) texts and later to designate courtly tales of knights and ladies, great quests, and noble idealism. Largely print-based and incorporating typography and engraving, Romantic medievalism finds expression in Gothic Revival architecture (+1740s), Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1818), or texts like Walter Scott's *Tales of the Crusaders* (1825) and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*

(1856–85). It likewise appears in Ruskin's idealization of the Gothic cathedral and medieval craftsman in *The Stones of Venice* (1851–53). Stereotypically, Romantic medievalism presents windswept castles and ruined abbeys and lovelorn ladies and knights on quests. William Morris' justly lauded Kelmscott edition of *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1896), often called the most beautiful modern book ever printed, features over one-hundred woodcuts designed by pre-Raphaelite artist Edward Burne-Jones and represents a high point of Romantic medievalism.

Modernist medievalism likewise draws inspiration from medieval precedents but imbues them with the hallmarks of high modernism, like the idea of progress, the consciousness of the individual subject, and the creative vision of the author. If Romantic medievalism is primarily a print phenomenon, then modernist medievalism coincides with the development of film. *The Seventh Seal* (1957), where Bergman's post-WWII existential anguish is transplanted into the story of a medieval knight's return from the Crusades, may be the most potent example of cinematic modernist medievalism. *The Canterbury Tales* also received several film treatments, including Pier Paolo Pasolini's notorious 1972 *I racconti di Canterbury* in which Pasolini himself plays Chaucer and recounts some of the racier tales with glee.

Postmodern medievalism includes television as well as film. Modernist ideals are displaced, in Lyotard's (1979) famous formulation, with 'incredulity toward "metanarratives"' (p. 7). Instead of *grands récits*, those master narratives of progress central to Western culture, postmodernism embraces parody, pastiche, and deliberate subversion. Postmodern narratives often display the self-conscious, usually ironic, intrusion of the author into the text or an equally self-conscious display of the conditions of production, calling attention to the fictiveness of the text. *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975), really a series of TV skits, represents the postmodern parody of the Middle Ages, while the small screen features several 'sword and sorcery' TV series, like *Xena: Warrior Princess* (134 episodes, 1995–2001). Although not fantasy, BBC's six *Canterbury Tales* (Miller, Wife, Knight, Shipman, Pardoner, and Man of Law, 2003) abandon anachronistic concerns like chivalry and virginity to focus upon 'more contemporary issues: socioeconomic inequality, violent crime, immigration, xenophobia, and the cult of celebrity' to the point that they are less adaptations than commentary (Forni, 2008, p. 175). On the other hand, Jonathan Myerson's animated *Canterbury Tales* (1998) takes advantage of Chaucer's appearances as a character in his own text, a common postmodern trope (Ellis, 2000, p. 140).

While many medievalist productions historically share a flair for fantasy, the occult, and sword and sorcery, *metamedievalism* no longer negotiates with any reality beyond itself and other medievalisms. For example, the Broadway play *Spamalot* is less about King Arthur than it is a riff on *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, and Brian Helgeland's *A Knight's Tale* (2001) simply uses Chaucer as a vehicle to tell a medievally inflected rags-to-riches story. In contrast to Eco's denigration of the neomedieval popular culture, I contend that contemporary

metamedieval productions represent Baudrillard's (1985) definition that the image is not 'unreal but a simulacrum, that is to say never exchanged with the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference of circumference' (1994, p. 6). Contemporary videogaming could therefore be considered the embodiment of metamedievalism, for unlike a reader or viewer's relationship to print, film, and TV, videogamers actively create experiences that are different from interaction with print, television, and film, yet intimately related to (and mobilizing) all three media. Metamedievalism as expressed in video games therefore changes the centuries-long function of author and reader (or producer and consumer) because gamers become, in effect, the authors of their own experiences within the gameworld parameters.

The four movements of medievalism discussed above should not be taken as a strict chronological series. Instead, the relationship between them is recursive and agglutinative, with each instance gathering up its predecessors and extending them into new forms. In this sense, each medievalism embodies all of the simulacra's effects simultaneously, whether in residual, dominant, or emergent forms – to use Raymond William's terms, 'the dynamic interrelations, at every point in the process, of historically varied and variable elements' (1977, p. 121). With apologies to Eco, in my view medievalism properly denotes a structure and process rather than a chronology or succession of periods, and gaming exemplifies metamedievalism.

Metamedievalism and *WoW*

Set in a fantasy-inflected medieval world, *WoW* allows players to develop characters (or avatars) in an open-ended series of quests throughout the massive gameworld.[2] In one version of the *WoW* Character Selection Screen, the first image a gamer sees after logging into the game initially situates the gamer's alter ego in a cemetery between a grave marker and a mausoleum, within a spooky, windswept forest. The mausoleum's features flicker in the torchlight, adding to the portentous feel of the scene. Each element is a stock feature of *romantic medievalism*, that gothic combination of decrepitude and supernaturalism common in so many novels and movies. The character-avatar itself incorporates the fantasy elements familiar in *modernist* and *postmodernist medievalism* – a pastiche of elements, including fantasy armour and weapons based upon historical precedents. All three historical medievalisms are present here and throughout the *WoW*. Constructed of metamedieval images that reference other forms of medievalism rather than a fixed medieval reality, *WOW* allows gamers to organize and to control the traditional features of narrative in the gameworld like (a) *character*, (b) *plot*, (c) *setting*, and (d) *point of view* in an environment driven by icons. Although games like *WOW* operationalize these terms differently from traditional literary analysis, literature teachers face not so much a deficit in their students' understanding, as a challenge to help students

transfer their knowledge and skills from the gameworld to the academic context.[3]

a. *Character.* The most popular MMORPG in the world, *WoW* boasts more than 11.5 million paying subscribers, and much of that popularity comes from the nearly infinite choices supported in the *WoW* gaming universe, particularly in character creation. In *WoW*, gamers first create avatars based upon two foundational traits: *species* or *race* (10 choices between two camps, *Horde* and *Alliance*) and *class* (10 types). The choice of Horde or Alliance impacts all subsequent decisions, for the two groups communicate and interact peacefully only with allies. *WoW* gamers choose from other initial settings, which then impact all facets of the game (Table 13.1):

Table 13.1 Character options in *World of Warcraft*

Races	**Classes**	**Spell Types**	**Skills**	**Professions**	**Reputation**
*Human	*Druid	Arcane	Armour	Alchemy	Exalted
*Gnomes	Hunter	Fire	Class	Blacksmithing	Revered
*Night Elves	*Mage	Nature	Language	Enchanting	Honored
*Dwarves	*Paladin	Frost	Weapon	Engineering	Friendly
*Draenei	*Priest	Shadow		Herbalism	Neutral
Orcs	Rogue			Jewel-crafting	Unfriendly
Undead	*Shaman		**Attributes**	Leather-working	Hostile
Tauren	*Warlock		Strength	Mining	Hated
Trolls	Warrior		Agility	Tailoring	
Blood Elves	Death Knight		Stamina	Skinning	
			Intellect	Inscription	
			Spirit	Cooking*	
				First Aid*	
				Fishing*	
**Alliance*	**Spell Casters*			*Secondary profession	

Each *race* has unique traits but a limited choice of *classes. Class* in turn shapes the *attributes*, *skills*, and *spells* available to the avatar. For example, a *Dwarf* may become a Hunter, Paladin, Priest, Rogue, or Warrior, while a *Tauren* can adopt the Druid, Hunter, Shaman, and Warrior classes. *Spells* are class-specific and fall into five 'schools', each with different effects and unique requirements.[4] *Skills* fall into *professions* (acquirable trade skills) and *class/character skills* (integral abilities assigned by *race* and *class*). *Professions*, which are available to all races, follow a hierarchy (apprentice, journeyman, expert, artisan, and master), and

character skills include *language*, *class*, *weapon*, and *armour* skills. Players can also customize physical characteristics (skin, hair, face), acquire pets (personal or combat animals), or stop by their factional Barbershop to 'groom facial hair, perform piercings, ink night elf tattoos, modify undead features . . . reshape tusks, horns and tendrils', and change other personal features.[5] The avatar's physical appearance also changes as the gamer collects new items, armour, weapons, and attributes. *WoW* avatars accumulate *reputation* points, and all character classes have five *attributes*: *strength* (increases attack), *agility* (increases defense), *stamina* (increases health), *intellect* (increases mana, the fuel for casting spells), and *spirit* (increases health and mana regeneration). Gamers may also self-organize into 'guilds', whose members share a name (and thus an identity), battle common enemies, and participate in group quests called 'instances' that take place in 'dungeons', those specialized environments designed for particular encounters and rewards. Like the Knights of the Round Table who share common affinities yet differ in individual histories, sensibilities, and accoutrements, *WoW* characters embody both unity and diversity.

b. *Plot.* Plot flows from character development in *WoW*, and gamers take their avatars through a unique course of action based on their *levelling strategy*. Gamers develop their characters by levelling or accumulating experience points up to Level 80. Higher levels of experience equal greater power for the character. A primary feature of gaming, the process of 'levelling' allows a variety of activities, particularly 'quests'. Quests share recognizable characteristics: they are tied to specific regions of the gameworld, lead the player into unexplored areas of the map, yield a choice of rewards, vary from single person to epic group quests, and provide goodies that can be accessed in no other way.[6] The inherently episodic structure of questing – of encountering obstacles, villains, puzzles, monsters, other characters, and exploring unfamiliar terrain and foreign cities – gives *WoW* a structure much like that of medieval romance, where the protagonist overcomes a myriad of challenges in pursuit of love, an enchanted object like the Holy Grail, a monstrous villain, or the restoration of proper rule.

c. *Setting.* Character and plot are in turn affected by *WoW*'s settings, and the expansive gameworld creates vast opportunities for single-player and cooperative gameplay. It is not an exaggeration to say that the *WoW* gameworld is nearly inexhaustible. *WoW* ranges across Azeroth (comprised of the three continents Kalimdor, Northrend, and the Eastern Kingdoms) and the planet Outland. Varying in geography, topography, animal life, vegetation, climate, architecture and even weather (*WoW* functions on a 24-hour diurnal and four-seasonal cycle) from region to region, the continents feature cities, dungeons, and wilderness (or everything in-between). Medievalists might be happy to note that *WoW* also follows an in-game calendar that includes Easter, Midsummer, and Christmas, among other dates. Cities allow players to interact, purchase goods, encounter programmed or Non-Playing Characters (NPCs), conduct banking, find quests, arrange transportation, repair items, set up auctions, seek

training, and send in-game mail. They also serve the capital for the primary races that inhabit them.[7] A primary site of questing, *dungeons* can be *instanced* or *noninstanced*, where players take on challenges singly or cooperatively to earn experience. Dungeons require set numbers of players to initiate cooperative play and to defeat dungeon 'bosses', powerful, elite monsters who 'drop loot' – specific and often specialized items associated with the particular instance – upon their defeat. Levelling requires characters to investigate all features of the gameworld – ruins, mines, caves, cliffs, streams, villages, outposts, sewers, piles of stones, and even underwater shipwrecks. Unique settings are also established for 'player v. environment' (PvE) mode, in which players undertake typical questing gameplay and 'player v. player' (PvP) mode, where players fight anywhere in the gameworld or in specially designated Battlegrounds, both of which also occur in Role-Playing realms, where players are expected to stay in character throughout play.[8]

d. *Point of View (POV).* In *WoW* POV encompasses several different notions: (a) the physical orientation of the avatar in the gameworld, (b) the player's perspective upon the character-avatar and most importantly, (c) the constellation of assumptions, values, ambitions, and objectives motivating the player's levelling strategy as embodied in the character. A related element of POV concerns relationships between the gameworld and the real world. POV in *WoW* therefore describes an ideological position as well as a physical one. In the first case, characters move freely according to the player's instructions. In the second, players can shift between a third-person and first-person view and zoom in, out, and around the avatar. In third-person, the player watches the character as a figure on the screen; in first-person, the player engages in the action from the character's circumscribed point of view within the gameworld. *WoW* players adopt an ideological point of view upon the gameworld and other players as they act in their character's best interests throughout gameplay. Characters share with other characters (and therefore other players) overlapping subject positions and socially determined affiliations based upon their individual traits and social groupings. Race, gender, class, profession, reputation, guild status, and faction are all in play in the gameworld and motivate both individual and group actions.

A Pedagogy for Metamedieval Videogaming

Although gaming does not provide a comprehensive framework for studying medieval literature, like film it offers an engaging opening into an area of study that is perceived as obscure and impenetrable. Perhaps even more importantly, metamedieval gaming parallels the best kind of educational experience, and that is to imaginatively inhabit an unfamiliar culture.

My experience with literature students has led me to develop four basic steps in the movement from gaming to interpreting medieval literature: (a) Students

are encouraged to see every aspect of the gaming as an opportunity to investigate relationships between the game and the literary text. It is important to let students guide the initial direction of discussion. (b) Students enjoy articulating their understanding of what's happening in the gameworld before identifying parallel, similar moments in the text and should indeed be encouraged to do so. Here, the student has a chance to teach the instructor something about her/his experience, thus turning the investigation of gaming and literature into a dialogue. (c) After students have been allowed to freely establish this foundation, the instructor is better able to move towards the narrative analysis of the text according to character, plot, setting, POV, and their interaction. (d) Once we have got a handle on the formalist aspects of narrative (character, plot, setting, POV), the class discussion can easily venture into a cultural studies perspective upon the game and the medieval text by focusing upon issues like race/species (including gender); class; skills, attributes, professions; reputation; and even armour, weapons, and monsters (see Cohen, 1997).

Of course, it is impossible to be exhaustive, but the following table (Table 13.2) suggests possible relationships between representative medieval texts (and genres) and the gaming attributes outlined above, although many other possibilities remain:

Table 13.2 Medieval genres and representative texts vs. gaming elements

Medieval Genres and Representative Texts vs. Gaming Elements	**Images/Imagery**	**Character**	**Plot**	**Setting**	**POV**	**Race/Species**	**Class**	**Skills/Attributes/Professions**	**Reputation**	**Items**	**Monsters/Villains**
1a. Romance											
King Horn and *Havelok the Dane*		X	X	X		X	X	X	X		
Beves of Hamptoun	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X
The Lais of Marie de France	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
1b. Arthurian Romance											
Malory, *Morte D'Arthur*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Roman de Silence		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		

(*Continued*)

Table 13.2 (continued)

Medieval Genres and Representative Texts vs. Gaming Elements	**Images/Imagery**	**Character**	**Plot**	**Setting**	**POV**	**Race/Species**	**Class**	**Skills/Attributes/Professions**	**Reputation**	**Items**	**Monsters/Villains**
2a. Literature of Pilgrimage and Travel											
Mandeville's *Travels*	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X
The Travels of Marco Polo	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
The Aberdeen Bestiary	X			X		X		X		X	X
The Canterbury Tales	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2b. Visionary Literature and Apocalypse											
The Divine Comedy, esp. *Inferno*	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Marie de France, *St. Patrick's Purgatory*	X	X	X	X		X			X		X
3. Hagiography											
OE *Judith*		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
The Life of Christina Mirabilis	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	
Life of St. Margaret of Antioch	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
4. Historical and Chronicle Literature											
Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of England*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Joinville's *Life of St. Louis*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad*		X		X	X		X		X		
5. Epic											
Beowulf	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
The Song of Roland		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	

Like other games, *WoW* is built around the quest motif, suggesting the episodic structure and knightly pursuits of medieval romance. *King Horn* (c. 1225), *Havelok the Dane* (c. 1290), and *Bevis of Hampton* (c. 1324) follow the hero from childhood, through the personal struggles and chivalric battles of youth, and into maturity, suggesting the development of a gaming character from creation to higher levels. The 12 short narratives in *The Lais of Marie de France* (c. 1170) incorporate magical elements of Celtic tradition to tales of knights and

ladies, as well as a werewolf in *Bisclavert* and a bejeweled nightingale in *Laustic*. Arthurian romance forms a substantive body of related material across several centuries, and the sometimes incredible exploits are equally visible in contemporary gaming. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, with its Arthurian milieu, shape-shifting antagonist, seductive lady, hunting parties, bedroom scenes, and epic final confrontation, offers a terrific entrée into a number of gaming themes, particularly a reassessment of the idea of a 'boss battle'. The *Roman de Silence* (c. 1250) features a protagonist born a female but raised a male, paralleling the fluidity of player-avatar identity, where male players create female characters, human gamers take on monstrous counterparts, and older players take on a youthful avatar, all to experiment with online identities.

Related to romance, the pilgrimage is a parallel theme often found in travel narratives. The granddaddy of fantastical travelogues, *The Travels of Marco Polo* (c. 1300), and an Anglo-Norman successor, Mandeville's *Travels* (c. 1360), describes exotic settings, foreign peoples, and fantastical beasts of a piece with any metamedieval game. The medieval bestiary tradition, as in the *Aberdeen Bestiary* (c. 1200),[9] offers a range of known and unknown critters on a par with the many beasties of MMORPGs. Certain of *Chaucer's Canterbury* Tales, like the *General Prologue* and the tales of the Knight, Franklin, Squire, Wife of Bath, and Second Nun, intersect with different gaming concerns.

Visionary and apocalyptic literature shares a number of features with travel narratives. Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1308–21), especially the *Inferno*, comes immediately to mind, and certainly nothing in contemporary gaming exceeds Dante's imagination when it comes to horrific monsters and exquisite punishments.[10] Marie de France's *L'Espurgatoire Seint Patriz* (*St. Patrick's Purgatory*, c. 1175) presents another journey into the underworld, where demons tempt a pious knight to renounce his faith and confront him with horrible scenes of torture and violence.

Hagiography often incorporates that otherworldly element prominent in many games, and the lives of saints offer episodes much like *WoW's* dungeons in which a character (or group) defeats a powerful enemy and gains great reward. The saint's transcendence comes at a price, and the scenes of torture and martyrdom sometimes exceed video game violence. *The Life of Christina Mirabilis* (c. 1250) confronts the reader with a female mystic who lives out the tortures of purgatory in thirteenth-century Belgium. St. Margaret of Antioch (vita, c. 1250) defeats Satan in the form of a terrible dragon. The Old English *Judith*, the text that follows *Beowulf* in the famous manuscript Cotton Vitellius A.XV (c. 1000), is epic and hagiography in equal parts, for the saintly, savvy heroine saves herself from rape and her people from slaughter by beheading the foreign conqueror Holophernes in his own bed.

Medieval chronicles and accounts of crusaders often blend the fantastic with the commonplace and the historical with the legendary. Geoffrey of Monmouth (c. 1136) details the history of England from its legendary founding by Brutus to the ascendancy of the Saxons and includes the earliest version of King

Arthur. Perhaps the first female historian in the West, Anna Comnena, daughter of a Byzantine emperor, wrote an account of her father's reign (*The Alexiad*, c. 1148), presenting an Eastern perspective on the crusading era. Joinville's *Life of St. Louis* (c. 1305), in his *Memoirs*, recounts Louis IX's crusade in 1244 and his subsequent capture, ransom, and release. Crusading accounts lead easily to a discussion of the uses of violence in contemporary gaming and in the Middle Ages.

Probably the best analogue for metamedieval videogaming is the epic, for texts like *Beowulf* (c. 1000) or *The Song of Roland* (c. 1150) feature strategy and scheming as well as individual battles and collective warfare, so that students can easily approach the text through gaming scenarios. Take *Beowulf*, for example:

- Character and Plot: How would Beowulf's battles with Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon be structured in a game? Even Beowulf's swimming competition against Brecca, or his initial encounter with the sentry on the shore of Denmark, suggest common gaming tropes.
  - How do these different activities reflect the characters' attributes or redound upon their reputations?
  - How do specific characters negotiate the claims of kinship, clan affiliation, and hierarchical allegiance?
- Setting and POV: How is Heorot physically laid out and what is its geographical relationship to the fen in which Grendel and Grendel's mother reside? How do the monsters' points of view of Heorot and Hrothgar's thanes (or vassals) differ from the Danes' perspective upon the monsters?
- Race/Class and Reputation: How does battle and its preparation affect specific characters' reputations, claims of kinship, clan affiliation, and hierarchical allegiance?
- Virtual Objects: What discursive affects result from the naming of particular objects in Beowulf (like Unferth's sword, Hrunting), and how do those affects parallel the 'binding' of items to avatars in WoW?

Once students attend to the story in light of gaming, discussion can then easily turn to a more traditional examination of *Beowulf*'s textual dynamics, cultural contexts, and literary characteristics.

My classroom experience has likewise led me to different types of writing assignments that take advantage of digital composition processes, beginning with the capture and explication of gameworld images. I use a four-part procedure to move from the gaming image to the essay: (a) I begin with a simple assignment that asks students to capture a single image (or short video) of the gameworld that for them suggests a key aspect of the game. They then explicate that moment in a couple of paragraphs. (b) After discussing those images in class, I ask students to describe that moment within a longer narrative

about their character's levelling strategy, again allowing them to use screen captures to illustrate their narrative. (c) When students have examined and explained their gaming experiences in these brief assignments, I ask them to identify analogous moments in the medieval text under discussion, analysing both similarities and differences. (d) Finally, in a more formal paper, I allow students the option to read the medieval text in light of gaming dynamics while foregrounding relevant narrative and/or cultural elements. Depending upon the direction of the assignment, students can also pursue a traditional research paper, incorporating secondary literature. Though not a panacea, gaming simply presents another potential point of contact between student experience and the medieval text and creates the opportunity for different approaches to medieval literature and culture.

Metamedieval Studies

The perceived crisis in the humanities is often discussed in terms of its 'relevance' to contemporary culture, and medieval studies is (incorrectly, I think) seen to be even more obscure than many other areas of study. Eco (1986) reminds us that although 'We no longer dwell in the Parthenon' (p. 68) and we perceive the art and culture we admire from some remove, we still live in nation states, balance church and state, study in universities, use banks, and even wear glasses – all of which have their roots in the medieval period (pp. 64–8). When students and others question the relevance of medieval studies, I ask them to remember when Princess Diana and Mother Teresa died within a week of each other and the entire world seemed to stop and to mourn their passing. What could be more *medieval* than a princess and a nun? In some sense, the Middle Ages seem to be still with us.

Surely, we are not medieval men and women, but as post-medieval societies remake the Middle Ages in their own image, the *stories* they tell about the medieval period can have profound individual and social consequences, as in relating the so-called War on Terror to the Crusades (Shuster, 2004). To return to 'Dreaming the Middle Ages', Eco argues that identifying *which* Middle Ages we summon is a 'moral and cultural duty' – for the form of medievalism we invoke also reveals 'who we are and what we dream of' (1986, p. 72). Eco valorizes the academic process of 'philological reconstruction' because it allows us 'to criticize all the other Middle Ages that at one time or another arouse our enthusiasm' (p. 71). For Eco, academic study properly defined protects against the trap of pseudo-medievalism. While metamedieval gaming provides an untapped resource for studying medieval literature and culture, it is likewise essential to return our attention – and our students' attention – to the vital complexities of medieval culture. Otherwise, we risk reducing the Middle Ages to a 'hack and slash' fantasy.

Notes

[1] For this chronological framework, see Robinson (forthcoming).

[2] *World of Warcraft* online has three major releases to date: *World of Warcraft* (2001), *The Burning Crusade* (the first expansion, 2007), and *Wrath of the Lich King* (2008).

[3] Ludologists assert that gaming requires its own unique approach and vocabulary, while narratologists apply narrative and literary theory to games and gaming. See Aarseth (2004) and Frasca (2003).

[4] *Spells* are distinct from *powers*, *talents*, and *abilities* in *WOW*: (a) *Spells* are class-specific. (b) *Powers*, independent of professions or skills, are heightened actions performed by a character, mob, NPC, or item. (c) *Talents* are class-specific features based upon levelling. (d) *Abilities*, divided into *active* (requiring interaction) and *passive* (always operant) are effects of powers, skills, spells, and talents.

[5] See http://www.worldofwarcraft.com/info/basics/barbershop.html [25 March 2009].

[6] See http://www.worldofwarcraft.com/info/basics/quests.html [25 March 2009] for more detail.

[7] See http://www.worldofwarcraft.com/info/basics/cities-basics.html [25 March 2009].

[8] See http://us.blizzard.com/support/article.xml?articleId=20458 [25 March 2009].

[9] See the *Aberdeen Bestiary Project* online, http://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ [25 March 2009].

[10] Electronic Arts is currently creating a third-person game based upon Dante's *Inferno*. See http://www.ea.com/games/dantes-inferno [25 March 2009].

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Chapter 14

From Virtuality to Actuality: Representations and Enactments of Critical Theory on the World Wide Web

Anastasia Natsina and Takis Kayalis

Hypertext has often been described as embodiment, or even fulfilment of the prophecy, of much critical theory about textuality, intertextuality, and reader-response.[1] Thus different theoretical strands, such as post-structuralism, reader-response, and Bakhtinian theory, to name but a few, are thought of as enjoying a relation of precedence vis-à-vis the hypertextual structure and potentials of the World Wide Web. As Web 2.0, the latest and most prominently social-networking development of the web, is already enjoying a phenomenally widespread use, it seems an appropriate moment to discuss the state, that is, the status and use, of critical theory in the new cultural reality that the former is supposed to have heralded. Towards this purpose we propose a two-fold examination: first we discuss the *representation* of critical theory on websites dedicated to its teaching and promotion, by examining a host of common parameters that pertain to it; then we examine the ways in which particular strands of critical theory have served the theorization of hypertext, hyperfiction, and the web, which are commonly thought of as the former's *enactments*.

Besides being thought of as participating in the conceptual foundations of the web, critical theory is very much present in more obvious online manifestations, such as websites dedicated to its presentation, explanation, or promotion. Although this chapter considers open (i.e. free-access) electronic resources, which are obviously far more heavily used than pay-sites, we hope to offer some more general remarks on the present state of theory on the World Wide Web. It is clear however that as the sheer size and potentials of the web are expanding out of proportion and in directions whose impact on our notions of status and use are hard to predict, this discussion can only mark the present transitory moment.

The sheer abundance of websites dedicated to critical theory, their inevitably variable quality as well as a number of factors related to electronic credibility, make the entry point (i.e. the page from which a user begins to look for what she/he is after) particularly important. The absence of conventional quality markers (such as the names of author, publisher, or series editor) as well as the

general disregard for (or creative transformation of) scholarly conventions which is evident in much electronic publishing have led to the formation of an intricate net of signposted routes, which tends to replicate conventional power structures at work across the academia. Prominent web guides such as Alan Liu's *Voice of the Shuttle* or Jack Lynch's *Literary Resources on the Net*, to mention just a couple, serve as major gates for the exploration of critical theory, and the sites they link to, or comment upon favourably, have strong chances of becoming main sources of information for great numbers of users internationally. In this chapter we focus on the great range of websites, mostly hosted by Literature departments worldwide, that serve as general introductions to the various strands of critical theory and major theorists; these sites constitute major entry points for many students. Those destinations (websites or electronic libraries) that provide articles and other scholarly resources of a more or less traditional kind are excluded from our discussion.

A first observation on these general introductory sites – also reflected on the portals' catalogues of individual theory sites – concerns the span of theoretical schools they cover, as well as the hierarchies they establish among them. Despite the optimistic claims of scholars such as Bolter (2001, pp. 165–70) and, much earlier, Lanham (1993, p. 31) on the subversive potential of the electronic media vis-à-vis canonization, web pages of this kind clearly perpetuate the current dominant hierarchy of theories in the academia: the American New Criticism, Russian Formalism, Cultural Materialism, the Frankfurt School or Levinas' theory of otherness are far less represented than Post-structuralism, Deconstruction, Cultural Studies, Gender Studies, or Postcolonialism.

Although the hypertextual structure of introductory sites may be more or less sophisticated, with links offered in catalogue form or within an evolving narrative of sorts (or, sometimes, by a combination of both), they usually present critical theories in terms of clusters of main concepts. The typical basic module is a short definition or description of major concepts and keywords, sometimes accompanied by a brief mention of principal works and chronologies. When this information is engulfed in a broader narrative, the context (i.e. the seamless summary to which these main concepts are made to fit) can potentially be more misleading than the complete lack of framework, as it compromises the wider discussions within which theoretical arguments came to life. Downing (2000), who offers a critique of theory anthologies, interestingly points out that 'many theories critique the normal practices of traditional disciplines while the anthologies themselves serve to discipline the theories. This disciplinary double bind is the characteristic condition of the production and dissemination of anthologies of theory' (p. 130). Theory websites seem to replicate exactly this unsolicited function of anthologies, by concealing the disruptive effects of critical theories (particularly recent ones) and offering them into 'deliverable' chunks of given normal practice. Furthermore, this form of presentation is concurrent with a 'cult' approach to theorists, whose names are often taken as

a code (or shorthand) for their work. In spite of the alleged undermining of the pre-eminence of author brought about by hypertext, theorists like Derrida, Deleuze, and Barthes, among others, have clearly become icons of a largely uncritical hype and this is certainly reinforced by their representation in theory websites, where their work is typically reduced to highly selective clusters of quotations and summaries.

Certainly one cannot doubt the usefulness of basic definitions and summaries for many readers. However, the obvious reductionism of several web presentations of critical theory also carries the limitations of a gestation period far shorter than in the case of printed guides and dictionaries, in which the limited possibilities for updates and corrections (and perhaps the price demanded from the reader) support somewhat more meticulous editorial procedures. The combination of reflective reductionism and a certain editorial slackness evident in many theory websites acquires greater significance in light of the particularities of the web's function as a medium for the transmittance of information.

As web culture is only beginning to be formed, we still lack the clear demarcation of web genres or some sort of accurate quality assessment that would advise the reader on the specific uses and limitations of different sites. This absence of a system of expectations impedes the evaluation of information, and so one might think it would hinder its use. However, the contrary seems to be the case: concise information that is offered quickly, conveniently, in an attractive layout, and for free, is bound to be used excessively and to acquire potential impact that has no precedent or equivalent in print culture.

Another pertinent characteristic of the World Wide Web, as Haas and Wearden (2003, p. 177) have noted, is that it tends to be self-referential. Even when users understand the need to verify web information, they often do so by checking other, related sites. This increases the risk of readers shying away from actual theoretical texts, a tendency imminent in all popularizing and encyclopedic approaches to theory, and familiar at least since the widespread use of textbooks and dictionaries of terms. The web environment, with the endless information that it can yield through multiple links within and outside a particular website, creates a compelling impression of sufficiency, significantly supported by ease of access. Moreover, as Bolter stresses, the age of electronic writing does away with the 'inescapable great books' characteristic of the age of print, fostering instead readings that will be more and more tailored to individual needs and tastes: 'In the world of electronic writing, there will be no texts that everyone must read. There will only be texts that more or fewer readers choose to examine in more or less detail. The idea of the great, inescapable book belongs to the age of print that is now passing' (2001, p. 240). Furthermore, as Landow has remarked, the ever-increasing use of electronic media and hypertext tends to obliterate documents that do not partake of the network of links: 'Since hypertext promises to make materials living within a hypertext environment much easier to obtain, it simultaneously threatens to

make any materials not present seem even more distant and more invisible than absent documents are in the world of print' (1997, p. 287).

What we witness, then, is a paradoxical situation, as the unprecedented proliferation of information on critical theory goes hand in hand with its more or less casual reduction to sketchy representations of its core concepts. This shrinking of theory severs its polemical aspects as well as its pragmatic potential: for example, reports on the deconstructionist attack on logocentrism fail to register the upsetting impact that results from the unveiling of the intricate workings of logocentrism written in the latter's very language. Similarly, précis on truth as intricately linked with power tend to conceal their own conditionality, while summaries of dialogism often become possible through an assumption of monologism. Consequently, critical theory in this type of websites appears to become a conveniently simplified branch in the history of ideas, with a rather nominal currency and not much performative potential.

We may now turn to examine a field that we might expect to counterbalance this picture, since it has often been described as the 'embodiment' of critical theory (particularly post-structuralist, Bakhtinian, and reader-response theory).

In his seminal study of hypertext, George Landow (1992, revised editions in 1997 and 2006) relates hypertext to critical theory by way of convergence, which in his analysis is understood in terms of embodiment, test, prophecy fulfilling, and similarity. Locating in hypertext a fundamentally decentred textuality, with no primary axis of organization or fixed endings, Landow describes the inherent intertextuality of hypertext with explicit reference to Derrida's reflections on textuality. Bakhtinian multivocality is also invoked in this description, as is the Deleuzean notion of rhizome (2006, pp. 53–68). In his equally influential work on hypertext, *Writing Space* (Bolter, 2001), Jay David Bolter makes similar observations; he argues for example that 'it remains striking how well the poststructuralists did seem to be anticipating electronic writing' (p. 171). Bolter adds to the array of theories he uses Barthes's distinction between work and text (which he finds analogous to that between printed book and writing on the computer) and also reader-response theory, as the reader's active role in conceptually filling the gaps and bringing together the strands of the text is seen as convergent with the necessary choices that are required on her part while processing a hypertext. In the same vein, Stuart Moulthrop (1990) finds in post-structuralism an important tool for the understanding of hypertext and also argues that Barthes's insights on the *Text* are 'literalized' in hypertext.

These reflections, shared by the now-called first-generation hypertext theorists, present a common tendency to perceive theoretical concepts in their broadest possible sense, and so to represent theory as a paradigmatic order.[2] In this vein, concepts as fundamentally different as dialogism, intertextuality, multivocality, and even writerly text are presented as almost interchangeable. This phenomenon is clearly concurrent with the appearance of summary presentations of theoretical concepts in critical theory websites. While we are

certainly not implying that the main source of hypertext theorists' information on literary theory should be traced to the 'Introduction to Critical Theory' websites we referred to earlier on, it is hard not to observe a certain common tendency at work. Strikingly, even critics who have noticed the simplification of post-structuralism in hypertext theorists, contend, as Lunsford does following Landow, that 'critical theory promises to theorize hypertext and hypertext promises to embody and thereby test aspects of theory' (1994, p. 274).

Promise is probably the key term here, and it would seem that for the sake of this particular promise several critics are willing to oversee the reduction suffered by theory upon entering the electronic arena.[3] Since the beginnings of their theorization, hypertext and electronic writing on the World Wide Web have been invested with visions of emancipation, pluralism, widespread and active participation, and open-endedness. Although these expectations are by no means exclusive to critical theory, the latter – in its many strands – provides a framework that connects them to an insightful understanding of the workings of textuality. Moulthrop (1997) depicts the new media as a postmodern ironic combination of, on the one hand, awareness of the failure of grand narratives and, on the other, desire for radical change. A more concrete example of this general claim is offered when he contends that '[b]ecause they require the reader to participate in the progressive unfolding of the narrative, hypertextual fictions necessarily undermine any singular fatalism, fostering instead an ethos of responsiveness and engagement' (1997, p. 275). A similar view has been proposed by J. Hillis Miller, who proclaims the 'ethics of hypertext' to reside in the fact that 'a hypertext demands that we choose at every turn and take responsibility for our choices' (1995, p. 38). On the other hand, feminists of a post-structuralist bend such as Wendy Morgan (2000), Donna LeCourt, and Luann Barnes (1999) find in hypertextual multivocality and fragmentariness a 'homologous' tool for conveying the subaltern knowledges of marginalized women without compromising them to the exigencies of academic hierarchical discourse.

The strong claims of this tendency in hypertext theorizing clearly have prescriptive effects. Writing at a time when hypertext was beginning to take shape and ascending in popularity, Moulthrop (1990) explicitly reiterated Barthes's distinction of 'work' from 'text' as he proposed that future hypertexts be developed not as objects but as systems. A lot of hyperfiction and other hypertext projects have caught up not just with this suggestion but also with its underlying implication that their enterprise could be theorized in terms deriving from critical theory. Introductions or individual lexias with theoretical reflections on the nature of these projects have frequently been offered and they functioned mainly as reading instructions, aiming at familiarizing the reader with this new type of work, whose revolutionary character they seldom failed to claim.[4] Although, 20 years after Joyce's seminal hyperfiction *Afternoon; a Story* (1987), this tendency is understandably on the wane, its early manifestations clearly reflect the influence of hypertext theorizing in the development of hypertext.

In his important *Cybertext*, Espen Aarseth (1997, pp. 82–4) refutes the idea of hypertext as a vindication of postmodern theories altogether, claiming that this idea conflates two separate conceptual levels; the aesthetic, constructed in the observer's mind, and the material, the physical reality of hypertext. The figurative, abstract quality of critical theory tenets (particularly post-structuralist ones) could not in this sense be thought of as 'translated', embodied, or reduced, to a literal (material) manifestation. David Miall (1999) and Michael Riffaterre (1994) have expressed similar concerns with the notion that critical theory is literalized in hypertext practice, which they find distorting and reductive.

Nevertheless, and despite the opposition it has met as a conceptual scandal or even as an objectionable scholarly practice, it seems that the literalization of critical theory in hypertext has ultimately been the object of a speech act. The function and value – or use and status – of a statement as act under certain circumstances, as in the case of the wedding ceremony, a bet, a promise, or the American Declaration of Independence, to mention a few of the most frequently discussed speech acts, has long been recognized and theorized among others by J. - L. Austin (1962), John Searle (1969), and Jacques Derrida (1972; 1984).[5] We propose that the way in which critical theory has been treated in relation to hypertext has facilitated its historical transformation from constative to performative, from speculation to promise, from supposition to declaration. This mutation has been brought about by the entire system of repeated evocations of critical theory for the description of the new electronic writing, by its use as inspiration source for the hopes of a 'radical change' or a paradigm shift signalled by the new media, and also by its regulatory inscription within hyperfiction and other hypertext projects. These factors have acted as necessary conditions for the establishment of critical theory's performative function.

The interpretative framework we are proposing can also accommodate the state of theory in introductory websites as we sketched it earlier, providing a ground for the explanation of the reductive tendencies observed both in theory sites and in the work of some hypertext theorists. The decontextualization of critical terms and the concomitant ossification of theory in clusters of main concepts, as well as its relegation to a branch of the history of ideas, are typical results of the process that has attributed a ritualistic function to texts in ceremonial speech acts or mere historical significance to inaugural texts such as the Declaration of Independence.

In this sense, critical theory does become obsolete, as Bolter (2001) has noted, but not because it fights 'a war against the traditions of print' which is 'long over', as he claimed. Although performativity would seem to derive from a certain linguistic force or quality imminent in the texts themselves, at least as much as it is conferred upon them by circumstances, this does not necessarily imply that texts have the power to determine the way they act. What we witness on the web today is just one realization of the many possibilities inherent in the

virtual variety of critical theory. One may only hope that the future expansion of the World Wide Web will do more justice to texts whose insights on the workings of power and language are much broader than their supposed application in hypertext and still pertinent in a cultural paradigm that will probably take some time to change.

Notes

[1] See, for instance, Landow, 1997, p. 91; Bolter 2001, p. 171. The authors would like to thank Raine Koskimaa for his helpful comments.

[2] The characterization 'first-generation hypertext theory' was introduced by Katherine Hayles (2002) to describe the work of Landow, Bolter, and other early hypertext theorists who discussed hypertexts in terms drawn by the print culture.

[3] Interestingly, Koskimaa (2000) observes that 'usually people write about hyperfiction Texts as *promises* of what is to come; analyses strictly dealing with characteristics of existing hyperfictions are rare' (our emphasis).

[4] Cf. Bolter, 2001, p. 187: '[Carolyn Guyer's] collaborative "High-Pitched Voices" was an attempt to define a feminist form of electronic writing through the practice of a community of women writers. The hyperfictions of Moulthrop, Joyce, and Jackson are all noted for their incorporation of theoretical texts as well as self-referential comments on the nature of the hypertext writing that they are practising. John Cayley and Jim Rosenberg are electronic poets whose theoretical views on the nature of representation and the act of reading enter into and inform the electronic works they create'.

[5] The authors mentioned have widely differing views on the subject and we only refer here to some key works. A succinct and clear overview of the larger discussion to which these works partake can be found in J. H. Miller, 2001.

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Chapter 15

HyperCities: Building a Web 2.0 Learning Platform

Todd Samuel Presner

Digital Iterations

In 2003, I began to think about how I might teach a 'general education' class on the cultural and urban history of the city of Berlin. The purpose of the class was to consider Berlin as a prism through which to understand some of the broad historical transformations in Europe over the past several centuries. Although taught in a Germanic languages department, the course was offered in English and presumed no prior knowledge of either German history or the German language. Indeed, most of the students were science majors and had ambitions that were far from the conventional realm of the Humanities. Moreover, the vast majority of my undergraduate students at the University of California, Los Angeles had never been to Berlin and none was old enough to remember the fall of the Berlin Wall. The challenge that I faced was essentially the inverse of that of long-distance learning: rather than broadcasting my class to distant learners, I had to imagine a way to bring 'Berlin' to my students in Los Angeles.

Having lived in Berlin for a number of years, I had a deep, personal connection to the city, its particular rhythms, sounds, and smells, not to mention its tragic, layered histories. While I could never represent the sensory and phenomenological experience of being-in-the-city to others, I thought that it might be possible – using the tools of new media – to convey the uncanny coexistence of Berlin's many pasts, the multiple ghosts that haunt the spaces of the present. After all, an urban flâneur experiences and begins to make sense, however precariously, of this haunted landscape by piecing together its remains, for example the synchronic encounter of a Prussian neoclassical building side by side with the relics of the Berlin Wall and the ruins of a Nazi deportation station. But more pointed, I wondered, how does one navigate spaces of absence and erasure, those places that were completely destroyed and are now invisible? In this case, it does not matter if one is actually 'in' the physical space or not because it has been evacuated of the meaning and significance that it once had. Here, the digital flâneur, I thought, might have more of a chance of peeling back the historical layers and drilling down into these invisible spaces.

Using the organizing principle of 'temporal topographies', my plan was to create a digital space for exploring Berlin, and more particularly an interactive, multimedia environment for experiencing the city's cultural, architectural, and urban history. But rather than taking chronology as the organizing principle, I wanted to foreground the uneven time-layers comprising Berlin's nearly 800-year history, the urban palimpsests, as it were, that comprise the present. Using a multiplicity of interconnected digital maps, the first, flash-based version of 'Hypermedia Berlin' was completed in 2004 and allowed students to navigate by time and space through 25 interlinked maps of Berlin keyed to relevant 'people' and 'place' links. All of the data objects were connected to geographic locations and temporal coordinates, something that allowed students to become new media flâneurs or 'data dandies' (Manovich, 2001, p. 270) as they moved through the digital space.[1] Students explored Berlin by zooming in and out of the maps, scrolling – in any order – through some 800 years of space and time, and clicking on various regions, neighbourhoods, blocks, buildings, and streets. Like most first-generation web applications, this Web 1.0 hypermedia textbook was 'read only' and did not allow users to add to, modify, or recombine the media objects.

When Google released its Map API the following year, I decided to embark on a second, digital iteration of Hypermedia Berlin, one that would engage with Web 2.0 social technologies to construct a more interactive, user-generated and user-modified site.[2] The result is 'HyperCities', a Web 2.0 learning platform that allows users to navigate through and collaborate on the construction of the urban, cultural, and social history of any city in the world.[3] A HyperCity is a real city overlaid with its geo-temporal information, ranging from its architectural and urban history to family genealogies and the stories of the people and diverse communities who live and lived there. Through collaborations between universities and community partners in Los Angeles, Lima, Berlin, New York, Rome, and Tel Aviv, HyperCities is a participatory, open-ended learning environment grounded in space and time, place and history, memory and social interaction, oral history and digital media.

As a platform that reaches deeply into archival collections and aggregates content across digital repositories, HyperCities not only transforms how information is produced, stored, retrieved, shared, repurposed, and experienced but also transforms how students interact with information and one another in space and time. The project asks some of the most fundamental learning questions: Who are you? Where are you from? What used to be here? What happened here in the past? The goal of HyperCities is to link generations and knowledge communities by mobilizing an array of new technologies (from GPS-enabled cell phones to GIS mapping tools and geo-temporal databases) to create a truly participatory, open-ended learning ecology grounded in the space and time of the real world.

With the emergence of the geo-temporal web – what could arguably be considered Web 3.0 – the 'real world' has become conjoined with cyberspace,

rendering the city, with all its information networks, the classroom. HyperCities fosters associative learning by utilizing geo-temporal taxonomies for producing, organizing, and experiencing information in a hypermedia environment. If, as John Seely Brown (1999, p. 1) argues, 'the new literacy [for the twenty-first century] is one of information navigation', HyperCities takes this literacy to the next level by extending it to geo-historical navigation. Students can explore, contribute, overlay, and slice through the city in innovative ways while also contributing datasets, family genealogies, and life stories to HyperCities. The result is the bridging of expert knowledge and citizen knowledge, connecting generations and knowledge communities with university specialists. Student groups coexist with vetted content which users can manipulate in different ways, asking both factual and counterfactual questions: Where, for example, did Moses Mendelssohn, the great Jewish philosopher of the Enlightenment, enter the city of Berlin in 1743? What would the city look like if the Berlin Wall was put up in 1805 and the Nazi ministries on Wilhelmstrasse were erected in the same year?

Indeed, such a speculative question places us squarely in the domain of the literary and asks us to engage with the interface between history and literature. At the same time that the HyperCities platform is used to teach students 'what happened', it is imperative that students realize that HyperCities does not present Berlin 'as it really was' but rather Berlin as a palimpsest of representations that are always accessed through combinations of various media forms such as narratives, photographs, films, and maps. In this regard, HyperCities is a platform that shares more affinities with literary modernism than with historical realism. As an interactive, rhizomatic web of objects, HyperCities is closer to Alfred Döblin's modernist novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* or Walter Ruttmann's film, *Berlin: Die Symphonie der Grossstadt* (Berlin: The Symphony of a Metropolis), both of which used the montage form to examine the structural complexity of the temporally layered city. But because of its interactive dimension, HyperCities pushes the media of literature and film further, allowing users to participate in the construction of the city's multiple pasts.

With an emphasis on participatory learning, then, users can add media objects, curate and share their own collections, as well as view and link to other people's public collections. Users are able to add 'micro-annotations' by geotagging points, lines, and polygons, such as Unter den Linden in the year 1793, or the northwest corner of Leipzigerstrasse and Wilhelmstrasse from 1920 to 1945. The rationale is that these annotations contribute to the creation of a 'people's history' of the city, leveraging the democratizing possibilities of the web to create, display, and distribute information. To add an entry such as 'My grandmother lived here from 1903 to 1937' is to participate in the practice of a commemorative, place-based memory, recreating what Dolores Hayden (1997, p. xi) has eloquently called 'the power of place'. These annotations function as collectively generated 'folksonomies', which complement – but do not displace – academically generated taxonomies or 'expert' content. In this

respect, HyperCities makes use of the Wikipedia model of collaborative authorship and 'writerly' content, but also maintains a tiered, authorship model for evaluating and publishing scholarly research.

The beta version of the HyperCities platform is currently being tested and used at scores of schools and universities to teach 'distant' courses on the cultural history of Berlin, Los Angeles, Rome, Lima, and New York. In my Berlin class at UCLA, students are 'embedded' in a place on one of the maps at a particular time (say, Alexanderplatz in 1810), and are expected to 'live' there for the duration of the quarter. They are responsible for generating an extensive cultural history of their location (which is seen by the whole class) and also for connecting this temporally and spatially distant place with their own lives today. Some students, for example, link their Facebook or MySpace accounts or produce media files from photographs stored on Picassa or Flickr. Not only does this help integrate the class into their everyday social networks, but it also facilitates a critical engagement with the hypermedia world in which they live. Bringing the two applications together also sparks their imagination: What would happen to MySpace when it literally becomes 'my space', when users can network by latitude, longitude, and time? How does deep spatial awareness relate to historical analyses, visual literacy, and the literary imaginary? These questions are not abstract but felt in very real ways as their knowledge networks and social networks overlap with one another.

The fundamental pedagogical premise of HyperCities, then, might be called transmedia literacy, as students have to simultaneously learn to navigate, create, and evaluate networks of information that take the form of multimedia maps, audio and film files, geo-temporal narratives, quantitative datasets, and web pages. Media-specific analysis, an attention to the specific material apparatus and technical medium through which knowledge is produced,[4] comes together with geographic, computational, and historical analyses. In the process, geobrowsers such as Google Maps or Google Earth are not naturalized as 'accurate' or 'realistic' ways of seeing and representing the world, but understood as part of a lineage of visualization and cartographic technologies motivated by particular cultural forms of spatial representation with a powerful and unmistakable investment in the globalization of military surveillance.[5] My position is that we must neither uncritically embrace every new technology nor cavalierly dismiss them; instead, we must engage them on both their own terms and our own terms, repurposing them in unexpected ways and bringing them into a critical dialogue with other media and media practices that have also transformed our pedagogy, including, of course, print culture. This involves experimentation with learning how to use and deploy new technologies, while also asking what new technologies might mean for disciplinary methodologies, models of engagement, and the production and dissemination of collaboratively produced knowledge.

At the core of HyperCities are databases of openly accessible, geo-temporal content defined by KML, a mark-up language chosen because its development

is funded by private enterprise (Google) but governed by the Open Geospatial Consortium, which ensures a robust user-base and an open-source development model for specification and implementation. Built on a mapping platform derived from Google, HyperCities allows users to explore, overlay, and curate various kinds of geo- and temporally coded information on cartographic, aerial, and satellite imagery in order to view, interrogate, and revise the representations of city spaces, their human histories, and the media-technology apparatus for which they were originally created. It not only endows Google maps with a temporal dimension – one that allows students to browse and search by 'drilling down' in time – but it also lets students add, edit, and curate information relating to a given city and its inhabitants over time. Beginning, then, with the Google maps API and the satellite imagery licensed by Google, HyperCities asks if it is possible to de-stabilize and de-naturalize this imagery, to use it in order to preserve a bit of particularity. Unlike the objectivist goal of accurately, comprehensively, and totally mapping every point on earth, HyperCities begins with a question: How can this platform be used to richly contextualize digital information, preserve individual memories, and, perhaps most ambitiously, undo historical erasures and silences? Might the very technologies themselves – indebted to and suffused with militaristic technologies of surveillance and precision-guided destruction – be repurposed, as it were, for something life affirming?[6] To do so, geographic information systems such as Google Earth or Google Maps must not be thought of as mirrors of nature, accurately reflecting the truth of the world 'out there', but rather understood as culturally and historically specific spatial practices that not only have their own logic and ideologies but also a particular place in the history, mediation, and representation of urban spaces.

Indeed, this is something that is not always apparent to students, who are somewhat loath to criticize new technologies or interrogate their hidden assumptions and meaning-making strategies. At the same time, 'born digital' students tend to be exceptionally engaged with creating and sharing new media content.[7] In the second part of this essay, I would like to examine some of the pedagogical implications of new media, using my experience with Hypermedia Berlin and HyperCities to guide my analysis. I will conclude by drawing five lessons that I have learnt teaching about Berlin in a Web 2.0 world.

Pedagogy in the Age of New Media

Pedagogy – at least in its conventional sense – commands docility. It is revealing to look briefly at the etymology of the term: A *pedagogue*, from the Middle French, is a schoolmaster, someone 'charged with overseeing a child or youth'; from the Latin, *paedagogus*, it refers to a 'slave who took children from school' and generally supervised them; in Greek, the word *paidagogos* was built from *pais* or 'child' and *agogos*, meaning 'leader', from *agein* 'to lead'.[8] A pedagogue,

then, was an adult person (teacher, instructor, or supervisor), who had reached a level or maturity to watch over and attend to children, lead them in a certain direction, and, depending on social and political privilege, to inculcate in them the necessary skills and education to eventually become citizens. The German term for education – *Bildung* – contains much of this history: *Bildung*, roughly translated as formation, refers to the processual cultivation of the subject-citizen to enter into civil society (Koselleck, 2002). The term has resonances that come from creation theology, sculpture, and educational practice, perhaps most famously articulated in Goethe's Bildungsroman, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. The young Wilhelm becomes '*gebildet*' (educated) so that he can enter into middle-class society (the *Bildungsbürgertum*). The normative process is repeatable as respectable citizens are cultivated, while deviations are excluded and killed off. In its traditional sense, then, pedagogy contains a fundamental presumption of docility and authority: Children are docile subjects to be looked after, while teachers are authoritative, disciplinary figures.

Jumping forward a couple of centuries, this binary has come undone: It is common parlance that 'kids today know far more technology' than adults do. I hear it all the time from colleagues who throw up their hands in self-surrender: 'I can't possibly keep up with all the new technologies; the students today come in knowing far more technology than I ever will.' My response is always the same: substitute the word 'literature', 'history', 'math' or any other traditional field of inquiry for 'technology' in that sentence and see how it would sound: 'I can't possibly keep us with all the new [literature, history, math]; the students today come in knowing far more [literature, history, math] than I ever will.' I believe that it is incumbent upon us – as university educators – to prepare our students to enter the world of the twenty-first century. Students must be able to both deploy and interrogate the range of media tools and technologies in which knowledge is being created, disseminated, and encountered today. If we reject the dichotomy of authority and docility as our starting point, what might this injunction mean concretely for pedagogy today? And just as important, what can still be salvaged from the traditional concept of pedagogy?

Foremost, the presumption of students as docile subjects has to be given up. This does not mean that our authority has to be given up, too; however, we need to imagine pedagogical models in which students are engaged in dynamic ways with their peers, with their teachers, with their cultures, with their languages, with their technologies, and with their histories. If this does not happen in the classroom, it will happen in every other space of the students' lives, rendering the classroom abstracted, at best, and downright irrelevant, at worst. Our students are constantly engaging with media technologies and, not paradoxically, arguably composing more text (emails, text messages, IMs, blogs, and social networking updates) than students of any other generation in history. And they are doing so in a richly dynamic media environment saturated with incessant and continuously dissonant streams of information. In her contribution to *Profession 2007*, N. Katherine Hayles describes 'the generational divide

in cognitive modes' as a gap between 'deep attention' (what is traditionally valorized in the humanities) and 'hyper attention', a cognitive mode 'characterized by switching focus rapidly between different tasks . . . [and] multiple information streams' (2007, p. 187). Deep attention – the ability to concentrate on a single object for long periods of time – is not only a luxury, as Hayles points out, but it might also be understood as the civilization effect: The production of quiet, well-behaved, good citizens who read books from start to finish. Checking email 30 times a day, while reading Wikipedia entries in lecture, tracking your friends on Facebook, composing notes for a term paper, and text messaging your roommate cannot possibly be a good thing, or so we are told.

While I do not want to argue that one form of attention is more 'evolved' or 'better' than the other, I want to conclude by extracting a few principles from my experience teaching with the HyperCities platform that might help us to think about pedagogy in our age of new media:

1. *The learning environment.* It is no revelation that our students are not learning primarily by showing up to class, taking notes, and going home to read the assigned texts from start to finish in a deep attention learning mode. Instead, they are often 'talking' to one another before, after, and even during lecture (texting one another with questions, surfing the internet for information, collaborating on assignments, and even indicating their progress on Facebook's mini-feeds). While I am not suggesting that the hyper attention model be universally embraced, I do find it productive in specific situations and with regard to specific kinds of collaborative pedagogy.[9] How might we harness these social technologies for rethinking the space of the classroom, the performance of the lecture, the analysis of texts, and the criteria of evaluation? Rather than dismiss hyper attention, we might, following Hayles's lead, ask what this cognitive mode makes possible. For starters, it might also allow us to re-historicize the traditionally prized cognitive model of deep attention and its connection to the history of the book, literacy, and reading practices.[10] In my HyperCities class, all the learning objects (readings and other media objects) are embedded at various time-place junctures in Berlin, contextualized in terms of history and geography. Students have to find the readings and media – sometimes by searching the site by drilling down at particular locations – and, in the process, discover cultural artefacts such as film clips, works of art, or snippets of literary texts that they may not have been looking for. Students engage one another in this discovery process, which, at times can be frustrating, but is, after all, how one navigates a city that is unfamiliar, strange, or new: We immerse ourselves, look around, choose a path, ask others for directions, and proceed from place to place.

2. *Evaluation.* Everything new is not automatically good and worthy of celebration. We have to ask: What do these technologies enable and what do they prevent? As educators, part of our mission is to be dialectical thinkers

who neither uncritically embrace every technology nor uncritically wave our hands at them all. Our students may be savvy users of new technologies, but they have not developed the evaluative tools to dissect the ways in which every technology creates its own normative subjects, exclusions, protocols, and violence, even while opening up new democratizing possibilities and freedoms. This is a problem of judgement, which is a problem of history, cultural context, experience, comparative perspective, and the development of criteria for evaluation. Here is where the traditional concept of pedagogy or *Bildung* as subject formation comes back: the cultivation of ethical, responsible, and (now) global citizens. Geo-browsers such as Google Earth or HyperCities allow students to 'travel' instantaneously across the world and gain a certain experience of distant places through geographically aware media environments; however, these experiences are, of course, highly managed, sanitized representations of an 'earth' devoid of social strife, economic inequities, and sometimes even people.[11] Moreover, how do we foreground and confront the very real investment that these technologies have had in military surveillance, control, and destruction? Again, we must ask: What do these technologies enable, where do they come from, and what do they occlude?

3. *Transmedia Literacy.* This is a term that Henry Jenkins introduced in his fascinating white paper published by the MacArthur Foundation, 'Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: media education for the 21st Century' (2006). It articulates, in my opinion, many of the most pressing challenges and possibilities for digital media and learning. By transmedia literacy, Jenkins meant the ability to search for, synthesize, and evaluate information across multiple modalities, whether textual, visual, aural, or hypermedia. While textual literacy may be the most important historically, the new literacy is information navigation: that is, learning to query, sort, and evaluate massive amounts of content in a multiplicity of media forms. In our pedagogy, we must cultivate this literacy of information navigation, selection, and evaluation. Indeed, HyperCities is constructed as an experiment in cultivating this kind of transmedia literacy.

4. *Collaboration/Collective Knowledge.* New social technologies enabled by Web 2.0 are based upon architectures of participation, in which openness, peering, and sharing are the privileged means of producing new knowledge and new communities. Of course, universities do not award collaborative degrees; tests and term papers are still evaluated by the aptitude of the author, who is generally presumed to be a single student. While I do not propose abandoning this practice ('one student, one grade, one degree'), I wonder how we might generate forms of collective knowledge that change and grow over time as more students participate in a given enterprise. The humanities are still quite reluctant to embrace collaborative, laboratory-like models of knowledge production, in which risk-taking and failure are part of the learning process.[12] What does it mean to participate in a collaborative venture, in which knowledge and content are not proprietary, singular, or closed off? For my students, the

HyperCities platform provided a publication venue for their collaboratively realized projects. Using the Google My Maps KML editor, students designed multimedia spatial arguments that could then be overlaid on any number of historical maps of Berlin. One such project mapped the itineraries of works of art looted by the Nazis across Europe and their eventual home in various museums throughout Berlin; another mapped the breakdown of transportation networks with the erection of the Berlin Wall; still another mapped the relationship between real and imaginary sites of transgression in Peter Schneider's 1982 novel, *The Wall Jumper*. Through these group projects, which became part of the archive for the class, cultural history became connected with geography, urban studies, art history, design, sociology, and political history.

5. *Trans-disciplinarity.* Obviously, this kind of research and pedagogy cannot happen until we start to think – especially on an institutional level – about flexible, even nimble, trans-disciplinary structures, perhaps rooted in knowledge problematics rather than conventional departments. At UCLA, for example, we have begun to conceive of digital humanities as a 'virtual department' that is overlaid on and across traditional departments. The virtue of this model is the agile, mobile, and temporal structure in which knowledge clusters aggregate around faculty interests and, through feedback loops, influence the direction of departments and disciplines. This, of course, goes in both directions at once. All-too-often, however, institutional environments, not to mention conventional humanities departments, suffer from a combined malaise: cognitive conservatism and institutional inertia.[13] Perhaps it is a sobering wake-up call, then, that some of the most significant pedagogical breakthroughs of the last decade have not come from universities but from private industry and non-profits: Wikipedia and the wiki, blogging, Google's book digitization and search project, the proliferation of cultural mapping platforms using Google's Map and Earth APIs, social networking sites, and the host of programmable Web 2.0 applications. If we are ever going to be more than consumers of these technologies, we humanists have to be involved in these technologies from the very start.[14] This means changing our pedagogical practices in radical ways that support innovation together with critical judgement, risk-taking, peer-to-peer knowledge production, and trans-disciplinarity. Our students are more than eager to experiment, link, browse, create, play, and share their knowledge. Should we not do the same, and should we not do this together? Indeed, nobody can afford to be docile in this enterprise.

Notes

[1] Following Manovich (2001), we could see precedents in the history of film, such as in Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: The Symphony of a Metropolis* (1928) or Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) for the creation of new ways to view, navigate, and experience the city space.

[2] Web 2.0 refers to the programmable web (as opposed to the 'read-only' web), in which users can recombine, tag, mash-up, annotate, and variously manage data. For an overview of Web 2.0, see O'Reilly (2005).

[3] In 2008, HyperCities was awarded one of the first 'digital media and learning' awards from the MacArthur Foundation/HASTAC. The HyperCities project is currently directed by Todd Presner, with six principal investigators working on Berlin, Los Angeles, Rome, Lima, Tel Aviv, and New York. Earlier versions of the Berlin portion of the project (called 'Hypermedia Berlin') were supported by a 'digital innovation' award from the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), the UCLA Office of Instructional Development, the UCLA Faculty Senate Grants Program, and the Stanford Humanities Laboratory. The technical development of the project was completed at UCLA's Center for Digital Humanities and UCLA's Academic Technology Services. For a discussion of the history of Hypermedia Berlin, see Presner (2006).

[4] In the field of literary studies, N. Katherine Hayles (2002, p. 29) argues that 'media-specific analysis [complements] the foundational concepts of material metaphors, inscription technologies and technotexts [through] a kind of criticism that pays attention to the material apparatus producing the literary work as physical artifact'.

[5] For an overview of this lineage leading up to Google Earth, see Pickles (2004).

[6] As Caren Kaplan (2006) has argued in her analysis of the ways in which Geographic Information Systems and GPS produce militarized subjects, the rhetoric of precision targeting, location awareness, and mapping often ignores, if not obscures, the military infrastructure that enabled these kind of subjectivities in the first place. For a demonstration of these claims in the form of a multimedia 'tutorial on technologies of sight in Western Euro-American modernity', see Kaplan (2007).

[7] According to the 2005 Pew Internet and American Life project, more than half of American teenagers who use the internet are media creators. Far from just passively 'surfing' the web, these students are creating media, such as web pages, videos, music, blogs, stories, and other online content. This does not even include the vast number of students who also engage in multiplayer gaming, social networking, and other forms of web-based communication. For a full discussion, see Jenkins (2006).

[8] *Oxford English Dictionary*, entry for 'pedagogue'. Also, cf. the entry for 'Pedagogue' on: http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=p&p=8 [1 February 2009].

[9] In my course on the Holocaust, for example, I expressly forbid students to use mobile devices in class, as they tend to disturb other students who are often very emotionally engaged with the subject matter. This class follows the format of a traditional lecture and definitely requires deep attention and empathetic listening. In my course on Berlin, however, I approach the subject matter completely differently, asking students to engage with participatory media from many different angles.

[10] This point is central to the arguments of media historian Friedrich Kittler (1990). For a recent popularization of Kittler's ideas, see Carr (2008).

[11] For a critical assessment of Google Earth and geo-browsers, see Presner (Forthcoming).

[12] As a pioneering institution, the Stanford Humanities Laboratory was established in 2000 on precisely this idea.

[13] The first term comes from Barbara Herrnstein Smith's *Belief and Resistance* (1997, p. 50). The second term is adapted from her account of 'intellectual inertia' in the same volume.

[14] I share this assessment with Anne Balsamo, who has recently argued for this in her forthcoming book on the technological imagination.

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Chapter 16

Affect and Narrative Encoding: The Problematics of Representing and Teaching Yanyuwa Narratives in Cyberspace

John Bradley and Frances Devlin-Glass

Introduction

Yanyuwa country in the Northern Territory, Australia, was settled by Europeans as late as 1886, and its culture studied very superficially in 1901 by ethnographers Spencer and Gillen (1904; 1912). Detailed research on the culture as that of an autochthonous people with a unique language, epistemology, and spirituality only started in the 1980s, at which point, Yanyuwa people, long inured to European disruption of their culture and lifestyles, were intent on, and able to control how they were represented. This was both empowering and threatening as the mediation they engaged in – creating films, television programmes, dictionaries, books, and a website – was necessarily conducted in English and by a dwindling team of culturally knowledgeable elders. Only two outsiders, a linguist, Jean Kirton, and an anthropologist, John Bradley, learnt the language. Yanyuwa ventures into Western media/artefacts were aimed primarily at their own children and at outsiders in the fervent hope that they could document their culture before it was too late, and archive it for future and as yet unimaginable uses by their own people. 'Experts' who learnt particular languages were the exception rather than the rule, and it is rare now for any indigenous language (most are in terminal decay) to have traction even in its heartland. Social Darwinist ideologies (McGregor, 1997) denigrated these cultures and governments attempted cultural genocide (Kiernan, 2007), even after the illegal massacres largely ceased as late as 1927. Aboriginal cultures, of course, have always had their heroic and principled supporters (Reynolds, 1987), often but not necessarily constructively, anthropologists and missionaries, but the odds against cultural survival were/are immense.

Mainstream Australian understandings of the historical injustice to Aboriginal people and culture have often been touched in the last 60 years: a record majority of 90.77 per cent[1] voted for the constitutional referendum in 1967 that allowed Aboriginal people to be Australian citizens and to vote; two Commonwealth-Government-sponsored investigations (*Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (1992) and 'Report of the national inquiry into the separation

of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander children from their families', published as *Bringing them home: The 'Stolen Children' Report* (1997)), provided factual information and moving testimonials of the operation of government policies in action. Their recommendations drove for ten short years a 'decade' of Reconciliation (1990–2000). The affect inherent in these findings, however, lost impetus under the governance of Prime Minister John Howard (1996–2007) in a turn to 'practical reconciliation' – a much-needed but largely ineffectual focus on health, education, housing, and redressing the effects of mismanagement of Aboriginal affairs. It was effectively a return to the assimiliationist agendas of an earlier era rebadged as an Intervention. In the interregnum, insofar as the well-disposed mainstream came to know and appreciate the depth and difference of Aboriginal culture, it has tended to be via the luminous, painstaking, semi-abstract art of Indigenous visual artists, more valued initially by the voracious international marketplace which read them as strikingly original, beautiful abstract works, than by Australian nationals. Increasingly, non-indigenous Australians have slowly learnt, guided by the artists, how to read the publicly available spiritual content of these works and to respect what is silently withheld from outsider scrutiny. The *affect* inhering in such works is palpable and it speaks in many voices and almost effortlessly across cultural divides. Such works are a splendid starting point for understanding Aboriginal culture in the classroom. Yanyuwa's treasures, though, are linguistic – song poetry, oratory and ritual songlines and performance – rather than visual (though a visual tradition has been gathering momentum in the last decade). It is indeed a more challenging exercise to foster understanding of affect using such resources which do not readily translate into Western media, and that is precisely the challenge this chapter documents and attempts to address.

Background on Yanyuwa Culture and Myths and Attempts to Represent and Teach Them

The West has a long and inglorious history of not taking indigenous social formations and the moral orders that go with them seriously and simply trying to dismiss them as left-overs from some undesirable past. These kinds of social formations have proven to be unexpectedly resilient across time despite the attempts to engage in cultural annihilation by the West: nearly everywhere indigenous people have managed to maintain some form of extended kinship network that forms the basis of their identity. The settler state has to learn to appreciate, work with and accommodate these social formations rather than wishing them out of existence, not only because of their inherent richness and complexity, but also because the Yanyuwa world view has much to offer the West in terms of deep ecological knowledge, spirituality and ways of relating to place. The website, atlas, and the animations discussed below are all demonstrative of a process of Yanyuwa people seeking to maintain a vision of Yanyuwa identity

that can be given to future generations of their own people, but they also assist non-Yanyuwa people to understand them.

What is very rarely fully appreciated is how kinship links and the affect inhering in them are simply made invisible by the academic and governmental processes which draw out of this complexity essentialized understandings which fail to differentiate these kinds of kinship relationships from neighbours in a Western-city context. Secondly, Yanyuwa ways of knowing are not museum pieces, and of the past. Yanyuwa culture has changed and is changing in response to contact with the encroaching mainstream society. What is threatened is a loss of control of the processes of representation. Ideally, Yanyuwa people (like many others) desire to voice their aspirations for themselves, rather than to be spoken for by the state or the academy, and to control their self-representation.

Yanyuwa's cultural treasure, a body of stories, some of which may have an associated songline[2] and some of which may not, were first systematically made available in print form in 1988 (J. Bradley). The methodology of this anthology, whereby people would tell the story and Bradley made drawings of them on the spot, subsequently became the basis for increasingly sophisticated methods of recording such Dreaming[3] material. This bilingual illustrated collection was attentive to the site-specificity of Yanyuwa narratives (by registering how minutely story corresponds with site and does not necessarily make sense unless the site is known) and to the special significance of multiple sacred sites, some with particularly high affective charge. But like so many Western representations of mythological material, it was limited by its media package, which restricts its potential readership to children, literary and anthropological scholars, and by the restrictive Western definitions of oral mythological narratives (Creation myths, legends of sun, moon and stars and animals, and also moral tales).

How Aboriginal Myths Have Been Rendered in Western Media

Print representations of Yanyuwa myths (and Aboriginal myths more generally) have several inherent limitations: they fail to distinguish between different kinds of oral storytelling practice, and to mark whether the context is a storytelling session for children or adepts; or whether the version is a fully fledged performance complete with archaic poetic language, music, dance, and perhaps intended for an audience restricted on gender lines. Most significantly, these narratives are often told *in situ*, focusing on that part of the narrative which is relevant to a particular site, so information on setting is naturally superfluous to the narrative as the objects and places referred to are evident to a Yanyuwa auditor. Furthermore, the narrative may begin *in medias res* as narrative elements relevant to place are foregrounded. As a result, the continuities of

those parts of the story that belong in other places (because in Yanyuwa stories move across country) are left for another telling in those other places. The sense of the centrality of place to narrative is easily occluded in print texts, and very few anthologies of Indigenous Dreaming narratives pay any attention at all to this central element. *Tjarany/Roughtail* (Greene et al., 1992) and *Songs of Central Australia* (Strehlow, 1971) are rare exceptions. Another element not deeply appreciated in the West is that narratives and songs are owned by those with a claim to the particular parcels of land spoken about or sung in the narrative, a notion that is anathema in the West where knowledge is supposedly freely available to those who seek it. Furthermore, European tales for children frequently get reduced to 'just-so' and moralizing tales. By contrast, Yanyuwa Dreaming narratives typically have cross-age auditors, many of whom are adepts who are not 'spoken down to', and the narratives perform a great variety of functions from articulating the sacredness of the web of life, the kin relationships between the human and more-than-human worlds, to more mundane purposes like demonstrating how one might recognize a hidden soak, or how to detoxify poisonous plants and render them nutritious. In other words, real learning of narrative and song is an expression of deep kinship ties and location-specific. One hundred and twenty years after white contact, these narratives inevitably implicitly carry a political freight palpable to their owners but needing to be explicated for an outsider auditor – for instance, they now attest to the history of dispossession, and despoliation of sacred places by grazing and mining interests.

What Diwurruwurru and Metacogs (2002) Attempted to Do

The pre/history of the Diwurruwurru websites has been explained and analysed in earlier essays (Devlin-Glass, 2002; Bradley et al., 1999). Summarizing briefly, the Diwurruwurru website (which has sections put aside for four different Gulf of Carpentaria cultures, of which Yanyuwa is the only one with a developed website) was developed in close collaboration with Yanyuwa elders between 1999 and 2002 for a dual audience of Yanyuwa children (it is pitched at lower secondary students) and non-Yanyuwa web users and students in a variety of Australian universities. It aimed at post-colonial best practice in giving Yanyuwa people control over their representation, hearing their voices and perspectives, and organizing knowledge in ways familiar to them.

Country, for Yanyuwa people, carries an affective charge which is difficult to communicate in Western media and which is crucial to the post-colonial methodology that the various iterations of the cosmology (books, website, animations) seek to implement. When Yanyuwa people speak of country or *awara*, there are many implicit understandings that speak of intimacy, love and a deep and abiding concern. Country is thought of as sentient and spoken

about in the same way that people speak about their human relatives: people cry, sing and care for their country; and take pleasure when others care for it. There is, increasingly, deep concern and worry about country, they speak longingly of country that they may not be able to visit because it is a part of a pastoral property, a mining lease or too hard to get to without transport. In return, country too can hear, feel and think about its human relatives, can also accept and reject, be hard or happy, just as people can with each other. Close relatives will often address each other as country, and when people see animal or plant species that are their Dreaming they will often call out, 'Hello country!' 'Country is full of countrymen, you can never go lonely', as one deceased Elderput it.

The Diwurruwurru website put Country at the heart of the enterprise (symbolized by the centrality of the Country button in the Yanyuwa homepage); furthermore, the website was systematically built around 20 sacred sites in Yanyuwa Country, for which knowledge was organized along six different axes. Where knowledge was gender-specific, or secret and sacred, this was made clear. The history of these sites was recorded both from Yanyuwa and Western perspectives and the Yanyuwa periodization of contact history was adopted.

Diwurruwurru, the website, has been used by students in various disciplines in several Australian universities (University of Queensland, Monash University, Deakin University, Australian National University). An ancillary website, Metacogs, delivered via FirstClass and later WebCT and not openly available on the internet outside Deakin University, was necessary to interrogate Diwurruwurru by setting up an analytical infrastructure which drew attention to the problematic of its knowledge system for students in Women's Studies and Literary Studies, both undergraduate and graduate, at Deakin. Consisting of three or four main pages (depending on the course), it performed a number of functions: it discussed the complex epistemological issues behind the representation of Aboriginal mythologies and the phenomenological bases for Yanyuwa thinking at the same time as it guided people around the particularities of the website to which it refers; it also demonstrated the continuities between ancient oral cultures which have been rendered in print, but also the differences (and in this sense it differentiated itself from earlier approaches, like Strehlow's monumental attempt to render and dignify Arrernte myths in *Songs of Central Australia*, 1971); finally, it discussed songlines as a genre with its own particular codes and conventions that were similar to and different from opera. This pedagogical strategy worked differently at different levels: the graduate students of myth, generally older and more in tune with the culture of opera, made good sense of these attempts to draw out connections with their own culture, but younger students were frankly bemused by the operatic comparisons that were not part of their knowledge repertoire. As an attempt to bridge cultural differences, to start from where students were, it met with varying degrees of success.

Limitations of Web-delivery on Diwurruwurru

Although Diwurruwurru continues to have its uses for teaching and for the community that owns its cultural material, attempting to hold a 'mini-museum' in a website (even a large one, of some 5,000 documents) is inevitably limited. The website can only ever hold a small proportion of the richness of the culture; it tends, like print, to ossify and, although more amenable to change than a print text, it is costly to redevelop. Educational disadvantage in Borroloola, the town that is now home to most Yanyuwa people, is such that the web expertise needed to have the website on a server in the town is not yet available, almost ten years after its launch. Furthermore, the website was built in frames, and this too adds to the complexity of modernizing it and updating it, although goodwill and expertise are available some 3,500 km away. One of the challenges of the website is how to communicate to outsiders a systematic knowledge system that is internally more intricately interconnected than the website currently enacts; in particular, the issue of how kinship binds parcels of country and the more-than-human world into a web of vital and supervital (sacred) dynamic relationships. Narratives, and an abundance of them, are essential for building up the affect that is stripped away by having to negotiate ontologies and epistemologies full of passionate intensity. Another related frustration is the knowledge that there are boxes of archival field recordings of significant ancestors, of great importance to the community, which could be turned into sound files. What is lost in translation into English is affect. It is more readily communicated through song, dance, and animated talk – all media that a website can encompass if resources are available.

Pedagogical Issues to Be Addressed

What one ideally wants students to apprehend about Yanyuwa culture from the website and other artefacts produced by Yanyuwa people is humility in the face of cultural difference, and an acknowledgement of incommensurabilities between cultures as well as points of connection. At its simplest level, students need to apprehend enough of difference to know that they don't know and to be curious about learning those differences. Language, of course, is a key symbol of that difference, and an intractable element in what is to be negotiated when there are so few (five currently) active speakers of Yanyuwa. It is not so much the content of Yanyuwa culture or language that matters to learners outside the community but the process of learning an epistemology and ontology which is different from their own, and the questioning of their own culture in the process. It is possible too that cultural insiders, the young people for whom the elders constructed the various cultural artefacts, may find the process empowering in questioning both their own culture and that of the West which sits so uneasily with them, and it is also likely that the line between

cultural insider and outsider is and will be an increasingly difficult one in the future to traverse.

In the literary domain and for European students, the issue of incommensurable versions of what is a narrative is potentially raised in close analysis of the Yanyuwa way of telling stories. For a Western reader, used to a literary tradition which is no longer site-dependent or phenomenologically grounded (see Tilley, 1994), there are learnings to be made about what it means simply to name places or persons – a process germane to ritual, biblical and ancient epic practices but 'sub-literary' in modern narratives (except perhaps in isolated instances, such as Yeats's magnificent poem, 'Easter 1916' (Yeats, 1950, pp. 202–5); also, about what it means to learn a story literally *in medias res*, or to grasp that certain kinds of narratives make sense only if one takes the trouble to learn contexts. These are minor insights compared with the more difficult task of having students come to appreciate the connectedness of land, kin, and creatures that make up Yanyuwa culture, and to grasp the sacred principles whereby the phenomenological can at any time be understood to be both vital (real and living) and supervital (pertaining to the Dreaming and sacred) (Tamisari and Bradley, 2005) and can oscillate between the two. There are a few literary texts which can be used to scaffold such understandings and to help bridge this incommensurable difference – Sam Watson Wagan's poems in *Smoke-Encrypted Whispers* (Watson, 2004) which makes eloquent use of the shards of a badly damaged urbanized Aboriginal culture, and Alexis Wright's monumental *Carpentaria* (Wright, 2006) which illustrates the workings of the Rainbow Serpent on an actual Gulf landscape. Such texts are useful because they 'do' mythology in ways that command respect in the West (each of these writers is powerfully bicultural), and they can assist students in retroactively reading back into a mythological corpus which is plainer in expression but quite as powerful in effect for Yanyuwa people. The contrast between the richly literary songline-influenced narrative and the translated or transliterated song can be used to generate powerful transcultural conversations about aesthetics and its value to Aboriginal people, as well as its Western constructedness.

Beyond the Website: Two New Methods of Archiving and Teaching Dreaming Narratives

While the websites are useful for online pedagogy, they also have their challenges, and two newer methods of representation of mythological matter/dreaming narratives have subsequently been generated, which augment and enrich the online resources, and do the job of generating affect more effectively. The first of these is the unique Atlas of Dreaming materials, *Forget about Flinders*, a Yanyuwa atlas of the south-west Gulf of Carpentaria (Yanyuwa et al., 2003). It is so highly valued that it is referred to within the community as 'the Yanyuwa Bible'. It covers vastly more territory than is possible in the website.

A large format book (A3 with double A3 spread-out maps), it is designed (and used) for reading by mixed age groups of elders and children. It not only dramatizes visually the movements of Dreaming ancestors around country, but it records images of individual ancestors in country, variant versions of the narratives, both prose and poetic, secular and sacred, and it enables a deeper grasp of the precise and minute ways in which Dreamings are mapped to landscape features. As a prized possession, copies of the Atlas have done much 'walking' around the community. For children, and not deeply literate older people, what matters are the cartoon-style maps that show the dynamics of Dreaming activity in each of 22 'slices' of Country that comprise Yanyuwa territory. For a people whose cultural parameters are not the book, and indeed for some of our students who are more deeply visually literate than book- and print-learned, the combination of story and image is a powerful pedagogy, as observations about its use make clear (Devlin-Glass, 2005).

The second artefact, which postdates the websites and will become available for online use, represents a further iteration of the Dreaming mythological corpus. A work-in-progress, a set of digital animations of five stories and one songline, they offer what print and web cannot. They capitalize on the highly visually literate X and Y generations and on the new capabilities of 3D animation in offering a faithful recreation of actual Yanyuwa landscapes, peopled with realistic creatures. The landscapes have been built from a combination of satellite, photographic images and site-specific sketches, and lay out the many landscape forms that exist in Yanyuwa country, and the surprising variety of them. For the non-Yanyuwa viewer who knows this country simply as 'dry schlerophyll savannah', the depiction of mangrove, ant-hill plains, rocky escarpments, islands, lagoons, and lightly forested plains, all with their own distinctive moving Dreamings and geo-political and geo-physical land unit designations, will indicate a different way of being in place. Such insights can be amplified by reference to the six-season cyclical chart and the animal and food charts, with their own Dreaming import (all available on the website and potentially on supporting material on the DVDs), and students can see how rich and hopefully precious such ecosystems are, and how well understood by Yanyuwa ethnobiology. The geography student might seek to learn how Yanyuwa ethnobiological knowledge intersects with and enhances European-style scientific practices, by accessing reports of the Yanyuwa Conservation unit, li-Anthawirriyarra Sea Rangers. Increasingly school children in Borroloola are being introduced to the workings of the Ranger unit, and hopefully eventually will make use of the underused school website for cultural purposes.

The animations allow the possibility that the sacralized transformation from vital to supervital be marked visually, non-naturalistically, and dynamically, for example, as in the Manankurra story of the Tiger Shark, with bursts of light which auditors come to read as a marker of power. The team of animator and anthropologist/artist has generated a range of creatures in highly realistic

detail which move and act according to their natures (*yaynyngka* or *yaynyka* in Yanyuwa); for example, in the case of the dancing brolgas (long-legged birds of the savannah), the images acquire an extra charge for Yanyuwa people because of the fact that a brolga dance which imitates the life cycle and dancing style of the birds is used in funerals by half of the community. What captures Yanyuwa affective responses is the memory of the ceremony and strong feelings evoked by the song and dance. For non-Yanyuwa viewers, the sheer aesthetic beauty of the images and the dancing movements will have their own pay-off, and further serious cultural understandings need to be scaffolded in supplementary materials in DVD format. How to do this in ways that avoid 'fill-em-up pedagogy' is an ongoing challenge. However, it is not insuperable. A photo-essay and the songs of the Kulyukulyu (funeral) ceremony are available on the website and remobilizable as support material.

The animations are challenging even for those who know the Country they animate. For insiders, cognitive dissonance occurs because the notion of story being intimately bound up with place has not been challenged by millennia of print and by the traditions of building in descriptions of place, and by the narrative conventions of negotiating the expected and exceptional which involves a breach of canonicality (Bruner, 1990, pp. 47–60). A good example of the latter phenomenon is the Wurdaliya narrative of the Farting Old Ngabaya (Spirit Man) (Yanyuwa et al., 2003, pp. 163–7). For a European reader of the tale, it has very little semantic coherence and no narrative impetus. It lists names of sacred sites in the order they are visited by Dreamings and briefly details their uses, tells of Dreaming creatures and pathways in the area, and of initiation and funeral ceremonies conducted in the immensely long (25 km) sand hills between the Robinson River mouth and Sandy Head, as well as of quarrels among groups of spirit men which result in the leader emitting a fiery fart which kills the dissidents. A diligent Yanyuwa insider who does not know the territory or an earnest outsider could consult the Atlas glosses to the story and the maps and photographs (Yanyuwa et al., 2003, pp. 165–7) and learn a great deal more that would be of academic interest. However, what the digital animation does that adds affective value is to convey the urgency of the debates through tone of voice, to show the country in almost photographic detail, and to show the transformations in action. One becomes aware of the resources of this Country (and their limitations) through the engaging graphics and its sacred resonances, especially when one witnesses the magical creation of sunken pandanus circles which harbour the hollow wooden log burial coffins. The sinister blank eyes and huge feet and hands of the unpredictably powerful Ngabaya men as well as their internal querulousness function at many levels, reinforcing taboos about who may and may not be in the territory, how groups ought to conduct themselves especially in relation to food and negotiations, and why these places are private and significant. For insiders the images undoubtedly evoke memories of the ancestors, Dreaming and

otherwise, who have been familiar with these places. The intensity of the old man's fart and its consequences dramatize and enact sacred power, its terror and the legitimacy of *experience* of the Country and kinship with Country. Used in conjunction with the Atlas, the animation can be amplified in the secondary or tertiary classroom. This is a tract of land which also features Saltwater Crocodile, Ghost and Soldier Crab and Pelican Dreamings, as well as Mosquito Dreaming, and suggests a causal relationship between creatures' activity and the landforms thereby created. The most centrally significant Rainbow Serpent, Bujimala, who is responsible for the cycle of creativity which begins with the monsoonal rains, also has a home in this territory. The animation/atlas used in tandem raise the possibility of teaching Country virtually with the aim of students' comprehending Yanyuwa notions of creativity more deeply: as the creation of landscapes full of affect, which are subsequently further animated through the song that names and gives ritual witness to their existence; and the connectedness of land, creatures, creative activity, fertility, and the cycle of birth and death.

Conclusion

In discussing these various media and their uses for both Yanyuwa and outsider education, dynamic post-colonial tensions needing active acknowledgement inevitably arise between the different teaching and learning constituencies, and can be mobilized to teach post-colonial methods and theory. Traditional oral culture and modern media are underwritten by different imperatives, and for the West, there is the ever-present colonialist dilemma of the risks of commodifying, exoticising and othering. The non-Yanyuwa learner inevitably relies on his/her cultural paradigms and needs reassurance that the journey is productive and mutually illuminating. The journey outlined above to find new and more effective ways of communicating Yanyuwa Dreaming narratives and their affective freight has been and is an energizing multi-disciplinary and bicultural one, demanding collaboration between disciplinary perspectives. It is furthermore a project with huge educational potential not only for understanding the Dreaming narratives themselves, but also for cross-cultural exchange of a truly post-colonial kind. What the stories potentially teach a non-Yanyuwa hearer is the difference between Western 'hearings' of stories and Yanyuwa ontology. The beginning of this understanding is country, not imagined but actual, with its embedded affect, which is then overlain with kinship, and even more intense affect. In this light, these projects, the book, the website, the atlas and the animations, speak not only of cultural survival in very real terms, but also enact crucial post-colonial transcultural conversations which involve nothing less than understanding that all knowledge systems are necessarily provisional, dynamic and mutually enriching.

Notes

[1] For a detailed breakdown of figures in this referendum, see John Gardiner-Garden's background paper for the Australian Parliamentary Library (1997).

[2] Songlines are a body of songs/performances/stories, sometimes in verse and sometimes in prose, which map the journeyings of mythical Ancestors in predetermined routes across small or sometimes vast stretches of Australia. They may be particular to a culture or shared with neighbouring cultures. They are often of epic scope, cosmological in function, gendered, and inherently sacred. They are said to emanate from the Land itself and to animate it through performance.

[3] The preferred terminology for the body of Australian Aboriginal cosmological narratives is Dreamings, or Dreamtime. For an analysis of the fraught history of this nomenclature see Wolfe, 1991. Dreamings are site-specific and may be exclusive to a particular Aboriginal culture, or shared by groups along a songline.

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