**Plan of Study**

A recent article by Katherine Bode exemplifies a current shift in approaches to digitally-enhanced literary scholarship. Bode builds a critique of “distant reading” pioneers Franco Moretti and Matthew Jockers, arguing that they too often disregard the provenance of the thousands of texts they select for study. When distant reading treats its mass corpora as complete and objective, Bode argues, it is not different from New Criticism’s technique of close reading, which attempts to dismiss historical context as irrelevant. As an alternative, Bode calls for scholarly editions of literary systems, rather than individual texts, in order to produce a “data-rich literary history” that integrates computational research with the textual scholarship of fields like bibliography and book history. My dissertation answers this call by systematically researching all texts printed in England between the years 1789 to 1799.

I have narrowed my scope to an eleven-year “decade,” keyed to the French Revolution, to make my inquiry feasible. Late eighteenth-century literary production, as the writers of the period anxiously observed, was characterized by incredible volume. In the 1730s, the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) records roughly 16,000 works published in England: this number triples, to 48,000 works, in the 1790s. I hypothesize that the works published in the 1790s — whether newly written or reprinted to meet new demand — were characterized by an unusual attention to timeliness, with frequently-revised editions responding to rapidly shifting political events and literary tastes. I follow Michael Gamer in applying this market-based framework even to the Romantic poets William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose era-defining *Lyrical Ballads* was published in 1798.

To account for the true variety and complex interconnectedness of the literary mediascape during this period, I will borrow methodologies from distant reading and corpus stylistics, but I will marry these to bibliographic textual studies and traditional literary interpretation. I will work with four collections of texts, or corpora, of different sizes and from different sources, which allow me to view my decade from multiple perspectives. I have already acquired bibliographic records for 51,965 works listed in the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC), my largest and most “distant” corpus. I am in the process of acquiring 4,381 full-length texts from HathiTrust; these texts can be unreliable, but include many works not available elsewhere, including works not listed in the ESTC. I have already acquired 502 full-length texts from the Eighteenth Century Online Text Creation Partnership (ECCO-TCP), which have been carefully marked up in XML according to the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) standards, enabling more detailed computational exploration of their subject matter.

I have identified four authors whose ‘case studies’ will contextualize my larger-scale findings. These authors are Ann Radcliffe, Charlotte Turner Smith, Hannah More, and Mary Robinson, all of whom wrote prolifically and influentially during the 1790s, but are not always accorded a prominent place in the modern literary canon.

The Ontario Graduate Scholarship would fund the fourth year of my five-year PhD program, during which I hope to complete a rough first draft of my dissertation. I have already begun to explore my corpora individually; during this year, I will build a personal database to integrate them and seek correlations. My inquiry will discover fresh insights into how English writers used literature to cope with what appeared to be near-apocalyptic political upheaval during the French Revolution, and will recontextualize the Romantic poets whose reputations have outstripped those of their more popular peers. My novel methodology reconciling disparate corpora will also provide a valuable precedent for Digital Humanities literary scholars in other fields who wish to pursue data-rich literary history.

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