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Editor's Note

Jamie L. McDaniel
Radford University

I am both happy and sad to announce that this issue will be my last as Editor. I feel sad because I will no longer be one of the first people to read some of the best pedagogical research on English Studies out there. However, I feel happy because I will be able to take this extra time and work on two book projects that are important to me. I am also extremely proud of the work that I have completed on *The CEA Forum*. During my tenure as editor, I have

- Led the transition to a more user-friendly and accessible journal website and content management system
- Helped to increase article views from 142 in 2017 (when the new website went live) to 6,298 so far this year
- Developed new logos and updated visual elements for the journal's website
- Began creating covers for each of the issues
- Instituted an internship program that has proven successful in helping English students gain employment and placements in graduate programs
- Expanded the content to include related fields, such as film studies and disability studies
- Developed The Bege Bowers Prize for Best Essay in *The CEA Forum*
- Created social media venues for the journal

- Established a more contemporary template design, and
- Solicited work that took advantage of the journal's digital venue

Whew!

These accomplishments have certainly zapped my time and energy in many ways, which is one reason I am stepping away, but they would not have been possible without the support of many friends and colleagues. Thank you to the countless number of reviewers for the journal who have worked tirelessly to bring the issues to life. I especially want to callout Danielle Nielsen of Murray State University, who I could always depend on to provide an excellent review at the last minute. Additionally, thank you to all the fantastic interns, who each had their own set of special skills and talents that made running the journal such a positive experience. I particularly want to highlight the contributions of interns Morgan Ebbs and Gage Rogers. Morgan stuck around for multiple years as an intern and continued working with me even though I left her university. She is an editor extraordinaire, with an acute eye for detail. Gage is a graphic design extraordinaire and would always welcome any design challenge. I am so grateful for them and their contributions.

I also want to thank the past and present Officers and Board of Directors of the College English Association for placing their faith in me. Similarly, my Department Chairs Celia Patterson, Rosemary Guruswamy, and Robert Williams have all been supportive in this endeavor, even when it took me away from other service duties.

Finally, I want to dedicate this issue to Jim Baxter, my partner of seventeen wonderful years who passed away in November 2021. Some of you knew Jim because he loved attending

the CEA Conference with me and listening to all the fantastic presentations. If not for his unwavering support, his keen sense of language, and his strong sense of design and aesthetics, I never would have been able to do this job. Jim – Even though you’ve been gone for almost two years, I still see your smile and hear your booming laugh. This one is for you.



Using Sentiment Analysis to Ease Students toward or around Macroanalysis

Donald Secrest
Radford University

Today, digital humanities, particularly in the area of computational literary analysis, have become important enough that at some universities in America, graduate English majors who take a prescribed sequence of digital humanities courses can use them to satisfy a foreign language requirement. One of the most influential voices predicting new venues for digital humanities is Matthew L. Jockers. A list of his books provides a clear compass of Jockers' research interests: *Macroanalysis: Digital Methods and Literary History* (2013), *Text Analysis with R for Students of Literature* (2014), and *Anatomy of the Blockbuster Novel* (2016).

Essentially, in *Macroanalysis*, Jockers argues that literary studies, in order to be relevant in the 21st century, must adopt a more scientific/computational approach: “Like it or not, today’s literary-historical scholar can no longer risk being *just* a close reader; the sheer quantity of available data makes the traditional practice of close reading untenable as an exhaustive or definitive method of evidence gathering. Something important will inevitably be missed” (9).

Most helpful in understanding the mechanics introduced in *Macroanalysis* is a website that Jockers maintains, www.matthewjockers.net, in which he provides an ongoing dialogue of wide-ranging literary analyses using the statistical method explained in *Text Analysis with R for Students of Literature*. This website allows other researchers to share the results of their work

using Jockers' digital approach. The program "R" (derived from a social science algorithm) enables literary researchers to "mine" hundreds or thousands of texts using an algorithm that searches for specific words, phrases, or precisely defined structures. With compelling effectiveness, "R" enables researchers to gather information more quickly and thoroughly to create graphs based on such statistical products as word indexing, frequency lists, text-analysis comparison, stylistic analysis, and textual dating. Summarizing the underlying benefit of computational literary analysis, Jockers points out, "The approaches outlined in this book also have the potential to present contradictory evidence, evidence that challenges our traditional, impressionistic, or anecdotal theories" (*Text Analysis* viii).

While Jockers' method can generate almost limitless approaches to academic analysis of texts, he has also proven that his statistical technique has a more marketable application. For a short period, in association with Jodie Archer, Jockers formed a consultancy agency to "help writers, agents and publishers find the next books that everyone will love" (www.archerjockers.com). In their agency's website, they claimed to "analyze over 3000 data points" using their "advanced proprietary methods." These methods allow the agency "to predict bestsellers 80% of the time" (*The Writer Files*). It's interesting to speculate why this service was discontinued after a relatively short time. One can imagine Jockers and Archer receiving hundreds of manuscripts each month and having to deal with disappointed authors who have been told by an algorithm that their novels lack any possibility of becoming a blockbuster. It's bad enough to have a writer's workshop group tell you your manuscript lacks mass appeal, but how does a disappointed author respond to the disapproval of a computer who prints out three

thousand reasons why your novel is a flop and provides a detailed graph emphasizing the faults in your writing?

Why Privilege a Visual Approach to Literary Discussion?

From a teacher's point of view, the most attractive aspects of macroanalysis are the detailed graphs generated by the "R" program. Any analytical approach which provides visual aids in explaining and prompting discussions about the often abstract and elusive elements that constitute literary reality should be valued as a principal tool in the classroom. Certainly, other writers and theorists, from Gustav Freytag to Kurt Vonnegut, have developed their own charts and graphs to illustrate the different strategies and structures that make for compelling narratives; however, Matthew Jockers' method represents a genuinely new and purely digital approach to visualization.

No less enthusiastic than Jockers for exploring the possibilities of diagrammatic analysis in the humanities is Johanna Drucker who, in her book *Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production*, provides an extensive history of graphs and a captivating argument for those of us in the humanities to recognize the influence our digital age is having on the way we think, the way we connect to the world and to other people—even the way we perceive. She asserts, "We need to develop a domain of expertise focused on visual epistemology, knowledge production in graphical form in fields that have rarely relied on visual communication" (iv). For those of us who have struggled with the task of introducing our students to critical thinking, Drucker's approach might appear at first to be just another sort of scaffold for analysis, another theory we

might try to stretch over our students' minds to filter out all the bad habits they acquired while being trained to pass their SOL's and other standardized tests in high school, learning to summarize rather than actually analyze, being trained to rally generalities rather than recognize significant details. She argues that graphs and graphic design represent a historic as well as an organic impulse for understanding that has deep roots in our human perception and cognition. Methodically, she provides evidence that, quite often, the visualization of emotion and abstract thought leads to an objectification, a concrete shareability, that enables us to more easily and accurately verbalize, organize, evaluate, and communicate those subjective states. In other words, for many of us in the humanities, visual structures clarify linguistic structures. As Drucker puts it, a graph "is a provocation to cognitive experience, but it is also an enunciative apparatus" (147).

Teachers who might be interested in exploring the use of visualization as a way to clarify and focus their own discussions of literary concerns or to encourage students to participate in poster presentations at conferences can acquire a thorough background in the history, philosophy, and relevance of graphic presentation in Drucker's *Graphesis*, particularly when she distinguishes between "visualizations that are *representations* of information already known and those that are *knowledge generators* capable of creating new information through their use. Knowledge generators have a dynamic, open-ended relation to what they can provoke" (65). Graphs infuse classroom literary discussions with the potential to expand in unexpected epistemological directions because by having visual constructs in front of them, students can more readily grasp the distinctions being made by other students.

Why We Don't Want to Start with Macroanalysis in the Typical English Class

Despite all the impressive results Jockers' research has produced, most English majors will likely be reluctant to embrace macroanalysis for three reasons. First, the traditional English major might be intimidated by the mathematics involved in Jockers' statistical analysis. Unless a course is specifically set up to provide extensive training in algorithms, a literature class simply won't have the time to acclimate English majors to the highly technical "R" program. My own personal experience with *Text Analysis with R for Students of Literature* was frustrating and took me back to those anxious nights when I was floundering in a programmed learning workbook for my trigonometry and calculus class in high school. And I ran into the same problem when I attempted to approach R through *R for Dummies*. Second, macroanalysis employs what might strike many English teachers, along with their students, as a counterintuitive approach to reading—what Jockers, under the influence of Franco Moretti, has come to call "distant reading" (*Macroanalysis* 17). While giving a historical, sociological, and geographical explanation of why traditional reading strategies are no longer adequate for contemporary literary theorists, Moretti provides a terse description of what constitutes distant reading: "Distant Reading: where distance, let me repeat it, *is a condition of knowledge*: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems" (48-49). In contrast to close reading, macroanalysis, by way of distant reading, focuses on letting the computer do the reading for the researcher, running an extraordinary quantity of texts through

the R program then letting the researcher interpret the numerical results provided by its algorithm.

Third, and perhaps most disturbing to a traditional English major, in permitting the computer to have primary contact with the text, macroanalysis further distances the reader from intimate contact with the text by intervening, to a certain extent, in the reader-response dynamic. Fundamentally, statistical analysis is a form of structuralist criticism, and in that regard, it runs the risk of leading to reductive consequences. In other words, even with all the possible variations in the graphs generated by R, the statistical nature of the program leads to a sense of attenuation, with the reader left outside the algorithm. When the algorithm becomes the primary reader, then a significant amount of the response no longer belongs to the person; consequently, an important connection to the text disappears, resulting in something along the lines of a readout-reader relationship.

Modified Sentiment Analysis as Detour to or around Macroanalysis

No doubt, macroanalysis is already finding its way into the college curriculum and is bound to establish itself as a traditional discipline, much the way literary theory established itself as a parallel discipline to literary studies in the sixties and early seventies. To prepare students for computational literary analysis, and to give them time to develop their math skills, teachers can ease them toward or around Jockers' digital world by first introducing them to a less alienating approach to analysis and visualization through a combination of "sentiment analysis" and reader-response theory. Somewhat counter to Jockers' insistence that being "*just* a close

reader” puts English majors in a risky position, sentiment analysis, even with its goal of producing information-generating graphs, still requires students to engage in close reading of a given text.

In fact, with its fundamental reliance on a reader’s reaction to specific elements in the text, sentiment analysis actually provides a framework for objectifying then visualizing those reactions. One of the most approachable and definitive discussions of sentiment analysis can be found in Bing Liu’s *Sentiment Analysis: Mining Opinions, Sentiments, and Emotions*. While sentiment analysis definitely has its own technical vocabulary (Liu 1-134), what students basically need to know is that it involves attaching numerical value to emotional responses—what Jockers will variously refer to as “scaled valences,” “scaled sentiment,” “sentiment,” or “emotional valence” in the graphs found on his website. The more traditional term, established by earlier psychological researchers, is emotional valence, and it’s the term I use when introducing my students to sentiment analysis.

Although Liu suggests that sentiment analysis in its contemporary form dates back to “early 2000,” the importance of the concept goes back much further (xiii). Anyone who is a fan of *Mad Men* might remember the attention the ad men devoted to how potential customers might react to the way a product was presented to them—not to the product itself, but to its presentation. Far from being an abstract study of pure statistics, despite its use of quite sophisticated algorithms, sentiment analysis, as Liu points out, has become a pervasive presence in society: “Many large corporations have built their own in-house capabilities. Sentiment analysis systems have found their applications in almost every business and social domain”

(xiii). The recent Netflix documentary series *Social Dilemma* reveals just how extensively social media platforms rely upon applying statistical methods to our buying, viewing, and communicating habits. Liu describes this practice, formulated in sentiment analysis research, as working “with the aim of bridging the unstructured and structured worlds and facilitating qualitative and quantitative analysis of opinions” (xiii).

Trying to teach pure, statistically-informed sentiment analysis to English majors could be as counter-productive as dropping them prematurely into the deep computational waters of Jockers’ macroanalysis. As a teacher, I chose to simplify my presentation of sentiment analysis by diluting it with the more cordial postulates of reader-response theory, particularly as developed by Wolfgang Iser. Basically, Iser insists “. . . the critic should not explain the text *as an object* but its *effect* on the reader” (*A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* 335). Even more pertinent to teachers who plan to introduce a seriously modified version of sentiment analysis to their classes is Iser’s idea that “. . . a text does not tell readers everything; there are gaps or blanks, which he refers to as the ‘indeterminacy’ of the text” (355). At first glance, the connection between serious sentiment analysis and reader-response theory might seem extremely tenuous. However, if we focus on Liu’s observation that sentiment analysis aims at “bridging the unstructured and structured worlds,” and juxtapose it with Iser’s assertion that a responsible reader’s role is to bridge the “gaps or blanks” of a given text with his or her own responses, attitudes, or opinions in order to confront the “indeterminacy” of a text or part of a text, then what emerges is a methodology with which students can visually represent and more easily share their opinions as well as validate their subjective relationship with a text.

Consequently, teachers do not have to provide an extensive presentation on traditional sentiment analysis because all we're really taking from it is the idea of a group providing appraised accounts (which will become digitized) of their opinions or responses to an assigned reading, performance, incident, memory, or experience. In very strict applications of sentiment analysis, participants provide quite narrow responses, usually limited to what Liu calls the "5 sentiment ratings: *emotional negative* (-2), *rational negative* (-1), *neutral* (0), *rational positive* (+1), and *emotional positive* (+2)" (21). For Liu, these five responses, both emotional and rational, form the basis for sentiment analysis, particularly as used by product researchers. By limiting the range of numerical response from -2 to +2, traditional sentiment analysis aims to emphasize the comparative nature of its test audiences. In other words, sentiment analysis in its most statistical application isn't really concerned with individual emotional and rational responses as it is with establishing an easily quantifiable and general preference. Its intent is purely pragmatic and ultimately economic. Its numbers represent an attempt to clarify a product's likelihood of success.

In vivid contrast, sentiment analysis, when modified by a concentrated dose of reader-response theory, can take its participants in the opposite direction and clarify their subjective states for themselves and their classmates. Because forming a structured opinion or a thoughtful response to a piece of literature, music, experience, or any other encounter with the abstract requires a more complicated and personal evaluation than responding to a camera or protein shake, the assessment standards for this modified sentiment analysis must provide finer distinctions with which to map the students' interior landscape. Rather than just expressing a

positive or negative response, students of literature will have to be much more specific and develop agreed-upon number systems that reflect a range from, say, exuberance to misery or from euphoric to wretched. Other positive responses include cheerful, elated, gleeful, gratified, blissful, upbeat, engaged, buoyant, and satisfied. On the other hand, negative responses could include melancholy, anxiety, repulsion, conflicted, disturbed, frustrated, offended, depressed, bored, disappointed, and angry. In addition to choosing the spectrum of responses with which they will be working, students must also be tasked with prioritizing whatever lists they agree upon. This exercise provides them with the opportunity to broaden their vocabularies as well as sharpen their ability to make verbal distinctions.

One simple presentation I like to use when talking to students initially about using graphs to clarify rather abstract topics, particularly literary topics, involves a graph that I created to represent my response to the opening scene of Flannery O'Connor's short story "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" ([Figure 1](#)). I've allowed some redundancy in the numbering that appears on the graph just to make my references easier to follow. My sample graph is made up of four basic elements: 1) the y-axis, which provides the "Emotional Valences," or the intensity of the reader's reactions to the text; 2) the x-axis, which represents the specific points (technically called data points) in the scene to which the reader is responding; 3) the series 1 legend which provides the specific values for each data point and simply reiterates those values shown on the y-axis; 4) the line which connects the data points and provides a visual representation of the emotional wave evoked by the sixteen elements in the opening scene. Without much difficulty, the graph can be made more complex in a number of ways, most obviously by including more than one series, as

will be seen when we move to the discussion of a student graph produced by a group of high school students in a Governor’s School class back in the summer of 2016.



Figure 1. Graph Representing Response Valences to Specific Points in the Opening Scene of Flannery O’Connor’s Short Story “A Good Man is Hard to Find.”

Scene one of O’Connor’s story is slightly longer than one page. As is typical of an O’Connor opening scene, it provides three important narrative necessities: 1) a definite hint of the dramatic conflict, 2) an introduction of key characters, 3) and a strong suggestion of what our attitude toward those characters should be. To a large extent, the opening scene provides a thorough synopsis of the entire story. In collecting the information I planned to use as the data points in my spread sheet, I began by reading the first scene, paying close attention to moments or phrases or images in the text that evoked a definite response. As it turns out, O’Connor’s first scene prompted me to underline sixteen different phrases that called particular attention to themselves. In the second step, I reread the underlined sections and tried to gauge what sort of

specific reaction was connected to each and how strong that reaction was. To each reaction, I assigned a number, either positive or negative. Some student readers might want to discuss the process of assigning numbers to their emotions, and this transition from reactions to numerical evaluations of those reactions must take into account what some students could see as the arbitrariness of such an exercise or, worse yet, as the process of dehumanizing one's emotions. Of course, even before the advent of macroanalysis or sentiment analysis, a certain type of English major always objected to analysis of any sort because it threatened to dissect the pure pleasure of reading. Once the teacher has provided the class with a suitable explanation of literary analysis's role as a tool for more deeply appreciating the art and craft that gives literature its power, attention can be focused on the mechanics of a modified sentiment analysis reading.

The implication of the conflict in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" appears in the story's opening line: "The grandmother didn't want to go to Florida. She wanted to visit some of her connections in east Tennessee and she was seizing at every chance to change Bailey's mind" (117). My initial response of -2 to this conflict represents a pleasurable anxiety. I have a natural aversion to any sort of conflict, and that's why I find myself in a negative state of mind. However, because I know that a good story must have some degree of conflict, I appreciate the drama being presented so early. Consequently, while I'm negatively stimulated by the hint of conflict, I do acknowledge how smoothly O'Connor introduces it. This is the reason I rate my response as -2, an emotional state I would characterize as *anticipation*. Certainly, in a class discussion, some students will argue that they see anticipation as a purely positive response, but in such a situation, the teacher can introduce the idea of how emotions can be ambiguous. Even

anticipation of a positive event, like Christmas or a birthday, contains at its core a negative charge because to anticipate an event indicates that the event has not yet occurred.

Also contained in the story's first two sentences is my second response: a -3, mild disapproval, because a serious character flaw is also revealed: the grandmother's willingness to manipulate people in order to get her own way. Perhaps some students will argue that being manipulative is not necessarily a flaw, but I would point out that the grandmother's motive for manipulation is purely selfish. She wants her entire family to go to Tennessee—not Nashville or Memphis, but to east Tennessee. Students also need to be reminded that when this story was published, there was no Dollywood or Uber Gatlinburg. Perhaps most importantly, from the viewpoint of the grandchildren, east Tennessee has no ocean views.

The first view we get of the grandmother's son, Bailey, shows him completely ignoring his mother as he sits "on the edge of his chair" (117) reading the sports page. For different reasons, I respond to this introduction of Bailey with the same -3 (third response) I assigned his mother. His posture makes me think he is tense, perhaps because he is consciously resentful and avoiding the information his mother is trying to share. The fact that he chooses to ignore her rather than talk to her irks me a little more than witnessing his mother's manipulative tendencies. After all, most people, under the right circumstances, resort to manipulative behavior, but Bailey is being passive aggressive in this scene, and that sort of behavior is just another way to be manipulative.

The fourth moment in scene one which evokes an emotional response, a -4, occurs when the grandmother intensifies her manipulation of the family's vacation plans. Seeing that Bailey is

ignoring her, she presents proof that going to Tennessee is actually safer than going to Florida by pointing out to him the news story about the Misfit. This behavior increases my negative response because it reveals the grandmother's willingness to badger the family. If a -3 response corresponds to my feeling perturbed, then a -4 introduces a tint of anxiety. As soon as the grandmother goes into more detail about what the Misfit "did to these people" (117), my response (number five) drops to a -5 which represents a more fully developed attitude of anxiety. In contrast to his mother's intensified attempts at manipulation, Bailey responds to the threatening information with his default defense of simply ignoring his mother's scare tactics. Consequently, I find my sixth response rebounding slightly to -3, back to my attitude of mild, but engaged, disapproval.

Seeing that her scare tactics are having no effect on her son, his mother shifts her manipulative efforts to her daughter-in-law, further proof that she is definitely a shrewd and devious person who works hard to get her own way. This further development of her manipulative personality drops my reaction (response seven) to her to a -4, now slightly more negative than my attitude toward Bailey. In my eighth strong response—to O'Connor's description of the daughter-in-law—when I become aware of her comic intent, my attitude jumps to a +2 as a result of the phrase pointing out that the daughter-in-law's face was "as broad and innocent as a cabbage." The humor at this point provides well-timed relief from the mother-in-law's relentless manipulation and introduces a feeling of buoyancy. To anyone familiar with other O'Connor stories, this shift in narrative tone establishes an important element of her own manipulative technique. Even in her darkest stories, her sense of humor pervades. To readers

who hold the notion that humor can be inappropriate in tragic situations, O'Connor's comic sense can be offensive. But anyone who understands her view of divine irony, that the most self-righteous (who tend to be the most self-centered) deserve whatever punishment they eventually incur, appreciates the justice of each inferno where such characters find themselves, infernos designed by the characters' own attitudes and behaviors.

Not fully satisfied with portraying the daughter-in-law as a rather bland vegetable, O'Connor further dehumanizes her by pointing out that the scarf she's wearing around her face is tied "on the top like rabbit's ears"(117). Just why I find this comparison to an animal more humorous than a comparison to a vegetable could be a topic for a class discussion, but I find my response (number nine) rising to a +3 because my previous buoyancy is intensified to delight by how O'Connor makes the logical but somewhat unexpected connection between a garden vegetable and a rather opportunistic creature closely associated with the garden. Aside from the rabbit being at the bottom of the animal food chain, perhaps just one step above the cabbage, the comparison also implies that the young woman is more fertile than she needs to be. Interestingly, this insinuation also serves a dual purpose by introducing the children to the reader. Being as ignored by her daughter-in-law as she was by her son, the grandmother shifts her manipulative intentions to the children.

Her insistence that going to east Tennessee rather than Florida will give her grandchildren a chance to "see different parts of the world" reveals both her own narrow view of the world but also the shabby quality of her machinations. In her own relentless way, O'Connor establishes the grandmother as both pathetic and laughable. Just as the daughter-in-law emerges

as a less than human character, the grandmother also undergoes a process of dehumanization, a parody of the cranky, failed matriarch. Lacking the comedic surprise of the rabbit daughter-in-law, the shallowness of the grandmother still elicits a +2 response from me (number ten), partly because I can feel superior to her and her constricted view of the world. By eliciting this response of ironic gratification in her reader, O'Connor is already preparing her audience for being able to accept the massacre of the entire family by the Misfit and his two cohorts. Had O'Connor not insulated her readers against the violent ending of the story by making her characters unlikeable, the slaughter would be unbearable for most readers. For O'Connor, humor functions as a distancing device. Interestingly, the humor simultaneously allows the reader to be complicit in the cruelty.

Continuing to distance the reader from what should be the more innocent characters in the story, the children, O'Connor presents the son, eight-year-old John Wesley, as a brat—almost a miniature version of his grandmother. When he hears his grandmother complaining about going to Florida, he responds, “If you don’t want to go to Florida, why dontcha stay at home?”(117) His disrespect prompts me to respond (number eleven) with a -3 upon hearing him this first time. However, my next response (number 12) of increasing disapproval drops to a -4 when John Wesley’s younger sister June Star intensifies the tone of impudence by saying, “She wouldn’t stay at home to be queen for a day.”

Responding to her grandchildren’s disdain, the grandmother resorts to the same scare tactics that she tried using on her son by summoning the threat of the Misfit. Her willingness to frighten her grandchildren, as unpleasant as they seem, resurrects my disapproval of her

manipulative personality. Consequently, my response (number thirteen) to her, at -4, matches my response to her grandchildren. But in a clear reflection of their family heritage, the two children demonstrate that they are completely contemptuous of the desires of other people. In response to his grandmother's asking him what he'd do if he met the Misfit, John Wesley insolently replies, "I'd smack his face"(118). This naïve belligerence comes across as both disturbing and depressing, especially if the reader is familiar with how the story ends. Where does an eight-year-old come up with the idea of smacking someone in the face? Possibly, it's an action he's witnessed or read about. And while his response implies a certain degree of violence, it also reveals that John Wesley really doesn't know what kind of deadly violence can occur outside his family. The ambiguity of John Wesley's place in the world O'Connor creates in this story makes me respond (number fourteen) with a -2, which reflects my anticipation of what's likely to happen to a character who isn't particularly attractive.

Similarly, when June Star resumes her rude assessment of her grandmother's need to go where the family goes, my disapproval of both grandchildren drops to -4 (response fifteen). "She wouldn't stay at home for a million bucks," June Star said. "Afraid she'd miss something. She has to go everywhere we go" (118). Voicing more resentment than her brother, June Star clearly ignores the grandmother's attempt at scare tactics, or perhaps her ignoring what her grandmother has just said about the Misfit indicates that she has already adopted her parents' total disregard for the older woman. Of course, in the final exchange of this opening scene, which prompts my response of -2 (number sixteen), a bemused irritation, when the grandmother refocuses her manipulative tactics by pointing out to June Star that she is the one who curls June

Star's hair, the granddaughter does respond to this comment—but perhaps only because it appeals directly to her own vanity. Because O'Connor merely summarizes June Star's response, "June Star said her hair was naturally curly," rather than providing direct dialogue, the close of this scene communicates the dismissive view the grandchildren have of their grandmother. But the humorous slippage between the grandmother's threat of the Misfit and curling June Star's hair keeps my reaction from being too negative.

By providing a method for close reading, the O'Connor graph, like many other sentiment/reader-response graphs, makes it easy for a teacher to demonstrate perhaps the most important lesson about the essential act of reading a serious text: to actually engage both intellectually and emotionally with literature lifts a reader out of a flat narrative flow and discloses the psychological undulations that enliven well-constructed art. Even students who are suspicious of analysis of any sort or who insist on being passive-aggressive in their reaction to literature can be encouraged to bring their particular biases into the graphing process, which is, after all, a basic tenant of reader-response theory. More advanced students might take the next step of distinguishing among which individual elements in the text generate specific responses. For example, a more complex graph can be constructed by tracking the responses connected to plot, character, action, setting, language, and theme. Obviously, such a graph would contain six series instead of just one. A more useful approach would be for the teacher to encourage advanced students to focus on just two or three narrative elements instead of graphing all six. However, even advanced students must be reminded that because a modified sentiment analysis approach to literary analysis can get overly complicated in direct ratio to the length and

complexity of the text under analysis, they should choose shorter rather than longer texts to analyze. Obviously, a short story is much more manageable than a novel. However, even short stories can generate fairly elaborate graphs. For example, “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” contains approximately thirty-one scenes. If each scene provides an average of say, sixteen responses which will be turned into data points, then a graph of the entire story would contain 496 data points—which would make an extremely long x-axis. Often, when discussing a complicated piece of literature or when class time for such a discussion is limited, I have found it helpful to assign students to groups who then analyze different sections of the text being graphed.

An Experiment with High School Students and Modified Sentiment

Analysis

In the summer of 2016, I had the opportunity to focus on teaching a concentrated course in sentiment analysis to two groups of Virginia Governor’s School students. I began by introducing them to the process of quantifying emotional states, and I was gratified to observe that these students were quite comfortable with the task of assigning numbers to how particular experiences made them feel. After all, on some level, most people do evaluate their emotional states by degrees of intensity. Ordinarily, the easiest scale to use when introducing students to rating emotions is -10 to +10 where -10 represents the lowest emotional state and +10 represents the highest emotional state. An interesting class discussion occurs when students are asked to numerically assess how a certain piece of music or poem or scene in a movie or chapter in a

book has made them feel. Naturally, once they become accustomed to ascribing numbers to emotional states, they can apply the practice to a wide range of stimuli including speeches, social events, and academic situations. Once students have become accustomed to the practice of translating their abstract and emotional responses to literature into graphs, they will be less intimidated by the statistical transformations generated by Jockers' "R" program. Whether we call literary graphs knowledge generators or discussion generators, they aid in opening up literary analysis to what it should be: intellectual discovery through speculation, interrogation, and discussion.

After being reminded that the purpose of sentiment analysis is to create a visual representation of their mental or emotional journey, students must then be instructed in how to structure their digitized responses. In sentiment analysis terms, their responses will become data points, but these data points must be presented in a regulated sequence. As we've already seen, in analyzing O'Connor's short story, one of the most helpful sequential patterns is the scene. In a novel, the sequence might be chapters, or scenes within chapters. Once students have decided on what sort of pattern they want to employ, they are ready to isolate the elements in each scene that evoke definite emotions. These evocative moments become the data points to which the students will assign numerical values. Typically, the x-axis of the graph will show the chapters or scenes or timeline, and the y-axis will show the emotional valence. In other words, the x-axis typically tracks whatever structural concern the student has developed or discovered while the y-axis represents their emotional response to those structural or dramatic elements.

Once students have determined the structure of their analysis and collected their data points along that structure, they must then confront the most mathematical-looking aspect of this form of rudimentary sentiment analysis: creating a data base using their digitized emotions. The most convenient application for setting up such a data base is Microsoft Excel. Over the years, Excel has become more user friendly, and it can serve as a comfortable introduction to the more challenging programs like R. I discovered that my Governor’s School students moved into Excel much more easily than I did and dressed up their graphs in ways I found completely captivating. As a matter of fact, I was so impressed by the students’ graphic design skills that I neglected to stress the danger of their being much too ambitious in how broadly some of their projects started out. I would like to share a graph produced by one group of students after only three weeks of discussion and experimenting then provide a sample discussion of the graph to demonstrate how a visual representation of a student-produced sentiment analysis allows a class to more easily perceive the layers of a narrative, regardless of its genre. What English teachers should value the most when considering the advantages of using sentiment analysis to structure their discussions of literature is that the method can elicit more class participation and in the process sharpen students’ analytical skills.

By graphing their responses to a piece of literature, students cannot avoid coming to terms with the “layering” that goes on in a piece of writing. Consequently, approaching class discussion through sentiment analysis can help students avoid getting stuck in a one-dimensional vision of the text under discussion. Because most high school and college English teachers usually require a novel as part of their literature component, I’m using a sentiment analysis graph

created by a group of students who had read Helen Klein Ross's *What Was Mine*. Although this graph contains a few flaws which resulted primarily from my failure to adequately warn them about the hazards of not limiting their analysis to a sufficiently narrowed text, I want to focus primarily on how even a faulty graph can provoke constructive class discussion because it provides an extremely effective visual presentation of how a novel can operate on multiple emotional levels while following a chapter-by-chapter progression ([Figure 2](#)).

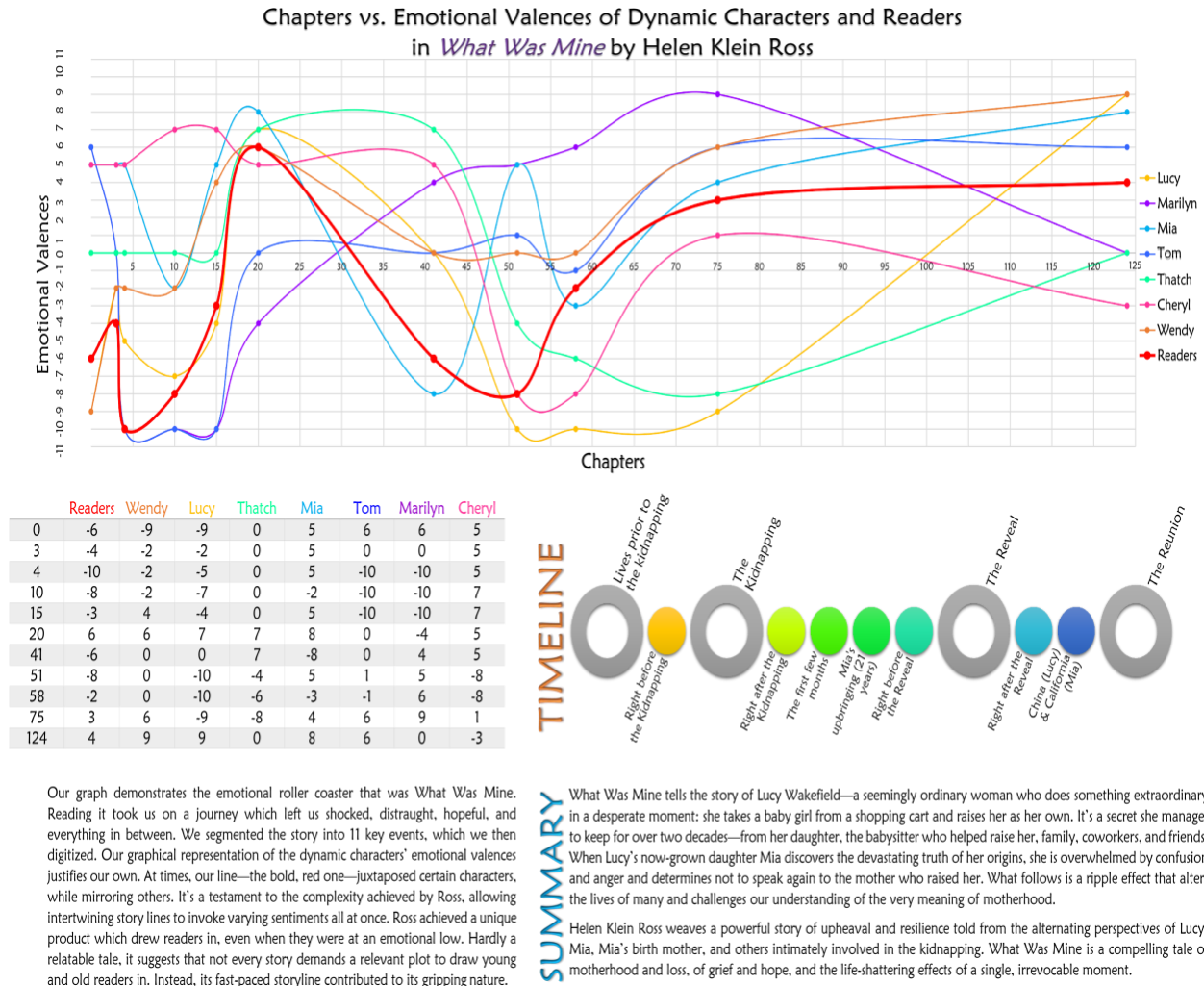


Figure 2. Chapters Versus Emotional Valences of Dynamic Characters and Readers in *What Was Mine* by Helen Klein Ross.

Fundamentally, this chart of Ross’s novel provides the necessary elements of a complete sentiment analysis: 1) the graph, which provides a visual image of how readers and selected (“dynamic”) characters respond to important dramatic situations in the novel, 2) the data base, which provides the numerical values connected to the y-axis, the “emotional valences” being

measured and the chapters which establish the movement along the x-axis, 3) a legend or “timeline” which provides a more specific explanation of which events in the designated chapters give rise to the responses being measured on the y-axis, 4) a “conclusion” which gives a brief discussion of how their data points highlight “intertwining story lines” in the novel, and 5) a “summary” of the particular events in the novel to which the students are responding. While working within the parameters of required components, this group still manages to introduce a creative element into their analysis by graphing not only *their* emotional responses to the major events of the novel but also by graphing what they interpret as the emotional responses of selected “dynamic” characters in the novel to those same events. So, instead of having just one series making up their data base, as seen in my O’Connor graph, this graph provides eight series.

In the summary section of the students’ chart, basic plot information is provided to clarify the events to which the sentiment analysis applies. The main character, recently divorced Lucy Wakefield, obsessed and in a deep, sustained depression because she is unable to have a child of her own, kidnaps an unattended infant in an IKEA and for twenty-one years raises the child, whom she names Mia, as her own. Lucy gives her a privileged upbringing, hiring a Chinese woman, Wendy, as her nanny for fifteen years. Parallel to Lucy’s and Mia’s lives, the novel follows the suffering and transforming recovery of Mia’s biological mother, Marilyn Featherstone. Eventually, Lucy becomes a successful novelist, achieving fame after ghost-writing a fictionalized version of her kidnapping. In a somewhat hard to swallow series of coincidences, Marilyn uncovers the truth behind Lucy’s novel and tracks down her kidnapped daughter through Facebook. Understandably, Mia is seriously stunned by the revelation that

Lucy is not her mother but is, in fact, a criminal who stole her from another family. Traumatized by Mia's anger and facing possible arrest for her crime, Lucy flees to China where she will eventually move in with Mia's former nanny, Wendy, and her family. In the final chapters of the novel, Mia and Marilyn have agreed to forgive Lucy and try to help her avoid prosecution.

Timeline, Legend, and Spreadsheet

The "Timeline" created by the students, the data that constitutes the x-axis of the graph, provides two interrelated sets of information. On the right side of the chart appears a sequence of eleven circles which represent the major dramatic events, the structure of the story. Among the eleven events which the students will be responding to, clearly four of them, represented by the larger, gray rings, carry much more dramatic weight than the other seven: 1) the characters' lives before the kidnapping, 2) the kidnapping, 3) the "Reveal," the climactic section wherein Marilyn confronts Mia with the truth about Lucy, and 4) the reunion at the end of the novel when Mia has come to China to meet with Lucy.

On the left side of the "Timeline" an actual spreadsheet appears, detailing three sets of information: 1) the specific chapters to which the group and selected characters are responding, constituting the x-axis, 2) the numbers indicating the intensity of their responses, constituting the y-axis, and 3) the specific names of the responders designated by separate columns which identify the individual emotional valence points in the actual graph. To further aid in identifying which valence belongs to which responder, a color-coding system links the names on the

spreadsheet to the names in the legend on the right side of the graph. This is an automatic function of the Excel application.

The legend section of the graph lists and color-codes seven characters' responses as well as the group's or "official readers'" response to the eleven dramatic events that structure the novel. That's why their red line is noticeably thicker than the other seven colored lines. So in a class discussion with limited time, we might start by comparing how the other seven responses differ from the "official" response. In an actual classroom setting, a large part of the discussion would focus on the group presenting their graph, explaining what narrative strategies prompted each of their emotional responses and why they assigned the specific numeric values that they did to those responses.

What impresses me at this point with the group's analysis is that they are demonstrating some awareness of how necessary it is to provide specifics in a literary discussion. When I taught critical thinking to freshmen and mid-level English majors, I found myself spending much more time than I expected explaining to them the difference between analyzing and summarizing, and, more frustratingly, the difference between generalities and specifics. This graph, however, provides 1) specific characters who are responding in 2) specific degrees to 3) specific dramatic situations. In addition to demonstrating an ability to find a specific structuring method in the novel and narrowing the range of characters they will discuss, this group has also engaged in a hypothetical empathy that in itself adds a definite degree of intellectual engagement with the text. In the course of constructing a graph of their own emotional responses to the novel, the group has projected itself into the emotional possibilities of seven characters. This strategy

establishes a second layer of class-wide discussion because other students in the class can not only question the data points connected to the “official” readers but also question the official readers’ representation of the characters’ responses. While sharpening students’ analytical skills, this experiment in hypothetical empathy also nurtures their ability to connect with a variety of personalities that they might never meet in their actual social spheres.

Through their group discussion, the students agreed on how the characters’ responses should be gauged specifically in relationship to their own official reader response. Later on, we will see that the students come to recognize that their own responses are influenced by 1) how they extrapolate the selected characters’ responses to the same dramatic situation, while at the same time, 2) carrying echoes of the other characters’ emotional valences along with them from previous chapters, and 3) anticipating what the next plot point will do to certain characters. Such a discussion requires an ongoing comparison and adjustment sequence in which the students must keep distinguishing between how the dramatic situations made them feel and how those situations made the seven individual characters feel. So even on this speculative empathetic level, the group is engaged in arriving at psychological/literary distinctions. For example, if we follow the visual wave pattern formed by connecting the data points provided by the official readers plotted along the x and y axes on the graph, through the eleven plot points, the novel has provoked the emotional equivalence of the “roller coaster” ride described by the students in the conclusion section of their chart.

Viewpoint: How the Antagonist Becomes a Protagonist (Chapters 1, 2, 4, 10, and 14)

Clearly, they begin by sympathizing with the infant's kidnapper, Lucy, as the first two chapters establish her despair over not being able to have a baby of her own and before she commits her crime. She has become so obsessed with her desire to be a mother that her husband has left her. The "official" emotional valence is a -6 out of a possible -10. (These boundaries can be extremely flexible, depending on how widely the students think the emotional responses should range and what sort of vocabulary they agree to use to describe their spectrum of responses.) However, when Lucy is in IKEA, in chapter 3, and sees an infant, apparently abandoned, she feels protective, then possessive. Sensing Lucy's blossoming awareness of possibility, of motherhood, the official readers respond with a slight rise in emotion, from -6 to -4. However, when the readers are faced with the actual kidnapping, their response drops to the lowest valence provoked in the whole novel, a -10, what might be labeled as shocked disapproval.

Skimming from chapter 4 to chapter 10, the official readers register a -8 response to the self-justifying explanations that Lucy provides to herself and her readers. Giving rise to an engaging class discussion, this group should be ready to explain how Lucy, after kidnapping an infant, has slowly begun to win sympathy from her audience. Most likely, some class members will not agree that Lucy deserves the small rise in sympathy registered by the official readers, but a more general question might help explain how we can begin to identify with a bad character in literature or in movies. Similarly, this point in the graph might also give rise to a discussion

regarding the role that viewpoint plays in any piece of literature. As a matter of fact, because this graph allows for an ongoing comparison of eight different viewpoints, this group should emphasize that viewpoint is definitely a major device which allows for the layered structure of a well-written narrative. During this discussion, the observation should be made that even the “official” reading is actually made up of a multi-layered response; the members of this group first produced individual data points then averaged the points before plotting their graph. Similarly, the data points representing the seven characters’ responses are hypothetical responses, so some members of the class could raise the question about how trustworthy such responses might be. Now would be an appropriate moment to discuss the importance of being an empathetic reader.

As the next five chapters (10-14) indicate, Lucy presents herself as a dedicated and fond mother. So persuasive is her voice, the official readers grudgingly grow even more sympathetic by responding across this stretch of narrative from -8 to -3. To justify this significant rise in their attitude toward Lucy, the group should present specific comments made by Lucy which mitigate the reprehensible circumstances through which she became a mother. Students should realize that behind Lucy’s possibly self-serving comments, the author is also employing narrative strategies to make her appear more sympathetic. The rest of the class should express their interpretations of why the official readers are allowing themselves to be swayed. This part of the discussion can also introduce the vital digital concept of “granularity” in a graph and reemphasize the importance of specific references to the text.

The Relationship between Details and Granularity

Generally speaking, in discussions of a graph, granularity refers to the number of data points that constitute the analysis: the higher the number of data points, the higher the granularity. In “Valence Is a Basic Building Block of Emotional Life,” Lisa Feldman Barret refers to “emotional granularity” when observing, “Some people made categorical distinctions, characterizing their experiences in discrete emotion terms, whereas others characterize their experiences in broad, global terms (37).” This different approach to describing one’s emotional valence should be discussed by students to make them aware of their own method of evaluating how they respond to specific stimuli. On a graph, the degree of granularity is also dependent upon how many structural divisions appear along the x-axis. For example, in the graph of *What Was Mine*, the students have provided a total of eleven data points for seven characters and one official reader which totals eighty-eight data points. At first, this number sounds like a fairly high granularity. However, if we take into account that only eleven situations in a 124-chapter novel have been responded to, then the granularity of this analysis diminishes considerably. In terms of literary analysis, what this concern with granularity highlights is the importance of details, particularly in the form of direct quotations, images, and specific scene references.

The most apparent weakness of the chart comes after chapter 75. The students provide no data points until the final chapter—leaving forty-nine chapters without *any* responses. In sentiment analysis terms, the last half of the graph provides no “granularity” in its analysis, a weakness that could have been avoided if I had been less dazzled by their design skills and more

emphatic in my directions about narrowing their topic. Notice in the first five chapters, the students provide three data points for a total granularity of 24. This reading provides a comparatively finer granularity of analysis compared to the zero data points across those last forty-nine chapters. It's very clear that something happened to the students' attention to the text toward the end of their analysis. Maybe time ran out either for reading or for responding. This problem provides another important discussion point which should be covered either in a conference with the group or in class as a learning moment. Unlike actual macroanalysis which is specifically designed to deal with vast amounts of literary data, sentiment analysis works more effectively when applied to smaller literary fields. Despite various shortcomings of the graph, noticeably after chapter 75, the group's analysis still offers ongoing revelations about the author's skill at manipulating emotions, even in the artificial context of "averaged" responses and hypothetical responses.

Even a Faulty Graph Reveals Manipulation (Chapters 15, 16, 17, 19, and 20)

Returning to a consideration of the graph's strengths, I want to emphasize that the students have done a good job of isolating the main dramatic situations from chapter 1 through chapter 75. However, in discussing the granularity of their graph, the class might explore the effect that their need to summarize such broad sections of the dramatic structure has on the comprehensiveness of their responses as well as the responses they ascribe to the novel's "dynamic" characters. For example, by the time the readers reach chapter 20, when the stolen

child, Mia, has turned 21, the readers have finally crossed from their negative response to a very positive view of the kidnapper. At +6, the official readers have achieved what will be *their* highest state of mind for the entire novel. The six chapters that have been condensed in the two data points constituting the line of emotional valence between chapters 15 and 20 cover Lucy's efforts to fabricate a plausible narrative for how she became an "adoptive" mother and her ongoing paranoia about her crime being discovered.

Just how well Lucy succeeds in deceiving everyone is reflected in the two chapters, 17 and 19, in which her sister, Cheryl, admits to how happy she was for Lucy but also confused by some of her behavior, though having no idea of her sister's duplicity until her crime is revealed twenty-one years after the kidnapping. Perhaps what might be most disturbing to other readers, those who pay specific attention to Marilyn's narrative in chapter 16, is how much she suffers as she recalls those first desperate days following her infant's kidnapping. In a class discussion of this chart, some students might want to know why Marilyn's hypothetical response registers as only a -4. At the end of her chapter, she must face the disheartening fact that the police have given up on finding her daughter. Certainly, we can understand that after the shock she's experienced earlier in chapters 4 through 14 where she was assigned three consecutive -10 responses, she might be entering a less intense emotional state reflecting a stunned acceptance that she has lost her child. However, even if the official readers assume that Marilyn is now "numb" instead of shocked, they might resort to a thesaurus to come up with a more definite emotional state that corresponds to that -4. To assume that Marilyn is simply numb seems to imply that she isn't feeling any specific emotion at this point. To be numb would reflect more of

a 0 on the graph than a -4. Perhaps a phrase like “morbidly resigned,” or “defeatedly acquiescent,” or “complicitly fatalistic” would clarify what state of mind is indicated by a -4.

On one level, as the official readers moved through the narrative developed in chapter 20, they were paying closest attention to Lucy’s voice. Because she establishes herself as a responsible and loving “mother” who is determined to provide her daughter with a privileged upbringing, our readers are ready to give her some approval. After all, as Lucy and even Marilyn remind us, Marilyn was neglectful as a mother. Apparently, the official readers are willing to take a narrator’s opinion about herself or himself at face value, regardless of the implications vibrating beneath the admission. So, as Marilyn is feeling guilty and regretful about herself, Lucy rises above her understandable paranoia and begins to feel pretty good about herself, with a valence of +7. If we count from Marilyn’s -4 up to Lucy’s +7, we see that Lucy’s state of mind is actually +11 higher than Marilyn’s. What we might be seeing in this chapter is an underlying dynamic in reading. Even if a character has committed a terrible crime, but in all other areas he or she presents herself or himself as basically decent with good intentions, the reader can be persuaded to tolerate or even approve of that character.

Fostering Hypothetical Empathy through Close Reading (Chapter 41)

Adding to the positive aspects that Lucy herself presents as justification for her behavior, the official readers also ascribe hypothetically positive responses to six of the other seven characters throughout chapters 15-20. Only Marilyn through this section of data is assigned negative responses. Consequently, as a class, we might consider the possibility that even a

seriously criminal behavior can be forgiven if 1) the criminal has other good traits, 2) a majority of other characters, who are good people, approve of the criminal, 3) the victim of the crime shares some degree of responsibility for the crime, and 4) the criminal herself speaks in a persuasive enough voice. Reading then, the moderator of the discussion might point out, is not a simple linear movement through a plot. What's being clearly revealed so far by interpreting the graphic response to the novel is that characterization and voice can strongly influence how we respond to the overall narrative movement regardless of plot details.

The next data point after chapter 20 isn't recorded until chapter 41. Once again, in a class discussion or in a conference with this group, the question should be raised as to why they skip twenty-one chapters before responding to the narrative. As already pointed out, in a long text such as a novel, students will have a difficult time providing a satisfactory granularity for their graph because of the overwhelming density of the narrative details. Because the emotional valence in chapter 41 has dropped to -6—a significant decline from the +6 assigned to chapter 20—the group should be prepared to explain what specific events through the elided twenty-one chapters influenced their response. Understandably, chapter 41 could exert a negative impact on the reader because it is told from Marilyn's point of view. She has come across the novel *Baby Drive* which Lucy has helped write. Although Lucy's name isn't on the novel and some of the details of the kidnapping have been changed, Marilyn still has the premonition that through this novel, her stolen daughter is reaching out to her. So, on one level, a reader should be feeling a little more positive. The twenty-one-year-old mystery is about to be solved. Most likely, because the official reader has now developed such a strong empathy for the criminal explains how a

drop of twelve valence points has occurred.

Apparently, a great deal happens over the next twenty-one chapters because the next data point the official readers record at chapter 41 has plummeted to -6. Clearly, because twenty-one chapters are compressed into a single set of responses from five characters and the official readers, the granularity of this section of the graph is suspiciously low. Even the data points that are provided in chapter 41 appear confusing. For example, a data point is ascribed to a fairly minor character, Thatch, who is Mia's half-brother from the remarriage of Marilyn and whose viewpoint occurs only once, in chapter 82. Yet, in chapter 41, a data point with a +7 valence appears under his name. Equally confusing, a data point of -8 is assigned to Mia who, like her half-brother, is not heard from in any of the intervening twenty-one chapters that we assume are being summarized in chapter 41. For the most part, all of the *indirect* references made to Mia in these twenty-one chapters, either from Lucy's, Wendy's, or Cheryl's points of view, reflect a bright, privileged, perceptive child growing into a confident, accomplished young woman. Necessarily, in a class discussion of the emotional valence data points at chapter 41, the official readers will need to explain 1) why their response has dropped so noticeably and 2) why their interpretation of Mia's state of mind has become so negative.

Graphing as a Tool for Discovery (Chapters 40 and 41)

Perhaps most confusing about the data points appearing in chapter 41 is the fact that the official readers record Lucy's emotional valence at 0. First of all, Lucy is the main viewpoint in the novel. In the twenty-one chapters that build up to the data point at chapter 41, Lucy's voice is

heard in nine of the chapters. The other characters who appear in more than two chapters are Marilyn and Cheryl, both providing their viewpoints three times. To Cheryl, the official readers assign an emotional valence of +5, and to Marilyn, they assign an emotional valence of +4. Certainly, it's possible for a character to be neutral in her response to a dramatic situation, but Lucy is so emotionally invested in her own narrative that many students in discussing this section of the sentiment analysis will have serious questions about that 0 data point. For example, at the end of chapter 40, when Lucy is preparing to attend a book signing for *Baby Drive* in San Francisco, she expresses her concern that Mia's biological mother lives only thirty-three miles from that city. She tries to reassure herself that such a distance should provide a reliable buffer between her and running into Marilyn. Nevertheless, despite her rationalization, her last comment in chapter 40 is "Her proximity—or my sense of her proximity—made my insides liquify" (131). This is a powerful image for the anxiety Lucy feels, and it is strong enough to push her out of any emotion even remotely related to neutrality.

Possibly the official readers have simply let their power of empathy slip. Or they might be allowing some other set of narrative devices to influence their own response. If they are being influenced by their feelings about Lucy, then they need to explain how they can extrapolate their -6 response from her 0 response. On the other hand, if they're being influenced by the emotional valences they've registered for Cheryl and Marilyn, they must explain how the +4 and +5 responses drag the official reader's response all the way down to that -6. The only other negative data point, of -8, has been assigned to Mia. Clearly, such a low state of mind could pull the official readers down to that -6, but as we've already discussed, this group will have to explain

why Mia's emotional valence is so low when, for twenty-one chapters, most references to her imply only positive values.

One possible explanation the official readers might give is that they are anticipating the "Reveal" section of the novel which they establish as occurring in chapter 51. After all, in chapter 41, Marilyn has pieced together enough of her research on kidnapping and information provided in Lucy's novel to suspect, on a compelling intuitive level, that the story does establish a connection between her and her kidnapped daughter. In the final paragraph of chapter 41, Marilyn is on her way to the Barnes & Noble where she plans on meeting the author of *Child Drive*. Still, if the official readers are recording a -6 valence for themselves because they're worried about the damage that is about to be done to Mia's relationship with Lucy, they must also explain their -8 evaluation of her state of mind since Mia's viewpoint is completely missing from the twenty-one chapters condensed into the chapter 41 data point. Although the readers can definitely feel their valence drop as a result of their anxiety about what is *about* to happen, they must clarify, by exercising their empathetic response and consulting a thesaurus, that -8 for Mia. Strictly speaking, if they are projecting their anxiety onto Mia, for the sake of accuracy, they should restrict their deeply negative valence to their own set of data points and not confuse their anxiety with Mia's, who cannot be feeling any such anxiety because her viewpoint is limited to only what she can know and not to what the official readers can anticipate. In other words, to anticipate a character's future state of mind should not be confused with the reader's own response to that character's future state of mind.

Granularity and the Friction of Viewpoint (Chapters 41, 46, and 51)

Because only ten chapters are condensed into the data points found in chapter 51, as contrasted to the twenty-one chapters condensed between chapters 20 through 41, the granularity represented by chapter 51 is considerably higher than the granularity represented by chapter 41. The official reader's response at this data point has fallen to a -8, down from the -6 recorded in chapter 41. Now, if we adhere to an interpretive tendency that was discussed earlier, that the official readers' reactions are being influenced by which particular character's viewpoint they have been sharing, then the -8 valence experienced by the official readers can be justified. All of the Lucy chapters throughout this section of the novel depict the truth of her kidnapping becoming exposed, until finally, in chapter 46, she comes home to find her apartment "ransacked." Although she has experienced increasing paranoia after her encounter with Marilyn at the book reading, once she gets back home and a few weeks pass without the police appearing at her door, Lucy has almost convinced herself that she has escaped being exposed by Marilyn. Unknown to Lucy, however, Marilyn has made contact with Mia, becoming friends with her on Facebook. Eventually, following Marilyn's request, Mia takes a DNA test and finds out that the likelihood Marilyn is her biological mother is 99.9%. Earlier in the novel, when Mia was a child, Lucy had told her that she was adopted. To Mia's shock, though, the story Lucy told her does not match the account she hears from Marilyn. The ransacking that Lucy discovers is the result not of a burglary, as she first assumes, but of Mia searching for evidence of her true origin.

In class discussion, the group needs to explain why they give a -10 valence to Lucy in

chapter 51. First of all, the rather coarse granularity of their graph at this point conflates at least four major emotional moments experienced by Lucy. First, she feels excitement because she is appearing as a reader at her first book signing. Second, she feels increasing paranoia when she encounters Marilyn at that reading. Third, she feels some relief when, after several weeks, nothing seems to come from her brush with Marilyn. Fourth, she feels a shock when she discovers her ransacked apartment. During their discussion, the official readers should explain why these four reactions add up to a -10. They have to keep in mind that in chapter 58 when Lucy actually confronts the reality that Mia knows how she came to be Lucy's daughter, the emotional valence they assign Lucy at that point is also a -10. This equivalence prompts an interesting consideration for a full class discussion: the shock of thinking your apartment has been burglarized can be as powerful as the shock of knowing your daughter has found out you kidnapped her when she was an infant. The class might want to discuss the possibility of extending the positive and negative ranges of their y-axis. Or they might actually decide that the emotional value of suspecting you're the victim of thieves is equivalent to being exposed as a thief.

Granularity and Ambiguity (Chapters 47, 49, and 51)

Another compelling discussion question that should come up in class is why the official readers in chapter 51 assign both Mia and Marilyn the same valences of +5. In chapters 47, 49, and 51, what is presented through Mia's point of view is the deterioration of her life with Lucy. Following a steady downward movement, Mia's three chapters develop a state of mind that

begins with the statement, “Getting that message really made me freak” (146), which refers to the first contact Marilyn makes with her through Facebook. After going through an understandable period of denial, during which she questions Lucy about the details of her adoption, sensing a few faint irregularities in what Lucy tells her and what she remembers from the *first* time Lucy told her about her adoption, Mia makes the decision by the end of her conversation with Lucy to confirm the friend request that Marilyn had sent to her. Getting over her initial shock, Mia studies Marilyn’s Facebook page and acknowledges to herself that she definitely does share facial features with at least two of Marilyn’s other children. She also realizes that Marilyn could not have been the fifteen-year-old unwed mother from whom Lucy claimed she adopted Mia.

When Mia works up the courage to message Marilyn, she responds almost immediately, sending her links to newspaper articles about the kidnapping and also telling Mia that her real name is Natalie. Still not completely convinced by the end of chapter 49, Mia speculates that Marilyn could be crazy, and besides, she doesn’t like the possibility that her life isn’t at all what she thought. Now, these two chapters establish a deep emotional and psychological struggle within Mia. So far, what I expect the rest of the class to be reacting to would be the doubt that has entered Mia’s attitude about her identity and what emotional valence might be assigned to Mia given the questions she now faces about her own origin. The class might question the fairly comfortable valence of +5 the official readers have assigned to her at the chapter 51 data point. Just from the standpoint of the spectrum of emotions implied by the -10 to +10 this group has chosen to work with, a +5 translates to a state of mind beyond “buoyant.” I would encourage the

class to discuss the emotional dynamics that they have encountered when dealing with moments in which they have struggled with their own self-doubt.

Prompting further discussion regarding Mia's +5 emotional valence at chapter 51 is the dramatic action she takes in that same chapter. She had been contacted by Detective Brown, who was in charge of the case from the very beginning, when she was kidnapped from the IKEA. He is the one who first asks her to take the DNA test. Initially, Mia is reluctant to take the test, but then, after a fight with Lucy, she decides to cooperate with his and Marilyn's request.

Responding to the test results, Mia declares, "February 1, 2012. The day that changed my life forever"(157). Possibly, the official readers might argue that Mia's statement reflects a positive response to the revelation about her true origin. Such an argument should provoke an interesting discussion about Helen Klein Ross's use of ambiguity. Quite possibly, all of her character's speak ambiguously. This aspect of the novel's dialogue could provide its own insightful discussion. If Mia's declaration can be taken as a positive response to what she's discovered, we should still ask the official readers to explain why that +5 reflects her emotional valence. But as we've already discussed, this group might explain their data point as representing an average of Mia's emotional states through the ten chapters condensed in chapter 51.

However, just in chapter 51, Mia experiences a variety of dramatic moments that call into question such a positive interpretation. Most significantly, toward the end of the chapter, when Mia searches through Lucy's closet for some confirmation that the DNA test might be wrong, she discovers an old suitcase which contains undeniable evidence that Lucy has kidnapped her. Finally persuaded that Marilyn has been telling her the truth about Lucy, Mia describes her state

of mind: “The closet walls seemed to close in and I felt as if I were about to be crushed”(161). Convinced that she has to escape the home that now makes her feel “as if bugs were crawling all over me” (161), she is so distraught that she has trouble locking the door behind her, and it seems to be saying to her “*You don’t live here anymore*” (162). These three highly charged dramatic moments indicate that Mia is experiencing 1)an extreme sensation of claustrophobia, so strong, in fact, that she feels physically threatened, 2)formication, or paresthesias, a form of “tactile hallucination,” which is that sensation of insects crawling on one’s skin, often caused by intense anxiety (*healthline*), and 3)a sense of alienation so pronounced that she has lost some degree of muscular control. Certainly, this traumatized state, this last view we have of Mia in this ten-chapter conflation, casts doubt upon the suitability of Mia’s +5 emotional valence at this point.

Slippery Empathy and Ambiguity (Chapters 51, 53, and 58)

When they reach chapter 58, the group’s emotional valence has slid up to -2, although Lucy is still suffering at a -10. Their response might be on the rise because they are now identifying more closely with Mia’s birth mother, Marilyn, while retaining a diminishing sympathy for Lucy. Mia’s emotional valence has now dropped from the +5 in chapter 51 to a -3—a full eight points. In the seven intervening chapters between chapter 51 and chapter 58, Mia’s viewpoint occurs only once, in chapter 53 which picks up immediately after Mia’s departure from her kidnapping mother’s apartment. She is in tears and her sense of alienation grows even sharper because in leaving behind the apartment building where she grew up, she becomes more deeply aware that she is leaving behind the life she has known for twenty-one

years. Definitely, the official readers are correct to assign a negative value to Mia's state of mind. But considering the questions that were raised about why they evaluated her valence at +5 at chapter 51, the class might ask them to explain why she has experienced such an emotional drop when the alienation she is feeling in chapter 58 appears to be very similar to her alienation in chapter 51. As she rides in a cab across New York City, Mia continues to reevaluate her relationship with Lucy, whose deception makes Mia doubt the worth of her entire existence. That -3 doesn't seem to represent the psychological weight of such an identity crisis. Students should share their ideas on how such a crisis would make them feel. In addition, Mia cannot think of where she can go or with whom she might share her sense of loss. Her boyfriend is out of the country, and she isn't prepared to reveal the details of her condition to her best friend. More than likely, this sense of isolation compounded with her sense of alienation would have to pull her emotional valence lower than a -3.

In their defense, the official readers can point to the end of chapter 58 when Mia contacts her favorite high school teacher, Christine Lanieri. Not only will Ms. Lanieri provide a sympathetic ear, but she has always let her students know that her home can be used as a haven. At this moment in chapter 58, the official readers can reasonably argue that Mia's mood could be higher than we might expect, given that she finally believes she has found an avenue of relief from how she has been betrayed by the woman who has been the center of her world for twenty-one years. Nevertheless, the final image in chapter 58 shows Mia ignoring a phone call from Lucy and saying, "I didn't have a mom anymore" (171). Without a doubt, Mia has found some relief in knowing that she can share her pain with Ms. Lanieri. At the same time, this relief could

counterbalance her loss of stability and identity enough to rate her emotional valence at -3.

As can be gathered from all the data points connected to chapter 58, Marilyn is obviously the only character who has an emotional valence in the positive range: +6. While such a number implies that now the official readers, with their -2 valence, are being influenced primarily by all of the other characters *except* Marilyn, the class might want to consider just how strongly those other negative valences are affecting the official readers. After all, their -2 valence is considerably more positive than Lucy's -10 and Cheryl's -8. A serious question could be raised about that valence attached to Cheryl. In the seven chapters condensed into the chapter 58 data base, Cheryl's viewpoint doesn't even appear. The graph doesn't clarify from where that -8 response for Cheryl actually originates. The last time Cheryl's viewpoint appeared was in chapter 35. Here, we seem to have another instance in which the official readers engage not only in hypothetical empathy whereby they try to apprehend a character's emotional valence but rather they are confusing their own valence with what should be an approximation of that *character's* emotional state. In such instances, the readers' conjecture is turned toward themselves rather than toward the character. Consequently, what should be an exercise in extrapolation becomes, instead, interpolation. As students become more familiar with the intellectual discipline of close reading, they should become more practiced at recognizing when their interpretation slips into interpolation. Naturally, an important discussion can take place if the official readers are offered the chance to explain how they may have extrapolated Cheryl's drop in emotional valence from +5 to -8 over those twenty-three chapters between 35 and 58 without having the benefit of reading Cheryl's viewpoint.

Granularity and Anticipation (Chapters 56 and 58)

Considering, then, the fact that the official readers' valence is comparatively higher than Lucy's and Cheryl's, perhaps the group can make a case that their -2 does reflect a positive influence coming from Marilyn's +6. In both chapter 56 and chapter 58, where her viewpoint again appears, her emotional valences are understandably on the rise. She makes first voice contact with Mia in chapter 56. Then in chapter 58, she breaks the news to her family that she is about to go to New York to meet her kidnapped daughter. As we have seen in several previous instances, many responses to a novel do develop as a result of anticipation, either when the readers anticipate implied future events in the plot or when they anticipate the effects those events will have on certain characters. Therefore, in addition to practicing their skills of empathy, serious readers also find themselves developing a capacity for inventive anticipation, both of which represent creative acts on the part of the reader. Specifically in chapter 58, Marilyn finds herself in a pure state of expectation, a condition which gives the official readers a chance to evaluate the dual nature of literary anticipation: 1) how it allows an author to dramatize a character, and 2) how that dramatization moves the reader. With this consideration in mind, the class should discuss how +6 accurately reflects Marilyn's level of expectation.

To properly initiate a discussion of this question, the teacher needs to once again emphasize to the class the importance of providing sufficient granularity in sentiment analysis. As was mentioned in the beginning of this essay, the underlying power of Matthew Jockers' macroanalysis approach is his algorithm's ability to sort through literally hundreds of texts, often

collecting the number of times a single word or phrase appears. A closer look at chapter 58 reveals that Marilyn's anticipation is more complex than simply being excited about meeting her kidnapped daughter. Definitely, that specific excitement is a strong current pushing Marilyn's emotional valence, but several other currents are also shaping her mood. Not surprisingly, her first response after making contact with Mia is to contact her first husband, and Mia's biological father, Tom. To Marilyn's surprise, Tom's reaction to the news of their daughter being found is much more subdued than Marilyn thinks it should be. He gives her a vague excuse for not being able to come immediately and reuniting with their daughter. His suggestion that mother and daughter need to conduct their initial reunion without his presence in order to better "bond" doesn't ring true to Marilyn, and regarding Tom's fatherly capacity, Marilyn concludes, "But Tom is a limited person. He is just doing the best he can" (185). Considering this disappointment with her ex-husband's reaction, Marilyn's emotional valence might not be as high as +6. Students should be encouraged to discuss their own experiences with how they have reacted when other people close to them have not shared their excitement over some event. The tendency of most people in this situation is to momentarily question the validity of their own excitement. Or their frustration with close friends or family who didn't share the same degree of excitement must have dampened their own enthusiasm at least for a short period of time.

After Marilyn has contacted Tom, she must inform her new family about being reunited with her lost daughter. Of course, her present husband, Grant, and their three children know about Marilyn's kidnapped daughter, but despite her joy over the prospect of being reunited with Mia, Marilyn does harbor a slight misgiving about how her children will respond to the news that

a new member is about to be added to the family. To be more precise, Marilyn must deal with how *each* of her three children will respond. Her basis for doubt is a fear that one or all of her children might feel alienated or displaced somehow by Mia's joining their family. Underlying her concern for how her children will respond to Mia is the fear that Mia might not accept her new brothers and sister. Marilyn also carries a deeper doubt that Mia could even refuse to visit her new family. After all, Mia has been raised in rather luxurious surroundings in New York City while Marilyn and her family live in a much less sophisticated home. In light of these fears, the class discussion might focus on whether or not Marilyn's emotional valence would be as high as +6, especially with the understanding that she is still carrying her disappointment from her conversation with Tom. Many in the class might argue that despite all of Marilyn's doubts, her underlying excitement about reuniting with Mia can certainly push her emotional valence up to +6, maybe even higher. A discussion regarding the power of doubt to undermine the strength of a person's hope provides an opportunity for students to examine their own experiences when they have had to deal with such simultaneous, conflicting emotions.

Fluid Viewpoints: Irony and Anxiety (Chapters 59 and 75)

Following another lengthy abridgement, seventeen chapters, the official readers arrive at their tenth set of data points with chapter 75. Understandably, the plot has moved over a great deal of territory. Most importantly, Lucy has fled to China to avoid being prosecuted for her crime, and Mia has joined her new family in San Mateo. Through the seventeen compressed chapters, the narrative's primary focus has been on Mia, whose viewpoint occurs seven times;

Lucy, whose viewpoint occurs five times; and Marilyn, whose viewpoint occurs four times. In data point seventy-five, the official readers register their emotional valence as +3, up noticeably from their -2 in chapter 58, suggesting that their empathy has shifted from Lucy to Mia and Marilyn. Class discussion could begin by asking the official readers to explain why they have begun to identify more closely now with Mia and Marilyn. Or some members of the class might want to ask why the official readers' response isn't even higher than that +3. In other words, Marilyn's +9 emotional valence should be exerting a more positive influence on that +3. In contrast, others in the class might insist that Lucy's -9 should be exerting a more negative influence on the group's response. An especially notable feature that occurs in the graphs of reader-response/sentiment analysis is a marker for irony—when two diametrically opposed data points appear, as in this instance when Lucy's emotional valence is -9 and Marilyn's valence is +9. Looking back over all the data points, students will see that this ironic relationship between the two characters is a fairly regular property of the graph. Students might suggest the possibility that Marilyn's and Lucy's valences cancel out each other in the official readers' response.

One apparent reason the official readers can give for their response of +3 in chapter 75 is that they are now identifying most closely with Mia and her emotional valence of +4. Considering this connection between the reader and Mia, the class will need to discuss how accurately that +4 measures Mia's emotional valence. In the seven chapters which reveal Mia's viewpoint, she struggles with 1) excitement about reuniting with her biological mother, 2) her anger with Lucy, 3) her sense of loss, in terms of her personal history, 4) her anxiety about joining a strange family, 5) her inability to function when she returns to college, and 6) both the

uneasiness and pleasure in shifting her identity from a city girl to a country girl. In exploring Mia's turbulent ambivalence about being introduced to her biological family, students might observe how Helen Klein Ross most effectively presents one of her major themes: dramatic human emotions seldom arise from a single cause or operate as a pure motivation. As active readers, students can't help but discover the psychological layers that create a believable and compelling fictional character.

When Mia is about to meet Marilyn for the first time, her anxiety is apparent in the difficulty she has in trying to choose what clothes she will wear to the airport. In responding to this device of characterization by action, class members might share their own experiences about feeling that kind of nervousness. Even if they're preparing for an event which will be enjoyable, they might consider how that nervousness affects their overall emotional valence at that moment of preparation. Considering that the official readers have ascribed a +4 to Mia in chapter 75, they should clarify if she experienced that same valence in chapter 59. Another recurring theme emerging this far along in the novel highlights the role that anxiety and anticipation play in the characters' lives. The class might discuss whether or not these two states of mind play such a prevalent role in their own lives as they also explore what seems to be the relationship between these two psychological states.

Oddly, when Marilyn does appear and Mia can already recognize physical similarities between her biological mother and herself, her response is far from joyous when she confesses: "I felt I was falling down a hole with no bottom" (190). This sensation is reminiscent of the disorientation she felt back in chapter 59, when she discovered that Lucy *had* kidnapped her. In

addition to her nervousness at meeting her biological mother in chapter 59, Mia also has to deal with increasingly desperate texts from Lucy. A close discussion of this chapter might lead students to speculate that this is possibly the most critical moment in Mia's development as a character.

For the rest of the chapter, Mia numbly accepts her role as Marilyn's daughter, but clearly she isn't yet comfortable with it because as the chapter ends, she admits that she still feels "awkward" with her new identity, and that in reality she and Marilyn are as much "strangers" to each other as they are to the other people standing around the baggage carousel (191). Most telling is Mia's focus on the "dark hole" (191) of the carousel, which clearly reprises that image of the dark hole introduced in the chapter's opening. Just from this chapter, the class can make a strong case against that +4 valence presented by the group. However, if those official readers are arriving at their chapter 75 emotional valence by averaging all seven chapters where Mia's viewpoint appears, they can argue that she gradually overcomes her anxiety and not only adapts but comes to appreciate the transformation of her identity fostered by her new family and exposure to country living. Ultimately, the class should try to decide if what Mia gains from reuniting with her new family outweighs what she realizes she must give up.

Insufficient Granularity as Analytical Impediment (Chapters 72, 75, 79, 120, and 124)

After chapter 75, the graph suffers its most consequential impediment because no data points are provided by the official readers until chapter 124, which means that this final set of

data points represents a compression of forty-nine chapters. Strictly speaking, such a lengthy extrapolation implies more of an elision, more of an omission which strongly suggests that the line of the graph running from chapter 75 to chapter 124 is more likely to be tracking interpolation instead of extrapolation—generalization instead of analysis. Rather than spend a tremendous amount of discussion time speculating about what actual emotional valences were accumulating through each of the elided chapters between chapter 75 and chapter 124, class time will be better spent simply focusing on the final set of data points given for chapter 124. The difficulty of trying to discuss a sentiment analysis that lacks even a minimum of data points—not to mention *any* data points—gives the instructor the opportunity to once again emphasize the importance that granularity, specificity, plays in creating a persuasive graph.

Except for Lucy's sister, Cheryl, whose emotional valence is -3, Mia's half-brother, Thatch, whose emotional valence is 0, and Marilyn, whose emotional valence is also 0, all of the other characters, including the official readers, register positive valences. If students haven't already discussed the significance of a 0 emotional valence, now would be an excellent time to explore what state of mind corresponds to a 0. Some students might equate such a null reaction to the once popular attitude of "Whatever," or to the more political response of "It is what it is." In the three chapters featuring Cheryl's viewpoint, 72, 79, and 120, she first experiences the humiliation of being "a kidnapper's sister" (236). In her view, and it's a view she's certain the rest of society shares, the scandal has tainted her husband and children as well. When Cheryl finds out from Mia that she and Marilyn do not plan to press charges against Lucy and that Mia is actually going to China to bring Lucy back "home" (311), Cheryl's dominant emotion is

anger. She deeply resents the fact that Lucy has always succeeded in avoiding responsibility. With obvious bitterness, she reiterates the seriousness of her sister's crime against Marilyn and Tom: "She took their baby. She took their marriage. She took the lives they were meant to have" (312). Given the depth of Cheryl's anger and resentment and her refusal to forgive Lucy, despite Mia's and Marilyn's willingness to forgive, surely, some class members will disagree with the official readers' evaluation of -3. However, the official readers might maintain the accuracy of their response by pointing out that *exactly because* Mia and Marilyn have begun to forgive Lucy Cheryl's valence isn't more negative than that -3. Along a similar line of argument, the official readers might defend their own +4 valence at chapter 124 by arguing that their response isn't higher, even in light of Lucy's +9 and Mia's +8, *exactly because* to a certain extent they share Cheryl's disapproval of Lucy's crime and the fact that she is about to get away with all the damage she has done to a child, a marriage, and a family.

What I hope most clearly emerges from this discussion of the students' graph is how it compels them to become close readers who must engage with textual details in order to recognize the intricate dynamics of literary devices and narrative strategies, becoming more adept at comprehending and communicating the layered and fluid texture of any narrative. The graph becomes an interface, a visual field of transactional reader-response observations, a tangible meeting and departure point that not only connects them more firmly to the text and their responses but also to the responses of their classmates. In addition, students will feel more confident in formulating their insights arising from addressing specific textual details, structures, and stylistic strategies. By objectifying students' responses to a piece of literature, reader-

response/sentiment analysis graphs allow class discussion to flow more freely because questions and disagreements can be directed at the graph and less directly at the students whose interpretations are represented by the graph. In a way, this objectification of student response actually can point students toward the more mathematical interrogations characteristic of Jockers' macroanalysis. Beyond providing a visual framework for structuring, guiding, and provoking class discussion, sentiment analysis graphs can ultimately generate well-focused topics for written assignments. For example, after discussing the *What Was Mine* graph, students will be well positioned to write on sufficiently narrowed topics about viewpoint, character development, and authorial strategies such as ambiguity, irony, and narrative pace.

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Vision and Revision: The Whys and Hows of Employing Creative Writing Pedagogy in the College Classroom

Susan Friedman

The University of Alabama in Huntsville

Visions

Last semester, one of my Introduction to Creative Writing students said something to the tune of: “You know, creative writing is really improving my academic writing. I’m paying a lot more attention to how I am selecting my words, and writing is coming more easily to me.” I am sure I responded matter-of-factly with my standard truism: “The only way you will improve your writing is by writing.” However, this exchange got me wondering: “What is the link between creative writing and students’ improvement in academic writing?” This paper will touch upon some of my discoveries as I seek to answer this question. Not surprisingly, I have found that students’ academic writing improves when they also engage in creative writing activities.

However, my research on Creative Writing (CW) pedagogies has also altered how I believe college writing should be instructed. In several Anglophone countries, creative writing classes are offered in lieu of, or before, academic writing classes are taught. Especially in vocational colleges or in technical universities, but also in other institutions of higher education (HE), first-year students in Australia and the UK take some sort of creative writing course designed to assist them in developing their creative thinking processes while also honing their

writing skills. Meanwhile, “academic writing” courses are frequently taught later in their “programmes” since academic writing has already been taught to university students prior to their entrance in the HE system. According to Giovanna Lucarelli-Mittiga, who received her BA from the University of Birmingham in the UK, college-bound students take Advanced Level subjects (A-Levels) prior to entering the university system. While preparing for their A-Levels, students focus on gaining analytical skills when reading, and learn “all of the skills which I assume are meant to be learnt in composition English classes” (personal interview). Since their university system is so different from ours, and there are many other HE tracks that students can take (e.g., vocational, technical), by the time students enter universities in the UK, they have presumably gained some skills necessary for college-level writing.

While I cannot logically propose a complete overhaul to our HE system in the United States, I can say that since writing this paper my vision has become clearer: College writing classes should include CW pedagogical practices. Students who struggle with grammar, spelling, mechanics, and other common writing challenges, as well as students who dread writing essays, can improve their academic writing skills through participation in creative writing classes or activities. For this reason and others, I believe that college writing programs in the United States should consider changing their approaches to writing instruction. I believe that our students would benefit from participating in writing programs that borrow pedagogies already in place in the United Kingdom, Australia, and elsewhere.

Creative Writing Improves Academic Writing

All writing is creative writing. Or is it? The differences (and similarities) between genres of writing have been explored by compositionists and CW pedagogues in myriad studies. I have neither the time, nor the desire, to take that route. Rather, as suggested by the title of Tim Mayers' germinal book (*Re) Writing Craft: Composition, Creative Writing, and the Future of English Studies*, while creative writers and compositionists "begin from several different perspectives, and arrive at positions that are sometimes in conflict" both approaches "actively question and challenge received boundaries" (94). Certainly, contemporary Rhetoric and Composition theorists and CW pedagogues are interested in the writer's relationship to language, technology and received knowledge (Mayers 95). But can both compositionists and creative writers achieve similar ends through disparate means? In his article "Why all Writing is Creative Writing," Scottish CW pedagogue David McVey says "yes." In his classroom, McVey deploys creative writing practices to help students who are challenged by what he calls "problems of ability" (191). These students are unsure about spelling, structure, mechanics, and "have particular difficulty with academic writing"; McVey also uses creative writing practices to help students who suffer from what he terms as "problems of engagement." These students do not enjoy writing, and see it "as a chore, at best as a means to the ends of marks, merits, passes, awards" (191). While McVey broadly defines creative writing as "any writing, from the published instructions for using a power drill to the most esoteric literary poetry" that "uses the raw materials of language, experience, knowledge, textual sources" (289), I believe that, for the purposes of my discussion, creative writing should be limited to fiction, poetry, drama, and

creative nonfiction. When a student enrolls in a Creative Writing course or is asked to write creatively in a composition classroom, she usually expects to be engaging with reading and writing assignments related to one of these four genres.

I have previously written extensively on the benefits of using first-person narratives in the college classroom to improve students' writing skills, as well as their health and well-being. In my Ph.D. program at the University of South Florida, I developed and frequently taught (over the span of five years) a 300-level course entitled "Expository Writing through Life-Writing." In this class, students wrote personal narratives to fulfill the university's curricular goal: to teach "the techniques for writing effective prose, (excluding fiction), in which student essays are extensively criticized, edited, and discussed in individual sessions with the instructor and with peers."¹ Several chapters in my dissertation as well as my scholarship for the past sixteen years has explored how and why we can and should honor our students' subjectivities and listen to their voices in the college classroom. I have argued that reading and writing personal narratives enables students to become emotionally invested in the texts they are reading and in the quality of the writing they are producing. My scholarship was initially based on the findings of social psychologist James Pennebaker, who established the connection between practicing self-reflective writing and experiencing an improvement in physical and mental health and well-being. Pennebaker also concluded that self-reflective writing improves students' overall academic performance. In fact, Pennebaker found through experimenting with control groups in history and Social Psychology classes, that class discussions which followed ten-minute self-reflective writing assignments were "rich, with students contributing interesting and insightful

comments on topics they previously could not relate to. In addition, absentee rates dropped and performance on essay exams improved dramatically” (qtd. in Moran). I include low stakes self-reflective reader response journals, personal narratives, and/or quizzes in all my classes—ranging from Creative Writing to Honors Writing Seminars to Women’s and Gender Studies surveys to literature classes—to aid students’ mastery of course material and to prepare students for class participation and discussion.

Certainly, student engagement and enthusiasm in courses where their emotions, ideas and feedback are valued has been explored through a variety of writing pedagogies. However, one place where CW pedagogies differ from the more traditional forms of college essays and academic writing is in their focus on creativity. In “From Imagination to Creativity,” Australian CW pedagogue Paul Dawson explores the trajectory of “the reproductive imagination” (23) from its Romantic era naissance to its contemporary definition “as the mental capacity to produce something new and valuable” (45). Dawson believes that creative writing classes are more than sites where expressive writing takes place. Rather, he envisions CW courses as places where “connotations of divergent, lateral and problem-solving thinking would be beneficially acknowledged” and where a literary work is produced that “will be seen to have a logic to its composition and thus be a new and valuable contribution to literature” (47). More practically speaking, I believe that tapping into students’ creative intelligence frees them from the writer’s block and the lack of investment they oftentimes experience in more traditional composition classes. This can be seen vividly in a study detailing an advanced-level ESL college writing course in which CW pedagogical practices were employed “to address the issue of engagement,

boost student confidence . . . and increase writing fluency” (Arshavskaya 68). At the end of the course, creative writing assignments were shown to have fostered “greater motivation and engagement with writing,” and to have motivated students to conduct additional research and consult with peers and friends on topics discussed in class (Arshavskaya 75). Through my 20+ years as a college writing teacher, I have found that regardless of what class I am teaching, students become more involved in and aware of their own writing processes when they are invested in choosing the “right words” to make themselves understood. Or, in the words of esteemed CW pedagogue Wallace Stegner: “All a teacher can do is set high goals for students—or get them to set them for themselves—and, then, try to help them reach those goals” (72). I am convinced that deploying CW pedagogical practices in the college classroom can help students succeed as college writers and thinkers.

Creative Writing Pedagogies in Anglophone Countries

Creative Writing classes are part and parcel of first year students’ curriculum in the UK and Australia. Accordingly, CW instruction in these countries’ colleges and universities has skyrocketed in recent years. As noted by McVey in 2008, “Creative Writing (CW) departments, courses, programmes and degrees are being introduced at an astonishing rate. Harris (2006, p. 44) reported 140 undergraduate, 70 Master’s and 20 Ph.D. CW programmes in the UK” (McVey 289). Similar enrollment gains and structural changes have been made in Australia. Dawson writes that during the mid-1970s, Australian schools of higher education split into two systems: universities that focused on research “and the dissemination of knowledge”; and “a vocational

sector concentrating on teaching and professional training” (144). Shortly thereafter, three-year Professional Writing degrees were developed for the students in the vocational/technical tract. Rather than “offering strict rhetorical training in various modes of composition,” this degree included offerings in the field of journalism, copywriting, scientific and technical writing, fiction, poetry, drama and scriptwriting (Dawson 145). By the 1990s, technical and vocational colleges, as well as universities throughout Australia, offered CW programs. Several Australian universities even allowed students the option to write a creative dissertation for their masters degree (Dawson 156). Paul Gardiner notes that an emphasis on creative thinking is found in a number of national curriculum documents in both Australia and the UK. Creative writing skills are paired with critical thinking skills as a general capability in Australia, and are included as a cross-curricular key skill in the UK (117). Clearly, creative writing and thinking is of paramount importance in other Anglophone countries’ national curricular goals and institutions of higher education.

A quick perusal of the English department’s home page from the University of Birmingham illustrates just how prominently CW pedagogy is incorporated into the British university system. In the first year of their three-year BA in English program, students are given “grounding in the major historical periods and genres of literature,” are invited to engage with a variety of authors and texts, “encounter new ways of thinking about literature” and “improve analytical and writing skills.” They also “have the opportunity to explore areas of creative practice.” In their second year, students take an “innovative Shakespeare module” and have the opportunity to take part in a residential trip to Stratford-upon-Avon to work at the Institute and

benefit from the university's connections with the Royal Shakespeare Company. In their second and third years, students are "able to tailor the course" to suit their interests "with increasing flexibility." Students also have the option of combining "literary study with one of several disciplines by choosing to take a Creative Pathway: Creative Writing, Drama, Film and English Language."² Who wouldn't want to major in English after reading this webpage? (And could our lack of curricular freedom and imagination, and dare I say "creativity," be some of the contributing reasons for the decline of students majoring in English in the United States?)

Deploying Creative Writing Pedagogies

While I do not see universities in the United States scrapping their composition programs anytime soon (after all they generate income for the English department and provide work for faculty members and graduate assistants), I believe the way we teach writing to first- and second-year students needs to change. Academic writing should be taught *after* students have found their voices and gained confidence in their writing skills. McVey's suggestions for making students comfortable with written expression regardless of whether they are taking a composition or a creative writing course are valuable. He recommends encouraging students "to write outside their studies, to keep a diary, write a blog, add content to a personal website or take part in online chat, in order to remove the mystique from the art of creating meaning through written symbols" (293). Other CW pedagogues have noted that while creative and academic writing enjoy their own styles and conventions, elements of the writing process are shared (Antoniou and Moriarty 157). However, writing teachers should be cautioned that

maintaining the notion that academic writing is an intellectual and professional task, rather than one which involves the whole of the writer's self, leads to difficulty and disenchantment with the writing process The split between academic and creative thinking, writing and identity is a relic of Western Enlightenment thought, which unfortunately persists in the twenty-first century university. (Antoniou and Moriarty 159-60)

In 2023, it is safe to say that we are long overdue for an overhaul of college writing pedagogical practices.

I believe that Mayers' call for CW pedagogues and compositionists to “cast aside institutional stereotypes” and engage in “collaborative work—work that will be very significant to any attempt to refigure English studies and reform the English curriculum” (122) is indeed the direction in which we should be headed. A restructuring of how we teach writing to first and second year students is in order. Why not think creatively to find a way to better reach our students? Why not teach first or second year Business Majors how write business reports, or instruct Chemical Engineering students how to write lab notes from the get-go? Why not teach creative writing in its various iterations to all students or, at the minimum, deploy CW pedagogies in all classes that require students to write?

Revisions

Mayers offers several structural changes that could transform the future of English Studies. These include having a writing department that is independent from the English

department which ideally brings together creative writing and composition (130-31); offering a writing track within the English department (131); and changing the existing English classroom to form “a convergence between composition studies and creative writing” wherein changes would occur within “established institutional boundaries and do not necessarily erase and blur those boundaries” (132). While Mayers offers several “creative” pedagogical practices for composition instructors to employ, such as asking students to find “poetic elements even in the most rigidly structured types of writing” (135), I believe we need to go further than that. I recommend that we follow Mayers’ lead and “include poetry writing or some other form of creative writing” in first-year writing courses (135). Although it might seem impractical at the moment, and perhaps impossible, English departments and their students would benefit from such a structural and systemic overhaul.

I realize that there are many heuristics that would need to be worked out, and quantifiable standards to be set, before many English departments, and the traditional compositionists within them, would be willing and able to open up their classrooms (and themselves) to the practice of teaching creative thinking and writing. However, if we let our students lead us, this process might not be quite as formidable as it might at first seem. As Stegner observes, “the best teaching that goes on in a college writing class is done by members of the class, upon one another. But it is not automatic, and the teacher is not unimportant. His job is to manage the environment, which may be as hard a job as for God to manage the climate” (11). We are not the Creator, nor should we try to be. But we certainly can give prioritizing creative thinking and writing in the college classroom our best shot. Can’t we?

Notes

¹ <http://ugs.usf.edu/catalog/>

² www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate/courses/english/english.aspx#CourseDetailsTab

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Roundtable: New Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare with Live Theatre

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Jessica Winston

Idaho State University

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Jessica Winston

Idaho State University

Introduction: New Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare with Live Theatre

Jessica Winston
Idaho State University

Over the past three decades, a significant trend in Shakespeare studies has been the rise of performance criticism, including studies of historical and contemporary performance, analyses of local and global Shakespeare, and the theorization of live broadcast productions. On a separate, but related front, a significant trend in the teaching of Shakespeare has involved the rise of performance pedagogies, an umbrella term for a wide range of methods that include analyzing films, up-on-your-feet activities, and student productions, all of which help students to understand the Shakespearean play as a script and to read drama as drama. Yet these performance approaches to teaching are only just beginning to integrate some of the more recent developments in research, such as studies of global Shakespeare or edited, multi-camera recordings of full-length theatrical productions. This *CEA Forum* Roundtable aims to advance Shakespeare pedagogy by considering how recent trends within the field of performance criticism are inflecting Shakespeare pedagogy now, particularly approaches to teaching Shakespeare in and with performance.

Many developments in performance criticism grow out of studies of live theatre. For this reason, one way to connect research developments to classroom pedagogy is to explore how instructors draw upon currents in performance criticism as they teach students to analyze live

theatre and theatrical productions of Shakespeare. Given the current popularity of performance approaches in teaching, it is notable that the teaching of and with theatrical productions is itself a gap in the pedagogical field. This topic – the teaching of Shakespeare with and through the viewing of full-length, live theatre productions – has received almost no attention in Shakespeare, drama, and theatre studies pedagogy. This is puzzling since it is fairly conventional for instructors to work the viewing of one or more live productions into their classes at least from time to time. By integrating recent developments in performance criticism into Shakespeare pedagogy, this roundtable also examines this relatively unexamined convention and articulates some new ways to integrate live theatre in our teaching.

While teaching with live theatre is an established practice, it is not surprising that it has been overlooked, even as subfield of performance pedagogy. For publications on performance tend focus on using performance as a way to develop student facility with the text. For example, in *Approaches to Teaching William Shakespeare's 'Taming of the Shrew'* (2013), several authors come at the play through performance methods, but tend to present the text as the ultimate aim. Edward Rocklin asks students to consider textual cues for “context and action.” His teaching positions the play as a script, but his methods nevertheless repeatedly refer students to the text as they consider “the role of noise *in this play*,” or what “*the play* [has] done so far,” or what students are “thinking about *this play*” (my emphasis, 157). Bruce Brandt introduces film versions of *Taming* to assist “discussion of the attitudes about gender and marriage that are embedded in [the text of] *The Taming of the Shrew*” and thus “elicits a variety of readings [that] complicate students’ reactions *to the text*” (my emphasis, 174). Even more recent articles on

performance pedagogy in *CEA Critic*, the sister journal of *CEA Forum*, continue to present performance as a way to “make students *think* about Shakespeare’s words” and “transform students’ understanding of and connection to Shakespeare’s texts” (Costa 170, original emphasis; Esposito 186). Performance pedagogies have been methods for teaching the text, the ambiguity of the text, editing the text, how the text can be interpreted in performance. Nevertheless, performance as its own artistic mode has figured less regularly as object of inquiry in its own right.¹

A few years ago, I published an article in this journal that explored some questions and approaches to teaching with live performance: “Situated Interpretation: Teaching Shakespeare with Live Performance” described this gap in the pedagogical criticism, while also discussing an approach to teaching one type course where drama is central, the kind where students study several plays and then attend live, often professional productions of each one. While that article was the first sustained effort to explore teaching full-length, live productions of Shakespeare, it was just a single essay, and it could not address a broad range of related questions, such as:

- How do we integrate the teaching of live performance with other trends in the teaching Shakespeare, such as those involving book history and editing or in-class performance?
- How do instructors work with local theatres to capitalize on their unique offerings?
- How is teaching a live broadcast or a recording of a live broadcast similar to or different from teaching a production viewed at the theatre?

This roundtable offers a slate of six essays, which are paired to explore each of these questions. In so doing, this roundtable highlights ways that faculty members from a variety of institutions

draw upon recent developments in performance criticism to shape their own performance pedagogies now.

Pair 1: Bridging Pedagogies. The first two articles address ways to integrate live performance with some other established ways of teaching Shakespeare. For instance, an important trend in Shakespeare pedagogy involves teaching with the history of the book, and more specifically with textual variants. In the opening article, Elizabeth Charlebois discusses one way to connect editorial and performance approaches in the classroom. She opens her paper by suggesting that textual variants raise crucial interpretive questions about a play. She describes how, after exploring a number of textual variants and editorial emendations with students, she asks students to identify what she calls performance cruxes, specific places in the texts that seem to especially invite or even necessitate performance to produce meaning. In the second article, Niamh O’Leary describes a class designed around her access to the Cincinnati Shakespeare Company. This class explicitly seeks to bridge the gap between performance-based, in-class activities and in-person attendance at live performance. O’Leary presents a set of carefully scaffolded in-class, at the theatre, and post-performance activities that help students to become familiar with and apply some important concepts and ideas in performance studies to analyzing the text, as well as to understanding the ongoing importance of Shakespeare in communities, for example, the idea that the layout of a venue and audience dynamics shape both the production and reception of a performance.

Pair 2: Local Shakespeare. As Niamh O’Leary’s article begins to indicate, when teaching live performance, instructors will usually find themselves working with local theatres

and companies. This fact raises a question: how do we make the most of these productions? In the next two articles, the authors discuss how they have capitalized on local offerings to create innovative and pedagogically effective classes. Jayme Yeo introduces a pedagogical project that started at her home institution, Belmont University, in 2016. Funded by a micro-grant from the Folger Institute, this project enabled her students to collect photos, interviews, and video footage from the Nashville Shakespeare Festival's annual performances and use it to create an online archive of the productions. While this project focuses on a local Shakespeare Festival, many of the assignments could translate into courses designed around classic or modern plays developed in collaboration with a university's theatre department or a local company. Allison Machlis Meyer addresses this question in another way. She has brought her Seattle-based students to local productions of Shakespeare acted with an all-female or non-binary cast. In her article, she discusses the ethical and pedagogical value of introducing students to non-traditional performances of Shakespeare, discussing how she fosters students' personal, creative, analytical engagements with these productions through assignments documenting their experiences, such as collaborative performance reviews, audience guides, and extensive interviews with cast and crew.

Pair 3: Mediated Theatre. Many instructors do not have access to live theatre. Yet professionally filmed and edited broadcasts and recordings of live productions have the potential to extend access to world-class productions. For instance, the National Theatre's program *NT Live* has broadcast to thousands of cinemas worldwide. In his contribution, Peter Kirwan lays out ideas to keep in mind when taking students to see these productions, for instance preparing

students to consider how camera angles and pre- and intermission interviews frame the experience. In the final essay, I discuss the current state of the research and pedagogical criticism on “mediated theatre”— recordings of live theatre (Bay-Cheng 37). Because this field of research is still relatively new, many instructors are not fully aware of the variety of issues raised and currently being addressed in the research in this area or the resources that are available. I aim to offer an introductory review of the literature on mediated theatre up to 2020. I describe several streaming services focused on mediated theatre, and survey some ways that mediated theatre currently appears in pedagogical criticism.

As is clear by now, this roundtable focuses on Shakespeare; nevertheless, our hope is that these essays will be relevant to a broad range of readers. In classes like Introduction to Drama and Introduction to Theatre, it is common to have students attend and review a theatre production, or (more recently) to have them view a professionally filmed version of one. Yet, as of the time of this writing in 2021, I have not been able to find published research on teaching (with) live performance in other fields, such as university-level English, drama, or theatre studies pedagogy. For this reason, the strategies and approaches presented here should also speak more broadly to college-level teachers of a range of global classical and modern drama taught at a variety of undergraduate levels in English and Theatre departments.

This roundtable originated in a seminar titled “Teaching Shakespeare at the Performance,” which occurred at the annual meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America in 2018. The seminar considered a wide range of topics related to teaching live performance and the conversation went well beyond those essays here. For instance, one important strand of

discussion focused on how scholars approach and lead publicly-oriented seminars at theatres. Another strand raised questions about the challenges and rewards of incorporating performance approaches into distance-based, particularly asynchronous online, delivery. The seminar attracted an unusually large and lively audience, and the participants were animated and engaged in exploring this strangely unexamined custom of incorporating live performance in our teaching. Unfortunately, for reasons of focus and length, it was not possible to include all of those many, wonderful papers and topics in this roundtable, but the range of topics above helps to suggest the size of the territory around teaching with live performance that has yet to be explored. For now, I would like to thank the participants in the seminar whose wide-ranging experiences and insights deepened the papers that are included here.

I finalized this introduction in the summer of 2021, as we were beginning to emerge from the global COVID-19 pandemic. During the course of the pandemic, we moved most classes entirely online, cancelled scholarly conferences, and closed theatres. We looked forward to a return to in-person teaching in the fall of 2021 and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London, and other venues, were just reopening. As a result of the pandemic experience, I feel a sense of fervor when I think about teaching in-person and teaching at and with live performance. As we look forward to regaining what we lost during that time, it is my hope that these essays will spark new ideas about how we engage and can re-engage students with each other, with Shakespeare, and with the Theatre, as we gather again and again.

Notes

¹ An exception to point might be Ayanna Thompson's 2010 discussion of using recorded student-performances, posted on YouTube, in the classroom. Nevertheless, this article principally outlines the opportunities and challenges of using these videos. It does not provide an overarching or systematic approach to using such videos in the classroom, or to discussing these as performances.

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Performance Cruxes and Consequences: Teaching Shakespeare with Text and Performance

Elizabeth A. Charlebois
St. Mary's College of Maryland

“Shakespeare is a plural noun,” I tell my students on the first day of class, and while I illustrate this claim by clicking through the unsettlingly different images of the Bard – the “Cobbe,” “Chandos,” and “Droeshout” portraits – it is the claim that I spend the rest of the semester trying to support, first by destabilizing the authority of the five-and-a-half pound *Norton Shakespeare* that they lug around campus, and ultimately linking that destabilization to the liberating indeterminacy of Shakespeare in performance.

A touchstone of my pedagogy is the idea of the “crux,” a term that has been used since the eighteenth century to mean an interpretive crossroads, fork, or juncture. First, I introduce the concept of textual cruxes in Shakespearean editorial scholarship such as whether Othello refers to himself as the base “Indian” (the quarto reading) or the base “Judean” (the Folio reading) in his final speech. After killing Desdemona and before his suicide, Othello tells his audience to speak of him as one “Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand, / Like the base Indian/Judean, threw a pearl away / Richer than all his tribe... (5.2.355-7). Majorie Garber points out that the Indian/Judean variant, rather than suggesting authorial revision, may have been merely a function of the peculiar conventions of early modern print, yet the difference, “however accidental, is salutary, for it has produced competing readings of great power” (615).¹ If Othello

invokes an image of the “base Indian,” the context is colonialism, and Othello sees himself as the “savage” man who does not know the value of the jewel he finds. If Othello is the “base Judean,” he likens himself to Judas Iscariot and the “pearl of great” price (Matthew 13: 44-52), Othello throws away becomes the Kingdom of Heaven (Garber 615). Scholars line up on one side or the other of this debate, largely choosing one reading or the other depending upon whether they find a post-colonial or religious reading of the speech, or indeed the entire play, more compelling, a choice that is, at least in part, based on what they see as the primary element of Othello’s identity as a Moor, either his racial otherness or his status as a Muslim by birth who later converted to Christianity. As Garber suggests this crux is beneficial because it ultimately serves as a catalyst for profoundly different but competing interpretations. This textual crux from *Othello* further illustrates to students how central the representation of race is, in both the texts of the play as well as the critic’s response.

In addition to considering the ways that early modern textual variants generate profoundly different meanings, we examine how contemporary editorial interventions and emendations further complicate the notion of a definitive Shakespearean text. From *Much Ado About Nothing* we look at the line from the final scene of the play, “Peace, I will stop your mouth,” (5.4.96) which is attributed to Leonato in both the 1600 Quarto and the First Folio, yet commonly reassigned to Benedict by modern editors who also add the accompanying stage direction, “[*kissing her*].” Students are surprised to learn that it is contemporary editors who have decided to conclude the play with Beatrice being silenced by her husband-to-be rather than her uncle’s exasperation with the squabbling couple.² The budding sense of reciprocity between the

pair is undermined if Benedict's words and gesture serve to curb Beatrice's unruly speech and enforce the patriarchal ideal of female silence. In a similar vein, we look at Act one, scene two of *The Tempest* where Caliban taunts Prospero with the implications if he had he been successful in his attempt to rape Miranda. After he boasts that he would have "peopled else /This isle with Calibans" (1.2. 352-3), the Folio attributes the blistering response to his lines to Miranda, yet editors from Dryden and Davenant through the early twentieth-century reassigned them to Prospero, thinking the harsh retort out of character for the presumably mild-mannered Miranda (V. Vaughan and A. Vaughan 135-6). In addition, we look at a number of stage directions also added by contemporary editors whose choices shape how readers imagine stage action.³ Emphasizing the contingent and mediated aspects of early modern textual production as well as the creative element in textual editing unsettles the hierarchical notion of an authoritative Shakespearean text from which all performances are derived and to which all performances should be more or less "faithful."

Beyond dispelling the myth of an original, definitive Shakespeare, our examinations of textual variations and editorial emendations lay a foundation for conceiving of text as analogous to performance, an idea articulated brilliantly by W.B. Worthen: "We might understand books...to materialize a certain kind of *performance* of the work. If books are like performances, it is not because they are individual interpretations of the metaphysical work of art; it is because they materialize the work as a unique event in time and space. Each *Hamlet* on the stage uses Shakespeare's words, and much else, to fashion a new and distinctive performance; each *Hamlet* on your shelf uses Shakespeare's words, and much else, to fashion a new and distinctive

performance” (10). As Lucas Erne points out, Worthen’s premise “shifts the emphasis from the loss of meaning to the production of meaning” and recognizes the extent to which “the text is always constructed in accord with a set of cultural values and textual assumptions, and its making and remaking are not evidence of its contamination but are, in fact, the very conditions of its being” (Erne 8-9). This theoretical framing encourages a “reciprocal sense of the relationship between writing and performance” (Worthen 12), both radically contingent and open to interpretive possibilities.

After laying this critical foundation that establishes both the contested and unstable nature of the text and its status as a kind of performance, I introduce what I call “performance cruxes.” While the term “crux” employed by textual editors refers to textual variants, inconsistencies, or “corruptions,” of the text(s), “performance cruxes” are interpretive crossroads in Shakespeare’s scripts that invite or even necessitate making a choice about staging to fully constitute dramatic meaning. By “dramatic meaning” I mean the rich yet necessarily indeterminate synthesis of what might be inferred from the words on the page and what might actually be happening on stage at a particular moment, especially where the relationship between the scripted dialogue and its performative counterpart is both unclear and consequential.

In some sense every single moment of a drama’s unfolding on stage might be considered as an interpretive crossroads, but to narrow the field I introduce three distinctly different opportunities that invite students to consider the extent to which performance is integral to understanding a play. In every one of these categories, students are paradoxically asked to look very carefully at the text in order to discover what is essentially *not* there. First, I ask them to

consider conspicuous silences, places where there the script does not include verbal expression from characters whose presence is called for on stage and who would be impacted by the scripted action or speech of other characters.⁴ Perhaps not surprisingly many of these silences belong to female characters. Examples include moments like Adriana's silence and apparent exclusion from the happy family reunion at the conclusion of *The Comedy of Errors* or Isabella's silence at the end of *Measure for Measure* when the Duke cuts off her plans to enter the convent and proposes marriage instead. What dramatic possibilities are there for Hippolyta, the captive Queen of the Amazons, who remains silent on stage while Duke Theseus, her husband-to-be, enacts a nearly parodic version of patriarchal tyranny in the first scene of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? Each one of these instances, among countless others, makes plain the extent to which the words on the page provide only a fraction of the information necessary to understanding any dramatic moment.

The second performance crux category involves questions of tone or delivery. The indeterminate tone of Katherine's concluding monologue from *The Taming of the Shrew*, where she surprisingly delivers an argument in favor of wifely obedience and subordination, is perhaps the clearest and most famous example of this kind of crux. Similarly, in Act 4 of *The Merchant of Venice*, when the Duke mandates Shylock's conversion to Christianity, Shylock's simple three-word response in the text, "I am content" (4.1.389) would seem instantly to dispel his prior bitterness and hostility. Yet, as with Kate's speech, how the actor articulates the words of the script conveys tone, and will fundamentally shape how an audience understands what, on the page, are sudden and unexplained transformations in defining beliefs and attitudes.

The third type of performance crux I introduce is the “ambiguous stage referent.” In this instance I ask students to identify places in the script where a clear question arises regarding the relationship between the language of the script and the action the audience sees on stage. Act one, scene two of *The Winter’s Tale* where Leontes becomes suddenly and violently jealous at the interactions between Hermione and Polixenes is among the most compelling and consequential examples of this kind of performance crux. While Leontes says he sees them “padding palms and pinching fingers” and “making practiced smiles” (1.2.115-16), every production of the play must decide what the actors do (or do not do) on stage that will either confirm, call into question, or blatantly contradict Leontes’ description in the minds of the audience. Given that Leontes is the only character in the play that seems to construe Hermione’s and Polixenes’ actions as illicit, this decision is especially consequential: it is directors and actors who determine what an audience sees and whether they understand or condemn Leontes’ jealous perspective.

The staging of King Lear’s enigmatic final lines from the Folio provides another example of this kind of ambiguity. While apparently oscillating between a hope that Cordelia is alive and a firm acknowledgment that she is dead he says, “Do you see this? Look on her. Look, her lips. / Look there, look there” (*Tragedy of King Lear* 5.3.284-287). In his introduction to the Arden edition of the play, R.A. Foakes points out that “what [Lear] sees, or thinks he sees, has been much debated; to some it appears a cruel final delusion if he supposes Cordelia to be alive, while others see a blessed liberation for him in a moment of imagined reunion” (75). The pronouns “this” and “there” in Lear’s speech create multiple ambiguities that require decisions about what

stage referents will correspond to them, and then there are broader issues concerning how the actor playing Lear will interpret or react to what he sees and how that is consistent or inconsistent with what the rest of the actors or audience observe. Foakes highlights a number of theatrical productions that have variously interpreted Lear's final lines as a "cry of pain" (Donald Sinden, 1976), a joyful hope at his 'perception of apotheosis in Cordelia' (John Gielgud, 1940; Granville-Barker's notes, Bratton 213 qtd. in Foakes 78) or omitted all together, as by Paul Scofield (1962), who sat upright, silent, and died without moving (Rosenberg 320 qtd. in Foakes 78). Each one of these dramatic scenarios creates a profoundly different ending for Lear's life and the play.

Pre-Performance Exercises

While referencing past performances is helpful for illustrating the indeterminate nature of drama, when possible, it is ideal to incorporate a trip to a live production so that students can see these choices unfold before them. But this activity benefits from further structured preparation. Before we see a particular theatrical production, I divide the class into five groups, each one assigned to each of the five acts of the play, and ask each group member to re-read the script on their own with a focus on locating performance cruxes and framing them in critical terms. In an informal written assignment they complete at home, I ask them to 1) identify the lines that correspond to their "crux," 2) describe the dramatic context of that crux in detail, 3) articulate the kind of ambiguity or indeterminacy that characterizes that moment (silence, tone, or stage referent), and 4) draft two substantial questions generated by the ambiguity that bear on our

understanding of characterization, context, or conflict, or some other aspect of the play. In class the following day, students meet in small groups by act, sharing the cruxes they each came up with and collectively choosing one that they feel is most consequential and open to multiple interpretations.

Once the class has collaboratively decided upon these five cruxes (one for each act), they work individually at home on a four-part assignment that asks them: A) to examine how they think the text *may* imply a staging choice for that crux, based on evidence either from elsewhere in the play or relevant early modern historical contexts B) to imagine generally how *contemporary* performance potentially could shed light on, problematize, or explicitly challenge those textual or cultural assumptions, and C) to specifically realize the crux by describing in detail the dramatic action including the stage space, the relationship to and potential interaction with the audience, blocking/positioning of the actors, inflection of the lines and other actor's responses to them, props, costumes, lighting, music, time period/setting, etc. and D) to articulate in a sentence or two what idea, connection, or question they want their imagined staging to generate in the minds of their audience and what their primary rationale and objective would be in doing so.

Once students have completed this assignment, they meet again in their small groups during class, sharing their work and the specific staging each of them envisioned. Finally, these groups informally present the work they did on the five cruxes back to the larger class who invariably provides additional insights and interpretive possibilities on how performance could create the meaning of an important moment on stage.

This assignment is designed to encourage students to think of themselves as artistic collaborators with Shakespeare and with one another, collaborators who come to understand that any reading or performance of any Shakespeare play is essentially a reconstitution of it; rather than seeing a performance as being “in” the text and succumbing to what Jane Margaret Kidney calls “anti-theatrical bias supported by the dominant ideology of print” (117), I hope that their imaginative engagement with performance helps to empower them as interpreters who see themselves as co-creators of the meaning of Shakespeare(s).

Before and at the Performance

Providing students with these structured assignments and exercises prepares them to see the live production we attend together because they begin to see performance as a series of active, creative choices made by the director, actors, and artistic team whom they now understand as the play’s co-authors and co-creators. Their analysis of the performance itself involves a related but very different interpretive process than they had just been engaged in with the performance crux assignment. Rather than examining the text as an invitation for their own creative work, they now attend to the various ways that the performance imagines and creates the meaning and implications of the text (again meanings and implications that are not “in” the text to be found but created in a collaborative relationship with it).

Beyond looking at costume or set renderings on the theater’s website, I urge students to avoid reading reviews or interviews with the director, not wanting them to be influenced by other critics or their analytic perspective overdetermined by the “intent” of the director. Naturally, they

are very invested in seeing how the specific performance cruxes they identified and imaginatively staged are enacted in the production, but I warn them that the fact that they have identified a crux doesn't necessitate that the director or artistic team will attend to it in any particularly interesting or purposeful way. I ask them to broaden their interpretive lens.

From the moment they take their seats, they take notes on aspects of the production they see and hear, without any preexisting notion of what those details will mean. They jot down their observations of the set design, costumes, lighting, music, props, and of course stage action -- and they all notice very different things from one another. I suggest that if a metaphoric reading or inference occurs to them when they see something to write that down, too. I encourage them to make connections between the production details and the language of the text, to forge a two-way relationship between textual and visual/aural fields of reference. A striated lighting design in a scene from *Othello* might remind a student of Iago's metaphors of entrapment or Leontes' spitting out a mouthful of wine at a climactic moment from Hermione's trial scene could recall his earlier soliloquy about having "drunk, and seen the spider" (2.1.47). Ideally, the performance is illuminated by the text and the text is illuminated by the performance to such an extent that they become mutually constitutive. I ask them to be on the lookout for rearrangements or cuts of scenes from the script in addition to nonverbal scenes or tableaux that do a considerable amount of decisive interpretive work. I encourage them to see their job not as figuring out the director's intent any more than they could discover Shakespeare's, but to co-create the meaning of the performance through their own interpretations of it.

Post-Show

After we've seen the performance, we have a class discussion where students share their observations and insights. I structure the discussion by having students write down specific aspects of the production in a variety of categories, such as props, costumes, or lighting. For example, I might ask students to write down one example where a prop was prominently featured in the production, describing its usage in a particular instance in as much detail as possible from memory. I call on a student to share what they wrote down and then ask the rest of the class to generate a variety of inferences from that piece of "evidence." This helps students to see that a variety of interpretive inferences might plausibly be made from the same piece of staging and put in different relationships to the script of the play. Students then draft thesis-driven papers on the production that go through peer review. Some make arguments about a single production element that they trace throughout the production such as costuming, set, or lighting design; others will do sustained analyses of a single scene. In every case their arguments need to forge a connection between the performance and the text, to read the visual field of the production as a rich and dynamic companion of the text that, when combined with their own interpretations, creates the meaning of the play.

Teaching live theatrical performance helps students understand Shakespeare as a topic that is quite different from the excavation of a dead author, his works, or the culture in which he lived. Instead, they see Shakespeare as a "plural noun," created through a dynamic and ongoing process in which they play a leading role, not as actors but as close readers of the script and the performance as two discrete but interrelated texts. The performance-oriented criticism I hope to

encourage among my students is akin to one Margaret Jane Kidnie envisions as “training readers in a *process* of creative and imaginative thought, a process that includes close textual analysis but also, for example...considerations of stage business, casting, theatre space, acting style, costuming, music cues, and the shaping of a script through cuts and rearrangements” (113). The complex logistics and financial cost involved in these theater trips can be daunting, but there is nothing that matches live performance in terms of its lasting impact on students. While I often use film clips in class to give students practice at reading and interpreting the visual field in relationship to the text, film is no substitute for attending a play together as a class. Admittedly film has what might be considered the pedagogical advantage of permanence and repeatability, but it is precisely the ephemeral nature of live performance that makes the interpretive work that students do more challenging, dynamic, and individual. In cinema the lens of a camera can direct, influence, and create common perception in a much more controlling and determinate manner than is possible in live performance where audience members have more freedom to direct their attention in unexpected ways, to make connections or drawn conclusions based on their own individual perceptions, perceptions that will inevitably vary based on any number of factors from where they sit in the theater to what elements happen to catch their eyes.⁵

At the time of this writing colleges and universities as well as theaters all over the country have had to close and move online due to COVID-19. Within this moment of cultural upheaval, I find myself appreciating more than ever the distinctive nature of the experience that live theater offers. There is something profoundly human and communal about being in a theater with fellow audience members and seeing a play performed not for a camera, but for audiences –

for you, for us. It is not a virtual experience. It is an imminent and intimate one that unfolds uniquely in real time and three-dimensional space that is shared. Teaching Shakespeare in performance hones students' skills at critical reading, viewing, and thinking while teaching them that Shakespeare is indeed collaboratively made, a plural noun, because the plays that we see together see are not created by Shakespeare but by theater artists and audiences – and student's individual and collective imaginations.

Notes

¹ Garber points out that the Indian/Judean crux is “produced by the fact that the capital letters for modern *I* and *J* were the same, and that the letter *n* could look like the letter *u* (the piece of type - *u* or *n* -- could also be inserted upside down within the frame)” (615).

² Interestingly, the first and second editions of *The Norton Shakespeare*, following the Oxford Edition, attribute the line to Benedict, but the freshly edited new text of the third edition of the *Norton* (2016) restored it Leonato with the added stage direction, “[*He gives her hand to BENEDICT*]” (1461).

³ Lucas Erne in *Shakespeare’s Modern Collaborators* (2008) analyzes the implications of these editorial interventions ultimately arguing for their value for contemporary readers and critics. He proposes that “the editorial intervention with which Shakespeare is mediated to us is basically beneficial” (3).

⁴ Philip C. McGuire’s *Speechless Dialect: Shakespeare’s Open Silences* (U of California Press, 1985) is the first book-length study of this common element in Shakespearean drama.

⁵ See Jessica Winston’s essay in this volume for another discussion of audience autonomy in theatre and film.

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Bridging the Gap from the Performance-Based Classroom to Teaching Shakespeare at the Performance

Niamh J. O’Leary
Xavier University

In a 2019 article on teaching Shakespeare with live theatre, Jessica Winston calls for “a robust pedagogical literature on teaching live performance,” stating that “conscientious framing” is necessary to avoid students perceiving attendance at live performance as “just an ancillary enrichment experience” (291, 292). This essay seeks to answer that call by sharing, as a case study, the “conscientious framing” I tested in a recent Shakespeare course at Xavier University. I articulate an approach to teaching Shakespeare *at* the performance, seeking to bridge the gap between performance-based in-class activities and critically-engaged in-person attendance at live performance, connecting these into a cohesive pedagogy.

In bridging this gap, I am working to bring together what I see as a more practical classroom approach with a more theoretical one. Performance-based in-class activities are a part of drama-based pedagogy that engages students studying dramatic texts in attending to those texts’ performance features and working to put the text “on its feet.” This often involves acting out scenes, cutting text or otherwise designing an imagined performance, viewing performances as a means of understanding text, etc. Performance studies, on the other hand, is a theoretical approach to considering the fact and experience of performance itself, and not just within the

theatre. In performance studies as it relates to drama, a student is invested not in the text being performed, but in the act of performance and how it intersects with other kinds of performances (political, athletic, religious, social, etc.). Bridging the gap between these involves exposing students both to the utility performance has in understanding the text, and to the fact of performance as its own experience, entire unto itself and part of a larger conversation about signification.

I am fortunate to teach in close proximity to a professional ensemble theatre, the Cincinnati Shakespeare Company [CSC].¹ As Marisa R. Cull has argued, place often defines the opportunities available to scholars, and geographical access is a privilege. Even with this privilege, I have repeatedly encountered challenges when incorporating CSC into my classes, the most immediate of which is funding. My department does not have the budget to cover purchasing students' play tickets, and I worry about obligating students to pay for tickets in addition to textbooks. While free online texts exist, I have yet to find one that includes the textual apparatus I feel necessary—modern spelling, line numbers, and both gloss and discursive footnotes. In 2019, I fortunately received a substantial grant from my university supporting a one-year institutional subscription to Bloomsbury Drama Online, giving my students free access to all texts for the course. Thus, I didn't feel I was imposing an unfair financial burden when I asked them to purchase tickets.² A usage study conducted by the library during that year has allowed them to justify adding the Drama Online Core Collection to their annual budget, which continues to be a benefit to my students.

To connect performance-oriented in-class approaches with the experience of seeing a live stage performance, I constructed a five-step in-class preparation, and a three-part post-performance process.³ In what follows, I lay out this process and describe its successes and areas for future improvement as I applied it to my course, which was titled “Shakespeare at the Theatre.” That course met twice a week in 75-minute sessions. We collectively read four plays—*The Tempest*, *Titus Andronicus*, *1 Henry IV*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. *Titus* and *Merry Wives* were the two Shakespeare plays in CSC’s schedule during that particular semester. I chose *The Tempest* because of the opportunity to contrast film and stage productions via streaming video, and *1 Henry IV* for the chance to follow Falstaff, Bardolph, Pistol, and Nym into *Merry Wives*.⁴ While four plays may seem a light load for a semester-long course, I found it necessary to limit my play selection in order to accommodate performance-based readings, production viewing, and other assignments.

Pre-performance Activities: Setting Up the Discussion

In our opening weeks of the course, I provided students with detailed historical information about early modern theatre. We polished our close reading skills and began applying them to analyzing performance by contrasting Julie Taymor’s *The Tempest* (2010) and the Globe on Screen *Tempest* (dir. Jeremy Herrin, 2013), focusing on the different ways stage and screen worked to craft a sense of magic and wonder in the production.⁵ With this initial set-up, we were ready to move into the pre-performance activities in more detail.

The **first** activity was the kind of text work one can readily find discussed in performance-based pedagogy material such as Joe Winston's *Transforming the Teaching of Shakespeare with the Royal Shakespeare Company*.⁶ Using a packet of exercises I received from the CSC teaching artists, I taught students about end-line caesuras, embedded stage directions, anchoring, etc. This gave them new entry points into the text, shored up their close readings, and demystified the work actors do performing Shakespeare.

Step **two** focused on reviewing live theatre. I put together readings, including selections from Mark Fisher's *How to Write About Theater*; editor Kevin Quarmby's reviewer guidelines from *Scene: Reviews of Early Modern Drama*⁷; several recent reviews from *Shakespeare Bulletin*, *The Shakespeare Newsletter*, and *Early Modern Culture*; and the performance history section of the Arden third series introduction to *The Tempest*.⁸ The reviews and performance history opened students' minds to what was possible in performance, while the guidelines taught them the conventions of academic reviews. Reviews focus student attention on the conventions of engaging *performance*, as separate and distinct from the conventions of engaging *text*. The two most important elements of engaging performance that I emphasized were crafting and articulating their response to performance critically beyond simply expressing praise or distaste, and recognizing that performance exists in many realms beyond the verbal or textual.

The **third** element of my pre-performance approach is a common technique: I embed performance into every discussion of the text. For example, while reading *Titus Andronicus*, I asked my students how Titus kills Lavinia, and then asked students to perform their suggestions as we discussed what was at stake in each choice—the physicality, the violence, the symbolism

involved in using a weapon or bare hands, and the (horrifying) possibility that one might choose to stage a Lavinia not fully complicit in her death. Discussions like this helped students learn how to read a performance, understand that multiple possible interpretations exist for any textual moment, and appreciate the ways in which actors, designers, and directors collaborate to construct a performance. Relatedly, I encouraged students to use performance to solve textual conundrums. When students were confused by the multiple secondary characters in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, I asked them to imagine they were cutting the play for performance. Each group was assigned a character or scene and asked what was at stake in cutting that character or scene.² This activity mimics the collaborative process of production design and helps students understand the possibilities inherent in performance as a means of solving textual problems.

Fourth, to leaven my performance-based approaches, I incorporated performance studies readings. I assigned the introductory chapter of W. B. Worthen's *Shakespeare Performance Studies*.¹⁰ My goal was to provide theory-based justification for decentering the text before students entered the theatre, preparing them to encounter the performance on its own terms. I have found most students treat theatre much as they do lecture: they see themselves as passive audience members, there to receive information, and not as interactive participants in an ongoing, mutable event. Discussing how Worthen presents Lehmann's description of postmodern theatre as a movement from *work* to *event* challenged this passivity. We spent considerable class time unpacking this quotation: "This framework of performative signification clearly extends well beyond the text, having more to do with the ideological structuring of an event in which the text plays a part" (Worthen 7). I provided context about CSC's new theatre,

built as part of a controversial revitalization of a neighborhood north of downtown Cincinnati, and invited the class to ponder what the ideological structure of a performance in this building might be.¹¹ I was hemmed in by time constraints. To have truly laid the community historical groundwork for this discussion would have required further limiting the course time spent on Shakespeare. But students did suggest in their course evaluations that they found themselves thinking more richly about theatre, attentive not just to what's happening to Shakespeare on stage, but also, to what's happening to Cincinnati and CSC through a production of a Shakespeare play.

To help frame performance as *event*, my **fifth** pre-performance activity is to discuss the physical space of the theatre. We compared the theatres students had been to with the very different spatial reality of early modern theatres. The concept of universal lighting, illustrated with images from the ASC's Blackfriars theatre, was particularly startling to my students, altering their understanding of performance as something observed by the audience but not engaged with by them. Here, I introduced Erika Fischer-Lichte's concept of the "autopoietic feedback loop" by which spectator response shapes performer action and performer action reshapes spectator response, thus creating the dynamic of live performance itself (Fischer-Lichte 38). Worthen urges us to think of theatre as "productive," in that "the theatre frames performance as an event, speaking not merely *to* the spectator but also *through* the spectator's agency in the performance" (Worthen 7). Discussing this with students, I underscored that, in attending theatre, they are not simply receiving information, nor is their only engagement "interpretation." Spectators have agency and can actively contribute to and shape performance.

This conversation primed my students to visit CSC’s Otto M. Budig Theatre. With its deep thrust stage and only six rows of seats, audience members can clearly see one another during the performance, and actors can clearly see audience members’ faces. For a theatre that seats 240, it feels incredibly intimate, and that intimacy exists not just between actor and audience member, but among and between audience members as well. Once my students had attended a performance, because they had the vocabulary of Worthen, Lehmann, and Fischer-Lichte, they were able to begin commenting on the power and dynamism of performance as a mutable event, shaped mutually by audience and performers.

Attending the Performance and Processing the Experience

At this point, having (1) engaged with the text using performance tools; (2) considered the conventions of writing theatre reviews; (3) consistently used performance to help interpret textual cruxes; (4) surveyed introductory performance studies readings and concepts; and (5) analyzed the significance of theatre’s physical space, we saw *Titus Andronicus* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. I required students to arrive thirty minutes before the show, giving them time to move through the lobby, consider the theatre’s geographic location in the city, and take field notes as they observed other patrons arriving. Students were instructed to consider accompanying materials—program, flyers, headshots in the lobby, etc.—as well as overheard conversations between other patrons and what the space of the theatre felt like before, during, and after the performance. These field notes generated a post-show reflective journal that addressed the physical space of the theatre and the experience of being an audience member. I

invited students to ponder the social experience of encountering Shakespeare in a theatre with two hundred other people, rather than alone, hunched over a text. They were to address the local nature of the theatre, asking to what extent this was recognizable as a *Cincinnati* performance.¹² These notes and journal entries constituted the **first** post-performance engagement (see [Appendix A](#)). The field notes not only helped students actively process the performance, but also engaged their attention with more than just what was happening on stage. The journal allowed them a space to work through their initial reactions without the constraint of formal critique.

As a **second** post-show writing assignment, students wrote a four-page paper analyzing a specific element or moment of the performance (see [Appendix B](#)). They were to consider how that element/moment surprised, delighted, or distressed them and examine what performance brought to the narrative that text alone could not. I emphasized that this was not merely intended to be a critique of how the performance interpreted the text, but instead, an opportunity to view the whole experience of the performance as meaningful in its own right.

The **third** post-production engagement comprised in-class discussions to help students process the experience of attending live theatre. I led these discussions with questions that focused student attention on the liveness, eventness, and mutability of the performances, such as, “Name one thing about the performance that was meaningful and unrelated to the text,” and “At any point, did the audience response change how you felt about what you were seeing onstage?” After discussing our second trip to the theatre, I asked students to email me a brief response to the prompt, “What does a Shakespeare theatre company contribute to its community?” The students spoke of the theatre as a mark of pride for the community that gave them insight into

Cincinnati as well as Shakespeare. Some argued that performances build empathy and commended the theatre's accessibility. Over and over, they emphasized how the physical space of the building and the makeup of the resident ensemble embodied community. I summarized the students' main recurring ideas and shared them with the class, framing a discussion within my institution's Jesuit values of solidarity and kinship while also putting their conviction that CSC was *building* community into conversation with performance studies notions centering performance as an *event* co-created by audience and artist. In connecting the class's ideas to a mission-centered value, I used language from the Jesuit tradition that my students, in their third or fourth year at Xavier, were already very familiar with. This helped cement the relevance of the course material to student lives.

Challenges and Opportunities

While the course worked well, there were definitely areas for improvement. Many plans were derailed by two obstacles. The first is obvious: time. I regularly cut more challenging elements (such as reading Fischer-Lichte) in favor of more instantly gratifying ones (asking students to view multiple recorded performances of a single play). The second major road block was more particular: I committed to teaching the Shakespeare plays CSC had on their fall 2019 schedule: *Titus Andronicus* and *Merry Wives of Windsor*. Odd bedfellows to be sure, but I almost always teach *Titus* in my Shakespeare class, and *Merry Wives* made for a compelling case study in staging less-familiar Shakespeare. I only belatedly considered the particular challenge viewing *Titus* live presented to my students. Several disclosed to me that they had experienced traumas

related to sexual violence. I ended up redesigning the lead-up to our first in-theatre experience by centering content warnings, preparatory discussions, alternate assignment opportunities and more.¹³

I was luckily able to bring together some of the hasty redesign with the original goals of the course, in particular through incorporating the participation of CSC actors. Maggie Lou Rader, who played Lavinia, shared a description of the blocking for some of the more violent scenes, so that students who wished could arm themselves in advance with an understanding of what the confrontation would look like. We spent class time discussing how actors work together physically, what a “fight call” means, and how minutely actor contact is choreographed. Patrick Earl Phillips, a talented local actor and former student of mine, was playing Demetrius, and he and Rader came together to visit my class. They spoke openly and honestly with my students about the work they do to craft the scenes the students were about to see performed. They described how they make decisions about movement, and how the design team works together to create an experience for the audience. Additionally, I shared with the visiting actors some of the principles we’d been learning about in our performance studies reading—performance as experience, as socially constructed, as dependent on audience—and asked them to respond. It helped immeasurably for students to hear actors’ takes on these principles. While I regret not assigning and discussing more performance studies readings, I am grateful for the opportunity to rethink approaching a potentially traumatizing performance, and to involve actors in our conversations about work vs. event and decentering the text.

Reflection

Did I succeed in getting my students to think about Shakespeare *at* the performance? In some ways, yes. Perhaps the greatest win for many students was a new appreciation of the physicality of performance. Much of our post-show debriefings centered on the compelling movements of the actors—their gestures, their smiles, their fights, and more. We discussed the awareness of bodily co-presence that being in the theatre space for live performance creates, and analyzed how it enhanced our appreciation for and understanding of the play.

In their course evaluations, I asked students to comment on what attending live performance added to the course. The majority of the responses focused on how performance enhanced their understanding of the text and its possible meanings, which, while nice to hear, still centers the text and only scratches the surface of what performance can do. A handful of students, though, noted some of the deeper impacts, such as creating a richer sense of community in the classroom and connecting the individual students more firmly with the local arts community. I am hopeful that future iterations of this class will evidence more rich responses like these. In particular, I think dedicating more class time to engaging the complex history of the arts in Cincinnati will make a difference here.

When I designed this course, I considered what Jessica Winston describes as a “continuum” of ideas about text and performance in relation to each other, which “prioritizes textual interpretation (at one end) and the contingencies of performance (at the other)” (297). I visualized myself at this latter end, beckoning the students toward an understanding of the eventness of performance. But in retrospect, I see I was actually deploying more of what

Winston calls “situated interpretation,” which “emphasizes the importance of the text” and “equally promotes the idea that performance emerges out of legacies and contexts that exist outside a text, including iterations of the play in editions, the history of the play in performance, the history of the performance company, the exigencies of the theatrical space, and broader political and social issues and trends” (300). Knowing this, I can more clearly enter into a future version of the class that prioritizes those “broader political and social issues” and the contextualized nature of a performance in Cincinnati.

This course design was experimental and is constantly under reconstruction. The COVID-19 pandemic introduced many new ways to think about performance and liveness, and university budget cuts loom that could threaten our access to Bloomsbury Drama Online. Regardless of what may come, I assert the value of this experience. As I refine this ambitious design, I continue to work toward bridging the gap from classroom discussions of performance to a critically engaged experience of live performance, as I feel this bridge is an undeniable good. In a July 2020 webinar, “Teaching Anti-Racism Through Shakespeare,” Ayanna Thompson argued we must connect Shakespeare to our students’ very real, contemporary concerns related to their lived experiences, or we risk him becoming yet another outdated statue to be torn down. I firmly believe that teaching Shakespeare *at* the performance is one way to do just this: to connect students’ classroom experiences of reading the text to an embedded and embodied experience engaging with the arts at work in a community. I hope that such experience cultivates in them the spirit of local arts activists and public scholars, engaged citizens invested in enriching the communities where they live.

Appendix A: Performance Journal Assignment Sheet

You will be completing a performance journal based upon **field notes** you take at the theatre and during the performance. Here is how to do that:

- You must arrive at least 30 minutes prior to curtain.
- Come equipped with a small notebook or bundle of scrap paper and pen.
- Explore the building, the two-level lobby, the restrooms, the artwork on the walls.
- Observe the theatre patrons as they arrive. What are they like demographically? What is the mood/atmosphere of the theatre? Are people being social or quiet? Does it feel formal, reserved, casual, exuberant, familiar, alien?
- By ten minutes before curtain, take your seat. Continue your field notes in the theatre. What does the space look like? How are people reacting as they enter the theatre? Where are you sitting, and what's your perspective on the performance space from there?
- Look at the set, the lighting, listen for any music. What sort of mood is being established in the theatre?
- Once the performance begins, take notes on what you see, hear, smell, noting anything that strikes you onstage, in the audience, or in your own emotional responses.
- During intermission, listen to the conversations in the bathroom line, at the bar, in the lobby. How are people responding to the show?
- After the show ends, look around the theatre again to see/hear how people respond.
- When you get home or early the next day, pull out your notes and review them. Type them up, fleshing out incomplete thoughts, putting notes from early in the evening in the context of what you learned as the performance progressed. These are your polished observation notes.
- If you haven't had the chance yet, you should carefully examine the program at this stage. You may also want to look at the theatre's website and social media profiles (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram), examining how the show has been marketed.

For the **performance journal**, submit a 500-word reflection on the experience of seeing *Titus Andronicus* in person. You can comment on any aspects of the evening that were of interest to you. This needn't be analytical; you will also write a critical performance response in which you'll offer a close reading of a particular interpretive choice. This is more general, more varied, and more personal. This also isn't a performance review. Again: this is your individual diary entry about having seen the play.

Appendix B: Critical Performance Response Assignment Sheet

All students will write a 3-4 page critical response to the production we are seeing at the theatre.

The key word here is **critical**. This is not an emotion-driven reflection on the experience of seeing the play staged (you do that in your performance journal), nor is it a review of the quality of the performance; rather, it's a scholarly, intellectual engagement with the production. Consider the performance and design choices that the actors and production team made. Consider lighting, sound, and costume as well as how various actors perform the roles they are assigned. Look at the set, consider what has been cut from the play for performance. How do these actors handle a fairly unfamiliar play from Shakespeare's canon? How do they handle the violence? All that Latin?

Your response need not be thesis-driven in a traditional sense, but it must be more than a series of disconnected observations. Focus is key. It's a long play, and you won't be able to write about everything. Choose **one** scene, a handful of moments, one design element, or a particular character, and focus your critical response on that. You should be commenting on how this production—be it in design or performance—highlights certain themes in the play, engages with either Shakespearean or contemporary ideas/traditions, or challenges or supports your understanding of the text. In short: what did you gain from seeing the play performed?

Other prompts to consider:

- What interpretive choices did the production make that surprised you or altered your understanding of a character?
- What is the dynamic in the theatre like? How does pacing shift?
- What theatrical tricks are used to convey the passage of time?
- Do the actors break the fourth wall and engage with you?

Remember, the text will show itself to be different than you thought when you're sitting in a theatre, hearing it and witnessing it in the hands and mouths of talented actors. Pay attention to that: what is being made new for you? And how, as an audience member at a live performance, are you contributing to that remaking?

Notes

¹ CSC is an SPT 5+, or a small professional theatre, as categorized by the Actors Equity Association.

² I administered an anonymous survey at the end of the course. One of the questions on it was “Was \$20/play too much to expect students to pay to see the show?” Only one of the 16 respondents, or 6.25% of the class enrollment, chose “It was almost prohibitive.” Five of the sixteen respondents checked “It was OK/I made it work” response (31.25%), while 10 students (62.5%) chose “Nope, totally worth it.” A few commented that while worth it, it required budgetary planning, or that it was completely manageable and reasonable *because* they didn’t have to also pay for textbooks.

³ In her essay, Winston discusses a continuum of “ideas of the text’s relationship to performance,” ranging from “prioritize[ing] textual interpretation (at one end) [to] the contingencies of performance (at the other)” (297). I sought to design assignments for each end of this continuum.

⁴ I always strive to teach one each of comedy, romance, history, and tragedy. In a non-performance-based semester, I teach five plays, the fifth of which students get to vote in. For a final exam in all of my Shakespeare classes, students have to read a Shakespeare play independently and write a 3-4 page essay putting it into conversation with what we read collectively in the course.

⁵ In her essay in this issue, Elizabeth Charlebois rightly notes that “film is no substitute for attending a live performance” (11). I fully agree, but I find this a useful conversation to have

with the students. In particular, it's helpful to contrast the different ways their experience is shaped by viewing 1) a cinematic Shakespeare film; 2) a recorded live stage performance; 3) a live performance in-person at a theatre. In both the first and second case, as Charlebois notes, viewer perception is controlled by where the camera focuses. Additionally, as I note later in this essay, the distance between performer and audience offered by a camera and a screen dulls our appreciation for the embodied nature of performance. My students' fascination with the physicality of the CSC actors' performances allowed me to return to this claim after we'd seen the live productions.

⁶See also Rizzio, Rocklin, and the many amazing educator resources put out by major theatres, such as the Globe, the RSC, and the American Shakespeare Center.

⁷Kevin Quarmby's reviewer guidelines are available on *Scene*'s criteria for submissions (see Quarmby in Works Cited).

⁸This use of performance history is a well-established pedagogical tool. See, for example, Howlett.

⁹I owe thanks especially to Elizabeth Zeman Kolkovich for this exercise, which I borrowed from her, adapted, and used with permission.

¹⁰In a future semester, I would want to include a broader introduction, with not only Worthen but also short pieces from texts such as Bial and Brady, Carlson, and Schechner.

¹¹In September 2017, CSC opened their new theatre on a site formerly occupied by the Drop Inn Shelter, a much-loved community homeless shelter. The optics of this—even though the Drop Inn Shelter moved north a few years earlier—are not entirely positive. At the same time, CSC's

new theatre is part of both a classic arts corridor in Cincinnati—it's in the same block now as the famous Cincinnati Music Hall, home of the symphony; not far from the ballet; and near Memorial Hall, a classic concert hall—and part of a continuing revitalization of the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood that has been openly criticized as gentrification or “re-*white*-ification.”

¹² Further prompts included: Were there local references? Indications that the actors were members of the community in which the students also live? Sociability among audience members who could be loosely described as neighbors?

¹³ Ultimately, all of my students attended and almost all thoroughly enjoyed the production. But it was rough, and I often questioned the ethics of what I was doing. I think this is a challenge those more entrenched in the experience of performance-based pedagogy may be richly familiar with already. For me, it was a rude awakening. I was grateful for Sharon James's work for guidance here.

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“Shakespeare is for Everyone”: Teaching Regional Productions through the Digital Performance Archive

Jayne Yeo
Belmont University

The past decade has witnessed increasing critical interest in local iterations of Shakespeare in performance, from adaptations around the world to regional American shows (cf. Orkin; Edmondson; O’Leary and Yeo). Within these venues, performances become an exercise in artistic identity-making through ownership of the global phenomenon of “Shakespeare,” a community endeavor that is embedded, both geographically and anthropologically, within the local or regional context (Brokaw). At the same time, these productions challenge and expand our sense of Shakespeare’s work, frequently through integrating local visual, aural, or cultural appropriations: a regional colloquialism dropped into a line or a local landmark recreated onstage (O’Leary and Yeo 323).

For teachers of Shakespeare without easy access to the stages of New York, London, or Stratford, this shift to the local makes good sense: the local live production is a common feature of Shakespeare syllabi. And yet, despite this ubiquity, our approach to teaching local live performances is curiously undertheorized. In critical work and classrooms alike, performance pedagogy instead focuses on student performance and filmed productions (Winston 290-291). There are, of course, good reasons for these pedagogical approaches. Acting out scenes invites students to grapple with the linguistic and interpretive challenges of the written text while

simultaneously awakening them to its embodied politics and emotional capabilities (Thompson and Turchi). Comparing filmed productions clarifies meaning by demonstrating one or more performative options (Eggers 273). However, both approaches treat performance less as an object of analysis in its own right than a supportive feature that posits the written text as fundamentally “Shakespeare,” while performed texts are coded as “interpretations.” While there is some validity to this idea, an uncritical acceptance of it endorses the belief in an “authentic” or “original” written text that performance merely explicates. Taken too far, this approach not only elides the collaborative messiness of early modern writing, but also relegates performance, in the words of W.B. Worthen, to “a ‘presentation’ of something that already exists, a *‘kind of commentary’* supplementing (or degrading) the written work of art” (75).

For our students, the result can be an implicit devaluing of local live performances, which are gauged against an unexamined ideal. This ideal claims a stake in the written text, as explicated by what Martin Orkin has influentially called “the Shakespeare metropolis”: major European or North American productions and the cultural and academic apparatus that surrounds them (1). Accustomed to the high polish of Hollywood films, students may equate professional talent with artistic merit, and so overlook the cultural work of community theatre. Student expectations may also be influenced by a desire to recover or retain an “original” production, or even authorial intention. These expectations often result in style preferences that are based on a limited or inaccurate understanding of early modern stage practices.

The task for regional educators, then, is to help students lay aside these preferences in order to see the performance as *itself* the textual object, one that does not merely interpret

meaning but also creates it (see O’Leary and Yeo). To accomplish this task, we must slow down student encounters with the live performance. For several years, my colleagues and I have been attempting to do just that through the Nashville Shakespeare Performance Archive (<https://shakespeare.belmont.edu/>), an online archive built and curated by our students at Belmont University. In this project, students collect visual and audio material from the Nashville Shakespeare Festival’s annual productions and build a website archiving each year’s performance. In the process, students catalog video footage, interviews, photos, musical scores, set models, costume sketches, and other elements of the production. My colleagues and I argue elsewhere that this project, particularly in its early years, emphasized multimodal analysis and helped students become aware of both the interpretive features of archival work and the adaptive capabilities of Shakespeare in performance (McDonald, Overall, and Yeo 132–35, 139–40). However, as the project has developed in recent years, I wanted to challenge student notions of Shakespearean authenticity more directly and encourage students to consider productions as texts in their own right, and so in 2019-20 we redesigned the project. This article discusses the key strategies and learning outcomes of the 2019-20 redesign. I argue that, in addition to challenging authenticity, the redesigned project helps students identify how regional Shakespeare contributes to local artistic identity. This approach finally democratizes Shakespeare for our students, moving them away from the notion of an “original” Shakespeare and toward a better understanding of Shakespeare’s work as a collaborative worldwide endeavor.

History and Overview

The Nashville Shakespeare Performance Archive was first built by our students in 2016 and each successive year has added to it. Launched through the support of an NEH-funded Folger Institute mini-grant, the project spans two classes and involves three faculty members: myself, early modernist Marcia McDonald, and digital rhetorician Joel Overall. Through this collaboration, students collect and curate audio and visual material from a local Shakespeare production and build a set of webpages that archive and interpret the performance each year.

The project follows a relatively stable chronology. Students in the Shakespeare class (taught in some years by McDonald and other years by myself) begin by watching the production at the beginning of the Fall semester and then divide into groups based on their interest in various production elements such as set design, costumes, music, etc. In these groups, students review production photos provided by the Nashville Shakespeare Festival, record interviews, photograph set mockups and costume sketches, and write stage histories and academic performance reviews. After collecting this data, students in the Shakespeare class annotate it and turn it in before writing a final reflection at the end of the semester. In the Spring semester, students in the Digital Literacies class (taught by Overall) learn HTML coding, video editing, and web design before using the performance data to build a set of webpages for the play. As part of this process, each student drafts a proposed logo and website design that reflects each year's performance aesthetics, for instance coloring a logo with the same vibrant hues of the set in order to highlight the whimsy of a comedy. Once a final logo and design are chosen by student vote, the students divide into groups that each create a webpage focused on a specific

element of the show. Each webpage features edited videos, photos, and copy text ([Figure 1](#) and [Figure 2](#)). The end result is a set of pages added each year that highlight different elements of that year’s production. The two classes are not “linked”: students may take one or both if they choose, and in fact most students only enroll in one class.¹



Figure 1. Screenshot from “Homepage.” “The Tempest,” *Nashville Shakespeare Performance Archive*, Fall 2019, shakespeare.belmont.edu/tempest/. Licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode). No changes have been made to this image. Photo credit Malkin, Rick. Prospero. Nashville Shakespeare Festival, Nashville Tennessee.



Figure 2. Screenshot from Lanz, Alexandra, Meg Barron, and Kayleigh Rucinski.

“Direction.” “The Tempest,” *Nashville Shakespeare Performance Archive*, Fall 2019,

shakespeare.belmont.edu/tempest/direction.html. Licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

(creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode). No changes have been made to this

image. Photo credit Malkin, Rick. *The Tempest* at ONECITY and the masque from *The*

Tempest. Nashville Shakespeare Festival, Nashville Tennessee.

Redesign

The 2019-20 redesign of this format coincided with the Nashville Shakespeare Festival's late summer production of *The Tempest*. The production had several features commented on by the students, but perhaps the most notable of these was the venue itself: ONEC1TY, a mixed-use property with an amphitheater stage surrounded by walkways, landscaping, and residential and commercial buildings. The stage is crowned by an architectural 3D printed sculpture, a geometric canopy arching 20 feet over the stage and narrowing to three pillars at its base ([Figure 3](#)). The structure's design leaves the backstage space open to audience view, and so a notable feature of the show was the near-continual presence of actors circulating amid the landscaping and the audience. While some students felt this placed them "on the island" with the characters, others found it distracting to ward off a popcorn-begging sprite or to watch a forlorn Ferdinand sitting atop his wood pile when not onstage.



Figure 3. Malkin, Rick. Photograph of *The Tempest* at ONEC1TY. Nashville Shakespeare Festival, Nashville, Tennessee.

To archive this play, our redesign began by rebranding the Shakespeare class, offered in previous years as a survey with the title “Shakespeare: Representative Plays.” The rebranded class, “Shakespeare on Stage and Screen,” focused on performance, covering six plays rather than ten. The class included readings on stage history, adaptation, and global Shakespeare, as well as work on archives by Jacques Derrida, Amy Earhart, and Barbara Hodgdon. Required reading also featured at least two full filmed productions for each play drawn from a diverse

selection of Hollywood productions, staged performances, modern-language adaptations, and translations. Most plays featured at least one well-known or conventional production alongside a nontraditional version to illuminate how less mainstream performances reshape the work of Shakespeare in unexpected ways. An extended unit on *Macbeth*, for instance, allowed students to compare Rupert Goold's 2010 production alongside global adaptations such as Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (1967) and Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (2004), as well as consider marginalized productions such as Tom Magill's *Mickey B* (2007), a modern-language adaptation written and acted by people incarcerated in Northern Ireland's Maghaberry Prison. Students also investigated productions for which there is limited or no access to full filmed versions, such as Emursive's production of Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More* (2011) and Manit Sriwanichpoom's *Shakespeare Must Die* (2012). These investigations gave students firsthand experience of a production through its artefacts, informing their understanding of the work of an archive and challenging their notion of what constitutes "performance" beyond "the Shakespeare metropolis."

Another important element of our redesign included the decision to offer both the Shakespeare and the Digital Literacies classes concurrently rather than consecutively. We facilitated two "concept and design" meetings between the students during the semester, which solidified the Shakespeare students' roles as interpreters and creators as they articulated their artistic vision for the archive. In their final reflections, the Shakespeare students often remarked on how the archive did or did not "capture" their sense of the production. One student, for instance, expressed disappointment that the design for her page departed from her idea of the

“family-friendly and appealing” show and instead featured “more serious elements of the plot and characters.” This back-and-forth between the two classes ultimately enabled both populations of students to articulate how the archive represents and mediates the show through images, graphic design, music, and text. As they did so, students began to realize that the archive itself creates a meaningful experience for its audience that alters the production it attempts to preserve (see McDonald, Overall, and Yeo 139).

Student Learning Outcomes

Challenging Authenticity

One of the earliest and most pronounced student learning outcomes from this class is a revised understanding of Shakespearean authenticity. In their final reflections, students commented frequently on their evolving conceptions of what constitutes “Shakespeare.” Several students, for instance, noted they entered the class with a preference for period settings and costumes. One student remarked that before she took the class she evaluated Shakespearean productions against “a strict sense of renaissance-themed productions,” which biased her against “abstract performances.” Other students remarked that their early expectations of Shakespeare in performance relied on a mistaken notion of authorial intention: “I came into this class believing that to do Shakespeare well, one had to find and stay true to Shakespeare’s original intent for the production. That’s the only right way to do it, right? Well, it is not nearly so simple.” These students substituted their expectations with a more expansive sense of Shakespeare in performance. One student who initially envisioned Shakespeare productions as involving

“period-costumed” actors noted: “Now when I think of Shakespeare I think of an all-black cast playing a politically charged *Much Ado about Nothing* in Central Park or Alexis Denisof doing push-ups in black and white to impress his Beatrice.” In other words, these students substituted expectations enmeshed in a mistaken notion of historicity or intentionality for an openness to performance diversity.

Contextualized Performance

This relinquishing of an “authentic” Shakespeare paved the way for a new understanding of performance as shaped within a local—sometimes hyperlocal—context. Students are awakened to this fact through interviews, an activity that we retained from the original course design. While students often interview cast and crew members as part of their group work, we always invite a key member of the production for a whole-class interview. For *The Tempest*, we interviewed Denice Hicks, executive artistic director of the Nashville Shakespeare Festival and director of the show. Several students commented on how their conversation with Hicks enabled them to reevaluate elements of the show, including the offstage presence of the actors:

In her interview, Hicks stresses the importance of immersive theater and interaction with the audience while producing Shakespeare. This is clearly seen in her creative decisions.

In her interpretation of *The Tempest*, the spirits roam around the crowd and interact with the audience . . . Since [ONECITY] doesn’t provide a backstage, audience members feel as if they are part of the production and not just observing.

This student came to understand how the infrastructural limitations of ONECITY offered opportunities for a creative response in keeping with the mission and values of the company, emphasizing accessibility through audience engagement. Students came away from their conversation with Hicks understanding that, far from replicating an idealized version of the written text, Shakespeare productions converse just as often with their own immediate contexts as meaning is shaped by and within them.

Regional Shakespeare

Given this new understanding of localized performance context, it is perhaps unsurprising that students also reassessed their valuation of the artistic work of the regional company, viewing regional productions—and the archives that memorialize them—as a form of grassroots artistic activism. From the first iteration of this project in 2016, we have emphasized for students that a Nashville performance archive shines a light on Southern contributions to global understandings of Shakespeare in performance (McDonald, Overall, and Yeo 132-33). One assignment from the 2019 project redesign, adapted and augmented from previous years, invited students to consider the mission of the Nashville Shakespeare Performance Archive in relation to the missions of larger, more centralized archives. In their responses students articulated how, as Christie Carson has pointed out, small-scale productions can be lost or overlooked in larger, more centralized collections (263). Students began asking questions about how and why some productions, like those in global archives or staged in major metropolises, are featured prominently in stage histories, while others, including regional productions like their own, are lost or overlooked.

While acknowledging regionality as a small-scale operation, students asserted that regional archives work not in competition with larger projects but rather as supplements and respondents to them. One student referenced Amy Earhart’s distinction between large-scale and small-scale data sets in digital projects to explore the mission of regional archives:

There are inequitable distributions between small-scale and large-scale data sets, since large-scale projects receive the proper funding. Small-scale data sets are more carefully curated but are often referred to as amateur projects . . . Earhart believes both forms of data sets are working to present and organize information and need to be treated as flip sides of the same argument . . . small-scale data sets are better at honoring the histories and specificities of the cultures represented due to more careful curation practices.

For this student, the task of the regional archive, akin to the task of regional Shakespeare, is thoughtful self-representation of a local community, a way of affirming Nashville’s identity as an artistic and cultural force in the world. The thought is echoed by another student who noted that “archives are preserving performances all over the world. I fully believe Shakespeare is for everyone . . . I think an archive only enriches the world of Shakespeare and proves how his work is timeless.” As another student suggested, the archive demonstrates “how Nashville is adding to the discussion of Shakespeare . . . our small city is engaging with an even bigger community.”

Democratizing Shakespeare

These discussions gesture towards the possibility of a more inclusive scholarly understanding of Shakespeare in performance, something akin to what Matthew L. Jockers

argues results from a macroanalytical approach to texts (24-32). By creating and analyzing large-scale textual data sets, Jockers asserts that we might better contextualize canonical works by understanding their place in larger trends. We might also, he adds, uncover “details that are otherwise unavailable, forgotten, ignored, or impossible to extract” (Jockers 27). Translated to Shakespeare in performance, the kind of data embedded in local and global performance archives create the possibility of more comprehensive assessments of the diverse cultural engagements of Shakespeare in performance by expanding the focus of scholarly inquiry to include not only major productions but also global and local trends and influences (cf. Huang 42). Indeed, much information, including local popular tastes, regional aesthetics, and even large-scale shifts in artistic styles, cannot be obtained or accurately assessed without access to diverse and widespread production data.

Student articulations of this kind of scholarly inclusivity surfaced as a revelation: that Shakespeare’s work is open to multihistorical, multicultural, and multilocal iterations. The phrase “Shakespeare is for everyone” echoed through several student reflections, serving as kind of marker for celebrating performance diversity. As one student writes:

This class has allowed me to have a completely new understanding of the work of Shakespeare and its amazing potential to impact people from any part of the world at any point in time. “Shakespeare” is no longer just a man who lived 400 years ago and wrote English in a strange way. “Shakespeare” is a small group of people performing *The Tempest* in Nashville, Tennessee; it is a Japanese director creating a radical adaptation of *Macbeth*; it is a TV show that turns the plays into 40-minute, Modern English episodes.

The work of Shakespeare is larger than the man, and this is something I never realized until this class.

For this student, the multivocality of Shakespeare enables her own local community of Nashville to participate in the larger project of democratizing Shakespeare. This project shifts meaning-making away from Shakespeare “the man,” instead grounding performance in a richer understanding of multilocal meanings created through the interactions of culturally-embedded artists and audiences.

Conclusion

As we have developed this project over the past several years, we have been struck by how it mimics both the risks and opportunities of performance itself. As Alexa Alice Joubin, quoting Barbara Hodgdon, points out, “plays are open sites where ‘textual obligation’ meet ‘performative options,’” and in much the same way, our own pedagogical work becomes and remains an open site of performative options that we continue to explore in collaboration with our students (Huang 48). Ultimately, the cultural specificity of Shakespeare in performance democratizes Shakespeare, and indeed theatre itself, through making Shakespeare’s work both accessible and relevant to our students. It replaces the urge to compare productions of Shakespeare against an impossible and uncritical ideal text, and, rather than capturing *what* Shakespeare means, begins investigating *how* Shakespeare means. The result is a greater appreciation for regional Shakespeare: those smaller, nontraditional, and/or nonprofessional

productions that both shape and are shaped by their local contexts as they expand and redefine our understanding of Shakespeare's work today.

Note

¹For an expanded account of the initial years of this collaboration, along with specific assignment descriptions, see McDonald, Overall, and Yeo.

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Teaching All-Female and Non-Binary Shakespeare at the Performance

Allison Machlis Meyer
Seattle University

Cross-gender and all-female cast productions have become a vibrant part of twenty-first century theater's animating of Shakespeare for modern audiences. For college teachers integrating the viewing of live performances into their classrooms, local productions featuring imaginative gender play through casting choices can often speak more immediately to students than traditional productions. As numerous scholars suggest, adapting course approaches to students' perspectives and providing what Jessica Walker calls "an accessible, inclusive, socially conscious, useful Shakespeare" are important aspects of teaching Shakespeare to all twenty-first century students and to marginalized students in particular (208).¹ And as the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies' "The Qualities of Mercy Project" demonstrates, regionally-specific classroom performance pedagogies can productively dismantle myths of Shakespearean universality, prioritize students' local knowledge and community concerns, and empower students to appropriate Shakespeare's work in the ways they need.² Performances that raise questions about identity through all-female, non-binary, and non-traditional casting can contribute to more culturally-responsive classrooms and help teachers better serve their female, femme-identified, non-binary, trans, and queer students, and students of color. This essay outlines my approach to teaching a recent upper-level literature course, "Early

Modern Drama on the Modern Stage,” that studied Shakespeare through the experimental work of two Seattle-area production companies—upstart crow collective and The Fern Shakespeare Company—using racially diverse all-female and non-binary casts. I explain the course’s two major collaborative projects, argue for the importance of intentionally framing such inclusively-cast productions, and describe the enlivened learning that emerges from students’ creative and analytical engagements with the local voices of modern Shakespearean performance, which can offer representations of their identities in live theater within their own communities.

Course Design, Approach, and Assignments

The genesis of this course is twofold: my access to a unique teaching resource in a local all-female and non-binary production company committed to reimagining classical plays for a modern audience and the generative work of a 2018 Shakespeare Association of America seminar on “Teaching Shakespeare at the Performance.” Founded by my Seattle University colleague Rosa Joshi, Kate Wisniewski and Betsy Schwartz, upstart crow collective has produced all-female and non-binary cast plays in Seattle since 2006. In the past I have incorporated their live performances into my Shakespeare class in a supplemental rather than primary way, such as taking students to see their 2017 two-part adaptation of the *Henry VI* plays, *Bring Down the House*, after studying *2 Henry VI*. The transformative experience of teaching *Bring Down the House* in such a context motivated me to better prioritize upstart-crow’s all-female and non-binary productions.³ I also wanted to more fully realize Ayanna Thompson and Laura Turchi’s student-centered and culturally-responsive approach to using performance and

discussing embodiment in the classroom. Thompson and Turchi advocate for classroom pedagogies, including performance-based approaches, that engage students' documented interests in an “*explicit exploration of identity*”—which they identify as an important “twenty-first century habit of learning” (*Teaching Shakespeare* 5) valued by students—through the use of “intentional frames” (*Teaching Shakespeare* 18) that foreground rather than gloss over discussions of difference. A Shakespeare class devoted to embodiment in local performance suggested an intentional frame where students might “grappl[e] productively with race, gender, ability, and sexuality” and see “notions of difference” as critical rather than tangential to the study of Shakespeare, but I was unsure how best to accomplish these goals within my English department's curricular needs (Thompson and Turchi, “Embodiment,” 730, 731).⁴ The work of my fellow SAA seminar participants Niamh O’Leary and Jayme Yeo, whose essays are also featured in this roundtable, offered particularly useful models: Yeo’s class on archiving the Nashville Shakespeare Festival’s performances pointed me toward a public-facing framework featuring a local production company, while O’Leary’s five-step in-class preparation process for studying Shakespeare at the live performance was invaluable to my assignment design.⁵

In my course, we studied four plays in-depth: *Richard III* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, which allowed us to see two live, local performances, and *Julius Caesar* and *The Tempest*, which both have long, rich histories of all-female or cross-gender performances and productions by female directors Phyllida Lloyd and Julie Taymor available on film. I designed assignments typical of an upper-level English course, including short papers to strengthen close reading, as well as experimental projects to capitalize on our access to local theater, including an audience

guide and a collaborative theater review. Students began this scaffolded work with close analysis papers on passages from each play, assignments intended to deepen close reading skills, generate class discussion, and identify scholarly cruxes likely to be strongly interpreted through performance choices. Beginning with an interesting passage of their choice from the day's assigned reading, students first paraphrased and then analyzed the language of their selection with a focus, but not a thesis, in mind. The exploratory priorities of this assignment directed students to formulate questions and issues that remained playfully available for interpretation through performance. Class discussion of these passages directed our study of the play text, and generated an informal class list of moments that would require our careful attention during a performance. (For more on using scholarly cruxes as a starting point, see the roundtable essay by Elizabeth Charlebois.) Miriam Gilbert establishes the value of such "production-oriented writing assignments" as simple and three-fold: they "can increase the depth of students' close reading, can broaden students' awareness of interpretive choices, and can stimulate students' imagination" (316). I pursued similar goals with post-performance analyses that asked students to posit arguments about the production's interpretation of the play text and attend carefully to performance choices as evidence while focusing on those aspects of the production they found most compelling. These regular close analysis and performance analysis papers created the ground work for class discussions and the course's two large collaborative assignments, which I describe at length below.

My approach to using performance in the literature classroom relies on Jessica Winston's "situated interpretation," "in which performance is understood as an interpretation of a play that

is shaped in relation to the text, but which is also in conversation with traditions of reception in criticism and performance, as well as with contemporary social, artistic, and political concerns” (297).⁶ This view of performance as an interpretation shaped, in part, by performance histories is particularly important for student work on all-female and non-binary productions, which often cite or push back against established performance traditions, both of Shakespeare in general and of individual plays, and which have their own histories of navigating dominant expectations. As James N. Loehlin notes, introducing students to the performance histories of particular plays offers opportunities “to see how the cultural context of a production enables or precludes certain meanings,” and “can show how profoundly these plays have been transformed through performance in changing historical moments” (636). In the case of cross-gender and all-female casting, the history of one striking performance choice employed across a number of productions created in different historical moments and for different cultural purposes can do equally resonant pedagogical work. Like Cassie M. Muira’s reception-based approach, studying historical as well as modern responses to women and non-binary people embodying Shakespeare can help students interrogate both “the concept of canonicity and the origin of bardolatry” (49) as well as “their own assumptions about Shakespeare within the larger educational, cultural, and arts institutions that have shaped them” (46). My low stakes written assignments thus approached all-female and non-binary performances as situated interpretations within both a history of reception and a contemporary political moment. They also scaffolded key components of two major outward facing projects, a collaborative performance review for a scholarly journal and an audience guide.

The collaborative performance review proposed a reach beyond the confines of the college classroom and an opportunity for students to create publishable work together. O’Leary, reviews editor of *Early Modern Culture*, invited me to submit student reviews of our two live productions, and I organized this project to culminate in work we could send to the journal. In our first week, we studied the journal website and read theater reviews—including a collaborative one written by Ohio State students and Elizabeth Zeman Kolkovich—to discern generic conventions, find lively examples, and initiate a discussion of biases in our reception of plays. These examples normalized collaborative publication, gave students a concrete sense of the format for their final product, and created excitement. After writing individual performance analyses and discussing each production with the directors and actors, in the last three weeks students divided into two groups, one for each performance, and then again into subgroups of two writers each based on their interests. Four very structured in-class working days and specific task sheets provided a step-by-step process for revising their fourteen individual performance reviews into two collaborative reviews. Students commented on their peers’ individual analyses, decided upon a thematic concept for each collaboration, assigned writer pairings, and offered feedback for drafting before working in subgroups, and eventually, review groups. Our final exam period was devoted to proofreading and signing author contracts for *Early Modern Culture*, which became a moving and celebratory act for students—marked by picture-taking and texts to family and friends—that revealed their pride in writing for a scholarly public beyond the classroom.



Figure 1. (L-R) Sarah Harlett and Suzanne Bouchard in *Richard III* presented by Seattle Shakespeare Company and upstart crow collective. Photo by HMMM Productions.

The Audience Guide Project

The audience guide project posits two sets of readers beyond the class: the theater company practitioners and their audience members. Students were asked to take an academic approach that would complement each company's production materials, requiring them to familiarize themselves with the company's web presence, advertising, and published interviews while also deepening students' knowledge of performance theory and theater history on the topic

of cross-gender, all-female, and non-binary casting. The project was broken up into seven different components to demonstrate students' competencies with text, performance, history, and theory: 1) an account of the production situated within the history of cross-gender and all-female performance of Shakespeare; 2) an account of the production situated within relevant performance theory; 3) an informative history of the company's formation, mission, past performances and future plans; 4) a summary of journalistic reviews from local sources that synthesized evaluative assessments of the production; 5) a character or scene study; 6) a practitioner interview; 7) a concluding reflection on the students' historicized interpretation of the performance.

While performance-based pedagogies are frequently charged with ahistoricity, Loehlin observes that these approaches more often produce students' "awareness of the plays as situated in history: conditioned by the original circumstances of their performance, but also remade according to changing cultural conditions" (635).⁷ The audience guide project privileged students' personal engagement with the performances, but the intentional frames of its components sought to balance that attention with the local histories of production companies still fighting for recognition and the international histories of all-female production companies that lent context to the experiences of the practitioners we studied.⁸ In their situated and informative histories, for example, students connected The Fern Shakespeare Company and upstart crow collective's divergent vocabularies of representation to those of more well-known all-female Shakespeare companies. Whereas upstart crow collective explicitly avows a feminist agenda, a commitment to all-female and non-binary casting, and a desire to reformulate claims about

which bodies count under the rubric of Shakespearean universality, The Fern Shakespeare Company takes an approach that most students saw as akin to the “female creative stakeholders” described by Kim Solga, who “frequently insist on their allegiance to the ‘universal humanity’ critical norm” as a protective measure (105). Students grappled with the cast’s self-assessment, which embraced the authenticity of original practices and the authority of Shakespearean intentionality, described their aims as truth-telling and identified their casting process as finding the right person. This rhetoric positioned the production’s feminist possibilities as naturally emerging from Shakespearean universals without directorial intervention or intention.⁹

Loehlin’s position that students’ “awareness of the historical contingency” of theatrical effects “works against any complacent belief in the universal, unchanging, and ultimately conservative nature of Shakespearean drama” anticipates my students’ responses to The Fern’s self-positioning: eager to hear a directorial vision that included socio-political intention and familiar already with upstart crew collective’s different approach, they were thoughtfully skeptical (636). Students wrote on how such a position potentially foreclosed discussion of the interpretive effects of their two non-binary lead actors by identifying their casting as completely “blind” to gender. But examining The Fern Shakespeare Company’s explanatory vocabularies alongside international histories of female directors and the reception of cross-gender casting made visible the pressures placed upon female directors, all-female companies, and female and non-binary casts challenging gender expectations in the theater. The survey and summary of journalistic reviews component of the audience guide project was similarly valuable, as they revealed the sometime punitive local responses and public assumptions about what constitutes

“appropriate” staging of Shakespeare. Examining the contrasting self-representations of two production companies alongside their complex historical roots in theatrical and educational institutions framed these productions of *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Richard III* as situated interpretations that dealt specifically with questions of identity and brought “bardolatry itself as a critical object of inquiry” into our classroom (Muir 50). The audience guide project, more than I anticipated, underscored the importance of historicized interpretation of larger institutional practices and traditions as well as individual performances.



Figure 2. (L-R) Sarah Harlett and Porscha Shaw in *Richard III* presented by Seattle Shakespeare Company and upstart crow collective. Photo by HMMM Productions.

Pedagogical Payoffs

Students' increased investments in learning emerged in this course from 1) their collaborative writing for public audiences, 2) their awareness of ethical responsibilities in writing about local theater companies, 3) their sense of the classroom as a place for important, ongoing, critical conversations that could be both politically and personally important, and 4) their valuation of their own contributions to these critical conversations about Shakespeare. Another

equally important outcome of our class discussions of gendered embodiment on stage was that they enabled—even demanded—corresponding discussions of racial embodiment.

One of the many surprises that emerged from both outward-facing projects was the power of asking students to produce timely, written work for a public audience, an experience not unique to either the Shakespeare classroom or the subject of all-female and non-binary productions but instead manifested by our access to local theater and a national journal's readership. Nearly all of the students in this class had taken prior courses with me, and while all were strong students, their explicit acknowledgments of how different it felt for them to write for a scholarly audience outside of the classroom were still remarkable. Student evaluation comments prominently featured what they saw as the uniqueness of the opportunity to write together for *Early Modern Culture*. As one student wrote, "I felt as though the work I did had scholarly legitimacy to it." Student responses to this aspect of the course align with Thompson and Turchi's observations about advanced learners studying Shakespeare, who "need opportunities to make meaning together, combining their insights and pooling their understanding" in ways that bring their "struggle with complex texts" out of isolation (*Teaching Shakespeare* 4). While my assessment rubric for this project did not explicitly require students to address the centrality of identity to studying Shakespeare, as Thompson and Turchi recommend, the productions themselves did. The collaborative review of *Much Ado About Nothing* argued that the femme and non-binary bodies of the cast used expressions of grief rather than jealousy to cite masculinity in potentially redemptive ways, while the review of *Richard III* addressed the interpretive effects of the production's double-casting of a Black woman, Porscha Shaw, as both

Richmond and Lady Anne, as well as the surprising ways 3.7 underscored Richard's artifice through a conscious attentiveness to the female bodies of its actors.

Students also felt an ethical responsibility to the production companies they were learning and writing about, seeing these companies' performances as important, political work and seeing their own responses to these performances in the context of historical barriers to women and non-binary people and proprietary claims over who can perform Shakespeare. Through their work on the audience guides' interviews and discussions with cast and crew members, students became more conscious of the power of their own voices to tell stories of Shakespearean performance in a scholarly and historically-grounded way. While students rarely have qualms about sharpening their tools of critique upon Shakespeare's texts (nor should they), my class was concerned about the effects of their reviews and analyses on production companies comprised of individuals fighting for representation on the Shakespearean stage. Student reviewers had robust discussions about the ethics of their public writing, noting that The Fern Shakespeare Company's investments in claims to Shakespearean universality and original performance practices were in part the result of a wider policing of all-female and non-binary companies and a history of audience reception of productions perceived as "inauthentic" or "political." Aware of the performance as a situated interpretation of *Much Ado About Nothing* that seemed to skim over the play text's gender politics through strongly sympathetic male characters and to minimize the possibilities of its obvious intentionality in casting choices, most students offered these critiques only after explicitly addressing what they saw as their own ethical obligations to write about the

production in ways attentive to the histories of women and non-binary people performing Shakespeare within potentially hostile theatrical and institutional environments.

Another affordance of the class was a change in students' attitudes toward the critical conversation and their place within it. As a number of students noted in course evaluations and throughout class, they felt that they were doing important theoretical work on gender and performance, a realization that emerged primarily from a study of the language they needed to discuss the plays they were seeing and from the sense of urgency created by personal connections with the embodied figures they were attempting to write about. Students who sought explanatory vocabularies to describe upstart crow's casting practices relied most heavily on Terri Power's categories of "cross-dressed," "cross-gendered," and "trans-dressed" performances, which allowed them to account for both stage practice and audience effect, as this student does in her audience guide:

upstart crow collective's production of *Richard III* is best described . . . as a cross-gendered performance. In the production, the characters are portrayed as men, however the audience is not asked to suspend disbelief regarding the actresses' gender and gendered bodies. Indeed, the bodies of the actresses are called upon throughout the play to emphasize and heighten certain scenes. . . the actresses do not manipulate their voices or hide their forms, but rather perform masculinity as a trait that plays out on their own differently gendered bodies and identities. . . . upstart crow collective produces all-female Shakespeare to provide meaty, substantive roles to women. But as the history of all-female productions reveal, and as the women behind upstart crow collective

acknowledge themselves, creating these all-femme productions layers new (and political) meaning onto the play text. (8-9)

This student writer argues that upstart crow collective's production acknowledges, and directs, the effects of the actor's female or non-binary body; in a comparison to Lloyd's productions, she connects upstart crow collective's strategic practices and staged effects to their overt intentions to provide roles for women and non-binary people, and situates them alongside established all-female Shakespeare productions that make unapologetically political casting choices. While Power's categorizations became essential to our analyses, students were also motivated by a desire for even more precise descriptions of gender in performance, and located this work as an important area of scholarship to which they could contribute. One student noted on a course evaluation that their "favorite aspects of the class" were "being able to struggle together to define, redefine, or come up with words" and "working in rather uncharted territory which made it really hard to find the language for some of the things we were talking about."

Our study of local performances ultimately illuminated the pedagogical value of transformative Shakespeare performances that invite discussions of identity and difference through conscious casting decisions. Upstart crow collective was unabashed about its political interventions: the gender equity in theater its all-female and non-binary, non-traditional casting enables, the reconsideration of gendered expectations it aims to produce in its audiences, and the political topicality its plays address. upstart crow actor Peggy Gannon claimed in a classroom visit that a theater company has responsibilities to its audiences because all casting choices have effects—because all bodies on stage mean something: "Any choice you make is going to be a

socio-political choice, even if it is not your goal first and foremost to do so . . . You are responsible for political ripples in the audience and community.” My students embraced this narrative of responsibility for the effects (including unintended ones) of casting choices that take up questions of identity, and it deepened their own attention to the vocabularies we used to discuss embodied representation as well as their engagement with the problems and possibilities of “blind” casting.

As a result of my scholarly priorities and my own positionality, the class as I designed it privileged discussions of gender over other categories of identity, an aspect that I am eager to change. But my students quickly saw that attention to gendered embodiment on stage required attention to all kinds of embodied representation, including and especially ability and race, and they pushed the course, and me, toward a more intersectional approach. upstart crow collective’s foregrounding of their racially-diverse casting and their articulation of a production’s responsibility for its socio-political choices within a community created a productive dialogue with our readings from Thompson’s collection *Colorblind Shakespeare*, which traces the contested definitions, histories, and effects of colorblind casting. Thompson notes that some approaches place “the onus of being ‘blind’ to race . . . completely on the audience” (6), while others contend that audiences cannot—and perhaps should not—always achieve such colorblindness, an “admission that socio-political and cultural-historical factors influence an audience’s viewing abilities” (7). Performances of racialized identities, according to Thompson, “should raise questions about the very nature of identity” . . . “not by claiming that race is insignificant, but rather by asking how significance is achieved and perceived” (Thompson 14).

As one student wrote in a course evaluation, Thompson’s scholarship and practitioner interviews were especially helpful “in pointing out the need for conversations on race in casting and the way that people need to be willing to have those conversations.” Confronted with two local models that mapped out “blind” and “conscious” approaches to both gender and race, students gravitated toward narratives that invited dialogue and acknowledged the significance of difference, and nearly every audience guide attempted to engage with racial as well as gendered embodiment on stage. Most students found upstart crow collective’s more racially-diverse cast, attentiveness to the effects of race on stage, and insistence upon engaging in difficult conversations about embodied identities not only hugely compelling, feminist theater but an instructive guide to crafting their own burgeoning scholarly identities.

Thompson and Turchi observe that an embodied approach to classroom performance “will keep Shakespeare relevant because critical engagements in performances provide not only cultural capital but also ownership” (“Embodiment” 736). An embodied approach to studying Shakespeare through regional live performance can similarly provide cultural capital and ownership of Shakespeare to students. I suggest we can find an additional, related affordance: a sense of responsibility to one’s Shakespeare community—comprised of the bodies, identities, and differences of its practitioners, companies, scholars, teachers, and students—that might strengthen our students’ investments in learning as well as the ethics of our own pedagogies.



Figure 3. The cast of *Richard III* presented by Seattle Shakespeare Company and upstart crow collective. Photo by HMMM Productions.

Limitations and Possibilities

The class I have described was largely possible because of my access to multiple local theater companies devoted to creating thoughtful all-female and nonbinary Shakespeare, a unique resource unavailable to many teachers pre COVID-19 pandemic, and to nearly everyone during the pandemic itself. The entire concept of teaching Shakespeare “at” the performance has been radically, and productively, challenged since I taught this course. While in many ways

typical modes of teaching through live theater have contracted during 2020-2021—and the devastating effects of the global pandemic on the livelihoods of theater practitioners cannot be forgotten—in other ways access to innovative theater has expanded, through the inventive use of streaming live performance, audio plays, and other online content. I briefly gesture to what I hope are workable suggestions for modifying course content and assignments for those who do not have the kinds of resources I used in my course, and I point to a few intriguing possibilities that have emerged from the new pandemic context. Some of these modifications and possibilities emphasize attention to cross-gender or all-female and nonbinary casting, while others are more focused on creating public-facing student work or more broadly defined questions of identity and embodiment.

Much of the student learning and writing about women-led theater, cross-gender casting, and contemporary all-female and non-binary productions I discuss can occur through the use of films or filmed productions, which offer their own benefits: students can watch and re-watch them on demand around their own schedules, and they often cost less than live performance. Two later articles in this roundtable, by Kirwan and Winston, provide helpful introductions to the genres of live broadcast—and live recorded—theatrical performances. Here I focus on resources specific to productions that are all-female or cast cross-gender. While my course centered on two local live performances, a vital component was our study of Lloyd's now widely available all-female 2012-2016 Shakespeare Trilogy (*Julius Caesar*, *Henry IV* and *The Tempest*) on film.¹⁰ Another much discussed cross-gendered production, Michelle Terry's 2018 *Hamlet*, is also available through Globe Player. These high-profile UK productions have sparked valuable

scholarship on cross-gendered casting and reviews that document both positive and pernicious responses to all-female Shakespeare. Such resources, which help students situate plays within complex performance histories, were a crucial element of my audience guide assignment. Some of the payoffs of the outward facing collaborative theater review might be achieved by a collaborative film or filmed live performance review posted on a public classroom blog or drafted with submission to an undergraduate research journal in mind. While these filmed examples cannot orient students toward specific theatrical communities as local live performance can, they do invite discussions of identity and difference and can be taught alongside other film versions such as Julie Taymor's *The Tempest* (featuring a female Prospera), Paul Quinn and Harry Lennix's *H4*, or the long performance tradition of female stage Hamlets.

Many theater companies released additional filmed content on streaming platforms or produced new online performances to navigate the closures of in-person shows during the pandemic. The Public Theater's 2020 Free Shakespeare on the Radio serialized audio broadcast of *Richard II* offers an accessible and exciting teaching resource for courses engaging with Shakespeare, performance, and identity. Divided into four episodes, the audio production directed by Saheem Ali features a predominately BIPOC ensemble cast and a female Bolingbroke. The episodes are usefully framed by dialogue with scholars Thompson and James Shapiro, and an accompanying Public Theater podcast, "Decolonizing Shakespeare," situates the production within conversations about spectator responses, the meaning of race in performance, contemporary national events, and the future of theater and Shakespeare with Thompson and Ali. I assigned this radio play in a 2021 Shakespeare course; students loved the production's

compelling, clear performances, useful plot recaps, and situating by critics, and they reported that they found *Richard II* the *easiest* of the quarter's plays because they linked their reading to the audio episodes. The color conscious and cross-gender casting of the production, as well as the fresh audio format, opened up valuable class discussions about vocal embodiment and performance that convinced me of its central value to a course focused on gender, race, and Shakespeare performance. Broadcasts such as Ali's *Richard II* would work well as subjects for an audience guide assignment, and our now ubiquitous use of Zoom might enable student interviews and interactions with non-local cast and crew members.

A second new resource is Robert Myles' *The Show Must Go Online*, described as the "first, best, and most prolific creator of made-for-digital Shakespeare in response to the pandemic," devoted to "making Shakespeare for everyone, for free, forever." Produced rapidly over Zoom—each show is mounted in a single week—TSMGO makes all their productions available on YouTube and has begun to produce the work of other early modern dramatists, filling a need for accessible performances of early modern plays beyond Shakespeare's. Committed to "gender balanced casting and proactive inclusion of underrepresented groups," these inventive, sharp productions also feature excellent introductions by leading scholars and brief intermission interviews that provide valuable frameworks for students. The robust audience chat of "Digital Groundlings" captured along with the recorded performance, which "replicate[s] the Elizabethan theatre experience in the 21st Century," might offer students tasked with an audience guide project unique ways to think about audience response to cross-gender casting (*The Show Must Go Online*).

Excellent all-female and nonbinary Shakespeare productions have become available to broader audiences through streaming live performance, but those that stream on demand for limited time spans—the Women’s Theatre Festival’s 2021 all-female cast *Othello* produced by an all-Black, all-femme creative team is one example—are not yet fully obtainable as repeatable teaching resources. But the existence of company-owned recordings of these live performances for streaming suggest future possibilities for scholars—and perhaps students—studying the usually ephemeral work of smaller theater companies. And the problems of accessibility raised to the forefront by the pandemic can be a catalyst for productive change. As theaters shift back to in-person production and we reflect on the value of newly available theatrical innovations and online teaching tools, teachers interested in the resources of local live theater will also have a bounty of new methods and modes for bringing the all-female and nonbinary Shakespeare performance to all our students.

Notes

¹See Walker, 206-208 and Sheila T. Cavanagh, 195-197 as well as Thompson and Turchi's *Teaching Shakespeare with Purpose*, especially "Embodiment: What is it (not)?" and their 2017 version, "Embodiment and the Classroom Performance." *Early Modern Culture*'s ten essays in "First-Generation Shakespeare" similarly advocate empowering, student-centered approaches. See, in particular, Cassie M. Miura's reception-based approach. Katherine Gillen and Lisa Jennings offer guidelines for crafting antiracist Shakespeare pedagogy that include privileging students' cultural knowledge and allowing exploration of their identities alongside addressing the legacies of colonialism and white supremacy that inform Shakespeare's works, our discipline, and our academic institutions ("Decolonizing Shakespeare?").

²See "The Qualities of Mercy Project: Dispatches," which documents six classroom experiences of performing scenes from *The Merchant of Venice* "filtered through the lenses of [their] own communities" (Way).

³I have published elsewhere about this experience teaching *Bring Down the House* in a 2017 Shakespeare course; see Meyer, "Bringing Down the Bard's House: Pedagogy, Representation, and the All-Female Cast."

⁴Loehlin also argues that a performance approach can provide a "laboratory where the implications of gender, race, sexuality, and social empowerment—and their inheritance in the traditions of received 'Shakespeare'—can become visible, and discussible" (636). Thompson and Turchi's work presses teachers to remember that such discussions are not laboratory work undertaken in isolation but are part of students' lived experiences.

⁵ See O’Leary’s and Yeo’s essays in this roundtable.

⁶ Winston identifies situated interpretation as a midpoint on a continuum that prioritizes “textual interpretation” on one end and “the contingencies of performance” at the other (297). See also G.B. Shand’s description of play texts as “sites of constant and normal negotiation between textualized obligation and multiple legitimate performative options” (245) in the context of using performance to teach close reading, and Barbara Hodgdon, 4-5.

⁷ Thompson and Turchi similarly argue that a classroom’s intentional frames can enable embodied performances’ “strategic deployment of history” (“Embodiment” 733). Stephen Buhler notes that the “larger cultural attitudes that help shape how texts and performances are produced and received can become clearer and more meaningful to students” (231) through the “highly flexible resource” (220) of stage history, belying the “ahistoricity thought to be inherent in performance theory” (231).

⁸ Assigned readings featuring case studies included Elizabeth Klett’s *Cross-Gender Shakespeare* and James Bulman’s *Shakespeare Re-dressed*. Melissa D. Aaron’s study of all-female Shakespeare companies and Kim Solga’s examination of women directors were also valuable, as was Terri Power’s chapter on female players and all-female companies and case study of Lloyd’s Donmar Warehouse *Julius Caesar* in her indispensable *Shakespeare and Gender in Practice*.

² Solga, among other scholars, identifies Lloyd as a successful director who overtly owns both Shakespearean and feminist labels, in contrast to others who place “a radical vision on stage but refused to stake their (obvious) claim to ownership,” choosing instead to disavow the gender politics of their work (114-15). Students in my class watched two of Lloyd’s Shakespeare

Trilogy plays and read Harriet Walter's *Brutus and Other Heroines*, additions that proved fruitful for situating local productions within larger transnational precedents.

¹⁰Lloyd's *Julius Caesar* is available through PBS Great Performances with a Passport subscription, while all three productions are available with an institutional subscription to DigitalTheatre+ or Drama Online, and can be purchased individually or as a boxed set on DVD.

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Teaching Shakespeare at the Live Cinema Broadcast

Peter Kirwan
Mary Baldwin University

While the recording of Shakespearean theatrical performance for the screen has an extensive history (Buchanan 2009; Wyver 2019), the more recent phenomenon of event cinema screenings of theater productions has occasioned a sea change in the way Shakespearean performance is consumed. As documented in the collection *Shakespeare and the “Live” Theatre Broadcast Experience* (Aebischer, Greenhalgh, and Osborne 2018), the arrival of the National Theatre Live (NT Live, from 2009) and Royal Shakespeare Company Live From Stratford-upon-Avon (RSC Live, from 2013) programs has precipitated a growing number of direct-to-cinema broadcasts—both live relays and pre-recorded “as live” films edited together from one or more performances—whose aesthetic, commercial, and formal properties are a burgeoning research area for performance scholars (see Barker 2012).

The nature and scope of these broadcasts have changed over time. Initially, NT Live was accessible only via cinemas, with screenings also made available to schools as part of a limited program (Way 2017; Nicholas 2019). RSC Live, by contrast, immediately began making its recordings available for general retail as DVDs and Blu-Rays. Both programs have more recently made selections of their earlier broadcasts (often lightly edited) available on educational platforms such as Digital Theatre Plus and Drama Online, as well as broadcasting some for

general viewing via YouTube and other platforms during the early stages of the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020. Other Shakespeare companies have experimented with different models. Shakespeare's Globe have produced live cinema and television broadcasts and pre-edited "as live" films for DVD and online retail; the Kenneth Branagh Company has broadcast productions to cinema that remain unavailable in any other medium; the Donmar Warehouse filmed its 2016 "Shakespeare Trilogy" and broadcast one production to cinemas while releasing the others on DVD and online; and other companies such as Cheek by Jowl and Forced Entertainment have sidestepped cinemas entirely and offered live web-streaming of productions (Nicholas 2018).

The sheer range and quality of live-streamed productions has created an invaluable pedagogic resource, and the availability of so much of the above content "on demand" is particularly important for the teaching of Shakespeare performance in areas that do not enjoy convenient access to theaters. While Jessica Winston's article in this roundtable explores some current uses of these resources in the classroom, in this article I will focus on the cinema as a venue for attending live Shakespeare performance. Particularly as there is a growing sense of expectation among audiences that these broadcasts will find their way onto on-demand platforms, it is important to recognize that changing platforms significantly alter the pedagogic opportunities that broadcast theater offers. As the cinema remains the initial and primary (and sometimes only) site of reception for many of these programs, a consideration of the challenges and opportunities that teaching Shakespeare at the cinema broadcast offers is long overdue.

The Cinema Stream as Live Performance

While teaching at the University of Nottingham, I regularly arranged excursions to see cinema broadcasts on two of my courses: the undergraduate option “Shakespeare and his Contemporaries on the Stage” and the Masters-level course “Shakespeare: Text, Stage, Screen.” Both courses have dynamic curricula which are adjusted each year to fit around two or three current productions of Shakespeare taking place in the UK. Both courses also privilege skills training in their learning outcomes, supporting students in developing the tools to respond to live Shakespearean performance and bring their own concerns to bear in acts of interpretation.

On both courses, the cinema broadcast is offered alongside live theater visits. Part of the rationale for this is economic; a trip to a local cinema is much cheaper than a coach trip to a more distant theater, and thus allows the group to see a larger selection of performances over the duration of the course. But if pure economics were the only concern, it would of course be even cheaper to give students access to recordings of previously broadcast productions, such as those available on Drama Online or Digital Theatre Plus. To justify its inclusion alongside theater visits, the cinema broadcast must offer unique value. This value is what the broadcast event offers to the pedagogical aims of the course in terms of exploring (1) experientiality; (2) collective learning; and (3) ephemerality. I must stress from the outset that it is not my intention to argue that cinema broadcasts are *better* as a pedagogic resource than online or DVD recordings; indeed, the superior accessibility of recordings, especially for students who for any reason are unable to attend a live event or in regions without convenient access to live or broadcast venues, makes the latter often much more appropriate. However, live broadcast events

and recordings of previously broadcast performances offer significantly *different* pedagogic opportunities which should be borne in mind.

(1) *Experientiality*: while the aesthetics and formal qualities of the cinema broadcast are significantly different to those of a live theater production, the cinemagoing experience offers a productive approximation of the theatergoing experience. Audiences arrive and congregate ahead of a given start time; they experience the event in synchronous real time; and perhaps most importantly, students experience the screening alongside the general public.¹ While a key feature of live broadcasts is the sound of the in-theater audience, the effect of being among a cinema audience who are also responding audibly and visually to the on-screen performance is markedly different to that of watching the broadcast in isolation. This has been most noticeable in student observation of audience responses that differ from their own, such as laughter at instances of casual misogyny on the stage. When this reaction is observed on a recorded broadcast, student reactions tend to be detached, observational; when this reaction is observed among an audience that the students are part of, more invested questions of perceived complicity and discomfort emerge. The co-presence of the live cinema audience invites the student to reflect on the “eventness” of the broadcast (Way 2017: 392-3).

(2) *Collective learning*: when recorded broadcasts are made available to students on demand, they are able to undertake a form of detailed close analysis, pausing and rewinding the recording in order to construct nuanced accounts of choices that they are able to re-watch and check. Teaching recordings of live broadcasts in this way has been exciting, especially on other courses focused on film analysis, where this kind of repeat viewing is encouraged. This mode

also appeals to students who are taking English degrees, mimicking the kinds of close analysis of a stable textual object that are familiar from working with print materials.

The one-off streaming event, however, requires a different kind of collective work around memory; as Peter Holland suggests, “the experience of performance is also a structuring of memory; leaving the theatre at the end of the performance is already to be aware of the excess of forgetfulness” (2006: 211). Having seen the screening in the cinema, the students are usually unable to see the broadcast a second time.² Especially for students whose assessment involves writing about the screening, the ability to accurately recall details of the screening is regularly a source of anxiety (though notably, usually only *before* the screening). I instead position this as an opportunity: none of us, including the tutor, will be able to remember all aspects of the screening we have attended in forensic detail, and thus the responsibility is shared. Students are invited to spend time in the interval, on the return coach trip, in class, and via discussions amongst themselves, sharing and pooling their memories. Importantly, in an educational context where students are largely assessed on the basis of individual projects and essays, this also asks students to become less protective about their own insight, and to decenter authority within the classroom (indeed, students correcting me on my own misremembering of performance moments often marks a turning point in the class’s confidence in ownership of their own knowledge).

(3) *Ephemerality*. The increased use of professionally filmed live broadcasts as a reusable archive version of a production risks blurring the lines between the unstable, ephemeral *event* of a performance, and the stable, enduring *text* of a film, concepts perhaps best articulated in Diana Taylor’s categories of *repertoire* (embodied memory) and *archive* (documented memory) (2003:

19-20). Thus, while the recorded version is available for close analysis along the same lines as film, those serendipitous and accidental features of the live broadcast—from wobbly cameras to dropped lines to fumbled props, some of which are edited out of the archival recordings, some of which are retained—risk being read as inadequacies in an otherwise stable production, rather than as features of the ephemeral performance event. The eventness of the one-night-only live cinema broadcast invites students to engage appropriately and generously with the contingencies of a live performance event.

Emphasis on these features of the cinema stream positions the stream as an equivalent to live theater. For pedagogic and assessment purposes, while the cinema broadcast has important formal differences to the in-person performance event—which I will discuss further in the next section—the eventness, non-repeatability, and ephemerality of the screened live production allows students to be assessed on the same skill sets as those writing about a theater visit. However, this is an *equivalence*; it does not mean that the live broadcast should be treated as *identical* to the stage production. To prepare students to attend a live cinema streaming, training in some of the basic features of the medium is essential.

The Cinema Stream as Live Film

Much of the published work on live broadcasts of Shakespeare has offered detailed close readings of the film grammar of these streamed productions. However, these analyses are usually based on recordings that the researcher is able to re-watch at leisure, and thus the detail of the analysis can be intimidatingly off-putting to students who are only able to attend a screening

once. On the other hand, to deny the mediating role performed by the screen director and the conventions of the live broadcast risks inviting the students to treat the broadcast as a poor or second-hand relation to the theatrical production. The remainder of this article offers suggestions for helping students develop fluency in aspects of live cinema broadcasts that they can aim to be alert to during their experience of an event; and, in doing so, to become critically aware of the acts of mediation that govern the form.

While the literature on live theater broadcasts is already too extensive to survey in this short article, teachers will find it productive to consider them as a form of adaptation in their own right, rather than as a mere conduit to the theater performance that is the “true” object of study. Linda Hutcheon reminds us that “adaptation is a kind of extended palimpsest and, at the same time, often a transcoding into a different set of conventions” (2013: 33), and it is this “transcoding” that is at stake in re-reading the performance event through the specific conventions of live filming. Hutcheon’s model of a “reception continuum” that moves “from a production focus to a re-production one” (2013: 171) is an especially useful way of perceiving the unique palimpsestic form of the live theater broadcast, in which the “here” of the theater is explicitly juxtaposed in the introductions to these events with the “there” of a worldwide cinema audience, drawing self-conscious attention to the interplay of different media conventions. The juxtaposition of the theatrical performance with the framing of the cinema event provides a productive space for engaging with a specific and explicit method of transmedia adaptation.

(1) *Paratexts*. Most cinema broadcasts, especially those from NT Live and RSC Live, are accompanied by paratextual materials that take the place of traditional theater programs.

Paratexts, in the influential language of Gerard Genette, are those liminal staging areas surrounding the text that exert “an influence on the public, an influence that – whether well or poorly understood and achieved – is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it” (1997: 2). In the case of live theater broadcasts, such paratexts include, but are not limited to, pre-recorded documentaries, live and recorded interviews with cast and creative team members, and framing materials that position the production within the company’s history and output; significantly, these paratexts are usually unique to the cinema screening, with some occasionally preserved on DVD recordings or YouTube as separate stand-alone videos, but most no longer available. While these paratexts are often compared to the kinds of material contained within theater programs, the mode of delivery and reception accords them a different and more privileged role; audience members must physically opt out of experiencing the paratexts by leaving the venue if they wish to ignore them. Elizabeth Sharrock’s work (2022) offers a comprehensive breakdown and analysis of the formal and interpretive qualities of these paratexts.

The limited availability of paratexts outside of the cinema event makes it especially challenging to prepare students for the influential role they play in shaping interpretation, and so a little advance preparation in documentary aesthetics can be invaluable. One exercise I have found helpful is to play students a brief clip from Al Pacino’s documentary film *Looking for Richard* (1996). In the clip, the actor Frederic Kimball remonstrates with Pacino about Pacino’s predilection for ceding interpretive authority to academics, who enjoy the privilege of direct-to-camera address throughout the film—before the film cuts abruptly and somewhat unfairly to the

scholar Emrys Jones, who is shown fumbling over a question to which he does not know the answer. The explicit contestation and subversion of the talking-heads trope of documentaries draws attention to the ways in which film aims to depict authority as unmediated. Discussion of the framing of authority then leads to three questions for students to bear in mind when watching the paratexts: (a) Who is delivering the paratexts? (b) What authority are they being given? (c) How do they want you to interpret the production? Having these questions in mind invites students to reflect critically on how the paratexts attempt to govern and direct audience interpretation.

(2) *Screen direction*. The most obvious differences students observe between attending a live theater production and attending a cinema broadcast are (a) the ability to see close detail on the stage that they are usually too distant to observe in a theater (usually framed as a positive) and (b) the inability to choose which aspects of the stage to focus on (usually framed as a negative). The latter in particular is often experienced as a failing of the broadcast, rather than as a positive mode of adaptation. Attending the 2019 cinema broadcast of the RSC Live *Measure for Measure* (directed for the stage by Gregory Doran and for the screen by Robin Lough), I and a group of students observed the significance of the choice to leave Isabella alone onstage at the end, crying out in anguish; attending the same production in the theater when it toured to Nottingham some months later, we were surprised to find that the Duke was also visible on stage at the end, but had been excluded in the broadcast version by the screen director. Rather than perceiving this as a deficiency of the production, I offer this anecdote to students as an example

of the interpretive role of the broadcast, the screen director presenting a particular reading of this moment through the close-up on a single character.

Building an instructor or tutor's confidence in the grammar of the live broadcast is an important first step, and Erin Sullivan (2017) offers the most detailed and accessible account of camerawork and directorial conventions in the major cinematic broadcast programs, with particular attention to how camera and editing construct theatrical space on film. As well as being an invaluable introduction to teachers looking to develop confidence in the specifics of this form, I have found this a useful article for discussing with students, especially at graduate level. To put this into practice as a training exercise, I use a clip that the RSC has made available on YouTube from Act 4, Scene 1 of its 2013 production of *Richard II* (stage director Gregory Doran; screen director Robin Lough). I deliberately do not teach this play on either of the courses in question and instead treat the clip as a cold example for the purpose of focusing on the screen conventions.

This clip offers several illustrations of simple conventions addressed by Sullivan: the slow camera movement; the oscillation between long shots showing the whole space of the stage and mid-shots on actors' bodies; and the sparing use of cuts, which privilege lengthy shots of the actors performing live. The camera work is largely unobtrusive, designed not to draw attention to itself, but students can quickly appreciate how the shot choices work to contextualize the space—dominated by Bolingbroke's throne and watching courtiers—and then focus on the individuals within that space. On a second watch, I invite the students, who are mostly unfamiliar with the play, to develop readings of how the camerawork tells a story. Observations usually

include the extent to which the camera follows David Tennant's Richard, both accentuating his personal charisma and suggesting that he, rather than the throne, is a center of power; the deliberate extreme close-up on the crown at the moment when both Richard and Bolingbroke have their hands on it, stressing the significance of this object; and the use of end-on shots that place the throne central in the shot and frame Richard and Bolingbroke in relation to the seat of power.

Simple exercises of this kind—which I have also experimented with presenting in the form of live commentary over a clip for the benefit of distance learners—help develop critical awareness of the interpretive potential of the camera that can then be drawn upon in watching the live event. While in practice student essays on the cinema broadcasts still focus predominantly on the choices made in the production, advance training of this kind has produced a greater level of engagement with the screen production's adaptational role, and enhanced sensitivity to the constraints and conventions of the form.

Perhaps more importantly, however, the hybrid form of a one-off event that is reimagined for the screen gives students an introduction to social responsibility. Foregrounding the role of the screen broadcast in shaping students' interpretations of the production, and encouraging students to collectively explore the implications of that mediation through shared memory and peer conversation, helps students develop a skillset that is more widely applicable to the mediation of news events and public affairs. It invites students to learn to trust one another, to try out ideas and risk being wrong, to check their memory of an event with reference to the

experience of others. It invites students to critique the way the world is being presented to them, and to build confidence in their own subjective experience as part of a collective.

This article was originally written at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic; at the time of completing it in 2021, cinemas and theaters in the UK are beginning to tentatively reopen their doors to socially distanced audiences. The extent to which collective viewing of live performance, whether in theaters or cinemas, will be viable in the near future remains to be determined; however, this article insists on the importance of understanding the specific value both of the form and of the medium of reception on student experience, in the hope that collective reception and interpretation can continue to be embedded as part of the drama student's essential skill set.

Notes

¹ Cinema audiences for live broadcasts vary enormously; in Nottingham I used the Broadway cinema in Nottingham which usually sells out a screen of several hundred seats for its Shakespeare broadcasts. Rachael Nicholas's work on cinema audiences addresses venues with more sparse attendance (2019).

² On occasion, students are able to attend an Encore screening of the broadcast on another date.

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Live on Film! Recent Trends in Research and Teaching with Mediated Theatre

Jessica Winston
Idaho State University

In Shakespeare studies, as in most fields in literary studies, there is a common pattern to developments in research and teaching. As a general rule across the field as a whole, research trends tend to foster innovations in teaching. These innovations in teaching, in turn, inspire teaching-oriented publications that describe and promote new approaches to course planning and delivery (Winston 320). In other words, while for individual instructors, teaching can spark research ideas, in the field as a whole, research leads teaching, which in turn leads pedagogical publication. For instance, as performance criticism developed as a field in the 1990s and early 2000s, university-level Shakespeare instructors increasingly designed courses with performance-oriented concerns in mind. Those innovations then inspired the documentation and promulgation of new pedagogies in articles and books, which in turn helped more instructors to adopt new performance approaches in their courses (e.g. Riggio; Rocklin). The general trend can be observed in a variety of fields and subfields, such as digital humanities or ecocriticism. Yet this pattern of change across the field—from research to classroom practice to pedagogical publication—is especially apparent in emerging areas. As a field is coalescing, still becoming a part of the broader research discourse at conferences and in journals, there is a gap in time before this new field begins to widely inform teaching approaches, and a still wider gap before these

approaches start to be described in pedagogical publications. Such a pattern is especially evident in one subfield of performance criticism, a subfield that does not yet even have an accepted name (Hunter 16), but which can be referred to as mediated theatre studies.

Drawing on the work of Sarah Bay-Cheng and John Wyver, mediated theatre can be defined as filmed theatre, or more precisely as “any theatrical performance originally created for live performance,” which is then “presented as two-dimensional moving images on screen” (Bay-Cheng 37), whether live broadcast in a cinema, viewed on TV, or on a smartphone or tablet.¹ While mediated theatre has been around for as long as television (Wyver, “All the Trimmings” 106), interest in this form has intensified in the past decade. One reason is the rise of event cinema, which involves the broadcast of live (or recorded live) theatre or other arts productions to cinemas worldwide. Another is the development of streaming services, such as Theatre in Video, Digital Theatre+, Drama Online, Globe Player, and National Theatre at Home, which consolidate and make available professionally recorded and edited theatre for on-demand viewing. Live-to-cinema broadcasts and digital streaming services represent a wide range of theatre, from classical to contemporary drama. Yet in the world of mediated theatre, Shakespeare offerings are especially prominent, likely because they can be expected to draw a large audience. For this reason, mediated theatre has attracted special interest in Shakespeare studies, especially from scholars already engaged in the study of historical and contemporary performance. As the works cited for this article attests, a growing list of articles, edited collections, and books now address a range of questions and topics, such as whether mediated theatre is theatre or how to describe trends and techniques in the cinematography and editing of theatre for film.

Alongside this growing body of scholarship, pedagogical articles have begun to appear that discuss the use of mediated theatre in the university-level classroom. At this point, however, these do not yet routinely frame the use of mediated theatre in terms of questions and debates within the field of mediated theatre studies.² Instead, as I lay out in more detail below, the authors describe employing mediated theatre in a variety of ways, from promoting basic comprehension to analyzing performance. In other words, there is a gap between the coalescing critical theorization and analysis of mediated theatre in research, on the one hand, and the variety of ways that pedagogical articles frame and describe its use in the classroom, on the other. One reason for this gap is the pattern described above: it takes time for new questions and approaches to permeate the field and for instructors to accommodate these ideas in their courses. In this case, however, another reason is access. Although thousands of cinemas worldwide have hosted event cinema screenings, attending these is difficult for instructors and students in rural areas, as well as those who simply do not have the time, means, or mobility to attend. During the Covid-19 pandemic, there were no screenings anyway. Streaming services, like Digital Theatre+, provide another route for access, but at this point most of these platforms are less than decade old. Some instructors are not yet aware of their existence. Those of us who do have access may not be aware of, or have the critical and theoretical background to utilize, the range of approaches and activities these platforms make possible (Borsuk 33; Carson 116).

Instructors might incorporate mediated theatre more in their courses, or might approach it in different ways, if they were more familiar with the critical discourse in this emerging area and with the available streaming services. The purpose of this article, then, is to promote wider

awareness of this field by offering an introductory survey of it. In what follows, first, I chart broad trends in the research. Next, I review types and capabilities of some digital platforms. Finally, I plot the range of approaches to mediated theatre in existing pedagogical articles. Ultimately, I hope that this survey will help instructors to refine established, or develop new, approaches to teaching with mediated theatre. In particular, where it seems relevant and helpful for students, I hope that this survey can help instructors to design courses that are not only informed by the now established discourse of performance criticism but also by specific questions and topics in mediated theatre studies. It is to these questions and topics that we will first turn.

Trends in Mediated Theatre Studies

Over the past decade, a variety of topics have dominated the study of mediated theatre, such as audience reception and filming techniques. In the most general terms, the arc of the criticism can be understood in terms of a shift from a “discourse of loss” (Wyver, “All the Trimmings” 117) to one of appreciation. That is to say, there has been a shift from an earlier understanding of mediated theatre as a lesser way to experience live drama and toward a current appreciation of mediated theatre as an art form in its own right—one that creates access to, even as it values and promotes, what is unique about the experience of live theatre.

To understand this shift, it is helpful to begin with the discourse of loss. This view grows from of a traditional idea about theatre: it is a unique experience that depends on audience presence and ephemerality. Once a performance occurs, it is gone. Writing in 1993, Peggy

Phelan offered a classic and oft-cited formulation of this point: “Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance” (146). More recently, Margaret Jane Kidnie has paraphrased this idea, noting that, for a long time, exclusivity, and the mutually reinforcing boundaries of live audience, limited time, and circumscribed place have been integral to the specific experience of theatre (133–34).

If the frisson of theatre lies in presence and non-reproducibility, then it makes sense to understand mediated theatre in terms of loss (Wyver, “All the Trimmings” 117–18). Mediation directly undermines those seemingly integral elements, eliminating the component of shared presence in one space and time, while also allowing for repeat viewing. Looking back on views of mediated theatre in 2014, John Wyver summarized: “the loss of liveness is deplored, the loss of co-presence of audience and actors, and the loss of reciprocal effect of spectators and cast” (“All the Trimmings” 117–18). As a consequence, there has been a “spirited debated” about whether mediated theatre can even “really count as theatre” (Sullivan 628).

The discourse of loss continues to inform current discussions. One example lies in the topic of audience autonomy. In the theatre, directors block scenes to attract and guide audience attention, but audience members are nevertheless free to look where they please—to focus on a minor character or some aspect of the set, for example (Hunter 24). In mediated theatre, however, camera angles and editing wield an “assertive hand” that “formally determines the object of attention” (Hunter 24). In other words, mediation through edited film can reduce the possibility of viewer choice. Mediated theatre, in the words of Bernadette Cochrane and Frances

Bonner, disrupts “the ability, indeed the right, of each audience member to select and compile his or her own edit of the proceedings” (127). The idea of loss thus persists in the notion that filmed theatre results in the “forfeiture of viewing autonomy” (Martinez 202).

Loss also informs a second, related discussion, which concerns whether and how film conveys the dimensions and use of theatrical space. This topic should be understood in relation to a technical feature of film, which is that a camera reverses the normal proportions of a stage. If someone is standing in the middle of the theatre house looking at a proscenium stage, the stage will appear widest at the front and narrower toward the back. But when a camera is positioned in a similar spot, it will register the space in the opposite way, with the area closest to the camera seeming narrower and the area farther away seeming wider. As a result, in much the same way that a sideview mirror makes objects look farther away, on camera, stage action can often feel as though it is receding (Bay-Cheng 41–43). Film directors use and work around this effect with a variety of techniques, such as using close-up and tracking shots, alternating one- and two-shots of characters, intermixing long shots that cut across the audience and the stage, and sometimes adding crane shots for a bird’s-eye view. This mixture of shots makes for more interesting viewing. At the same time, the sense of theatre “as a spatial art” in which the movement through and arrangement of space is significant “simultaneously recedes” (Sullivan 646-647). Such reduction or elimination of the spatial dimension of theatre can be exacerbated when watching mediated theatre on a small screen. Discussing a *Cheek by Jowl* production, Peter Kirwan highlights the loss involved when the production is viewed on a computer monitor, tablet, or

phone: the experience “risks jeopardizing the scale and effect of a company style that is rooted in a distinctly *theatrical* use of the whole ensemble” (Kirwan 163).

While a discourse of loss continues to register in the criticism, in general the trend is in a different direction, away from loss and toward an appreciation of mediated theatre as a distinct art form, one that operates in its own way, even as it introduces new audiences to and promotes the experience of live theatre. For some readers, the notion of mediated theatre as a distinct genre of film (or theatre) might seem intuitive, but this perspective has emerged slowly in the criticism, perhaps due to ways that theatres and film directors have played down the presence and effect of cameras and editing. As Bay-Cheng puts it, directors have tried to “mask” the fact of mediation (39). Such masking has been achieved in part, in the words of Hunter, through the public rhetoric of many theatres, which “promis[e] not the artifice of cinema, but a transmission of actual events” (17). For instance, in the first years of the NT Live Broadcasts, the goal was not “making a movie,” but to “make the production look as great on screen as it would on our stages” (Sabel 7:48–7:57). John Wyver, himself the director of many filmed productions for the Royal Shakespeare Company, assesses this tendency, noting that the persistent use by theatres and critics of terms like “relay” implies “the absence in the pathway from stage to screen of either any determining technological factors...or any creative agency” (“All the Trimmings” 109). In his colorful assessment, “It is almost as if the image sequences, which are considered and scripted and rehearsed responses to a host of factors, appear on screen courtesy of some kind of outside broadcast fairy” (109). Perhaps as a result of downplaying mediation, many audience members do not recognize (or minimize) how the medium inflects their experience of theatre.

Bay-Cheng writes that the recording “appears to be the thing itself, particularly for a viewer for whom live theatre is at best an occasional event” (39). Sullivan concurs: for many, there is a “perceived union of a stage production and its screen broadcast” (630).

Mediated theatre is, of course, not “the thing itself” (Bay-Cheng 39). More recently, critics have delineated how the process of mediation constructs the theatrical event. This process has begun with the recognition that mediated theatre is an art form in its own right. Such films are “distinct creative achievements” (Wyver, “All the Trimmings” 118) and “complex forms of artistry” (Sullivan 629) that demonstrate a “unique creative vision” (Aebischer and Greenhalgh 5). Mediated theatre is its own genre, one that has “developed its own conventions in response to pressures and innovations created by originating companies, broadcast teams, and receiving venues” (Aebischer and Greenhalgh 3). Roger Delamere, the founder of *Digital Theatre+*, sees mediated theatre as potentially “a new discipline” (Borsuk 27).

How then to make sense of this new genre? Critics have offered a variety of approaches. Using a formulation inflected by the discourse of loss, Sarah Bay-Cheng suggests attending to ways that mediation “distorts” live theatre (40). Implicitly harkening back to Linda Hutcheon’s influential work on adaptation, John Wyver has regarded such films as “doubled adaptations—adaptations (for the screen) of a text that was a staging of a Shakespeare play that was once, simply as a staged performance, an adaptation in itself” (“All the Trimmings” 104). Aebischer and Greenhalgh propose understanding much recent mediated theatre in terms of “expressive” archiving—that is creatively informed by the “medium’s potentialities” and the “style of the creator” (5). Yet, even as mediated theatre is a distinct genre of film, Margaret Jane Kidnie

cautions against going too far with this view. As she points out, the appeal of mediated theatre has “something to do with” live performance, and this context continues to define the attraction of watching it (142). Thus seeing mediated theatre entirely as its own art form, or even as a specific genre of adaptation, loses something of the live point of origin that makes viewing these adaptations exciting. Providing an approach that recognizes this origin, Sullivan examines how mediated theatre creates a sense of “being there,” and she does this by attending to ways that mediated theatre productions convey “dramaturgies of space,” in addition to a character’s “psychology and emotion” (654). Aligning with this view, John Wyver has also figured onscreen renderings of live stage productions as “translations,” a useful formulation since it recognizes the need for “a strong degree of fidelity to a pre-existing original as well as a recognition of inevitable and intentional creative mediation” (“Screening” 290). More recently, Wyver has returned to the term “adaptation,” recognizing that a screened version of theatre is a “distinctive creative work” (*Screening* 6). Only some of this meaning is “in dialogue with memories of the original production”—that is, with the fact of origination in a theatrical performance. Beyond that, screened theatre prompts “other dialogues,” in relation to other filmed adaptations, the work of a particular director, or other encounters with the playing company (*Screening* 6).

Whatever the specific way of describing mediated theatre, much of the criticism explores how this art form works by examining how the camera work informs interpretation. Such work focuses on analyzing the use and mixing of what can be called “theatrical” and “filmic” perspectives. Writing of theatrical perspectives, John Wyver explains:

[T]he theatrical elements may be understood as the components specific to the presentation on a stage, including the characteristic of continuous performance pitched to an auditorium and of live audience. Theatrical elements, moreover, may also include the image sequences that respect and respond to these characteristics and offer in wide shots an apparently direct and comparatively unmediated form of access to the staging.” (“All the Trimmings” 105-106)

Erin Sullivan provides a similar definition, describing “theatrical point of view” in terms of “a close focus on individual performers” which is underpinned by a steady awareness of the space surrounding them (639). While most mediated theatre incorporates theatrical elements, the form also employs cinematic or filmic elements more associated with film, such as crane shots, close-ups, as well as “more insistent mediations of multiple camera shots framed tightly on individuals and small groups and the editing between these” (Wyver, “All the Trimmings” 106).

Nearly all of what Aebischer and Greenhalgh classify as “expressive” mediated theatre involves both filmic and theatrical perspectives, with some characterized more by one emphasis or the other, often depending on the style of a particular company or director. Thus, some theatre companies, such as the Royal Shakespeare Company, rely more on close-up shots to promote the sense of “physical and psychological proximity” that many viewers might associate with film (Sullivan 639). Such shots provide “an intimate, inclusive, and people-centered point-of-view, offering free access to the nuances of facial expressions and other markers of psychological inwardness” (637). For example, in a fascinating analysis of *Hamlet* at the RSC (Simon Godwin, Dir., 2016), starring Paapa Essiedu and directed for film by Robin Lough, Pascale Aebischer

describes how the camera movement during Hamlet’s soliloquies reinforces a sense of psychology. In these moments, she observes, Camera 2 tracked from left to right while slowly drawing closer to Hamlet, “as if drawn into his consciousness by some invisible force” (*Shakespeare* 174). Meanwhile, other productions, such as those from the Globe Theatre, tend to be more “open and mixed” (Sullivan 636) blending “more tightly framed one- and two-shots” with “looser shots of the wider stage space” (636).

While nearly all recent, professional produced mediated theatre mixes “theatrical” and “filmic” perspectives, critics have become especially interested in exploring how productions convey, even promote, what is specific to a theatrical production or to the experience of live theatre. For instance, in a sharp analysis of the broadcast of the National Theatre’s *Hamlet* at the Barbican, starring Benedict Cumberbatch, Sullivan discusses how director Robin Lough used crane shots to “tell the story of this production” (650). For example, the camera work in the nunnery scene captured Ophelia’s effort to write a note to Hamlet about their being watched. In this way, the camera conveyed an important element of this production, their “supportive and mutual relationship” (652). At the same time, it drew attention to a detail that might have been missed by a live audience member, thus conveying this “story” more effectively on screen than might have occurred in-person (652).

Going beyond ways that camera work might reinforce a specific point of theatrical interpretation, Lyndsey Brandon Hunter argues that mediated theatre often emphasizes aspects of production that are distinct to the physical creation of live theatre, like capturing an actor spewing while speaking, or an actor’s sweat. To be sure, some audiences have reacted negatively

to seeing this level of physical work. For instance, after Disney+ released *Hamilton*, there was a Twitter firestorm about Jonathan Groff's spit (Ingolfsland), which freaked out viewers especially in the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic when the film was released. At the same time, this kind of spewing is what happens in live theatre, and in this way mediated theatre "often conserves and reifies traditional norms and expectations attached" to live drama (16).³

Globe Theatre filmed productions provide good example of the way that films can aggrandize the space and moment of a live theatrical performance. These films, which are frequently recorded over multiple nights and then edited together and released a year or so later (Sullivan 640; Aebischer, "South Bank" 124), tend to use editing to emphasize the unique nature of the theatrical space. For instance, Globe films often begin with an exterior shot of the unique building and then a shot of the audience, especially the groundlings, gathered around and leaning on the stage (Aebischer, "South Bank" 125). Because of the universal lighting and proximity of the audience members to the stage, the films include the audience frequently (124). For film viewers, these patterns create "a level of spatial awareness that is comparable, if not exactly identifiable, to that of their in-house counterparts at the Globe" (Sullivan 641). At the same time, by constantly presenting the live audience, as well as the sweat and physical work of the actors, viewers can also feel excluded from the Globe, "separate" from the "experience" of the play in situ (Aebischer, "South Bank" 128). In so doing, the Globe productions, while creating a sense for viewers that they are *not there*, also promote and elevate the idea of being there. In this way, going back to the observations of Lyndsey Brandon Hunter, they "convey" and "reify" what is distinctive about the live experience of theatre at the Globe. Indeed, many instructors incorporate

Globe productions in their teaching for just this reason. For instance, in a recent essay, Stephanie Pietros observes that she often uses Globe productions because “they make concrete my lessons about the mechanics of Shakespeare’s theater,” while also “invit[ing]” consideration about factors unique to any live performance” (92). Where then might instructors turn if they too want to help students to consider those factors unique to live performance?

Resources

Some instructors might be able to arrange for students to attend an event screening of a Shakespeare play at a local cinema. But for those for whom travel is not a feasible option, it is still possible to create for students a sense of what live theatre is like using a range of on-demand platforms. These include Theatre in Video, Globe on Screen, Digital Theatre+, Drama Online, National Theatre at Home, as well as reportedly a forthcoming site from Cambridge University Press. Here I briefly survey of the first four of these, the ones that are most established, in terms of content and functionality.

The most barebones site is Theatre in Video, published by Alexander Street. At this point, the site advertises a collection 800 hours of plays, documentaries, and interviews (“Theatre in Video”). The collection is available via institutional subscription at two, tiered price points, Volume I and Volume II, or as part of a larger, umbrella collection, Theatre Performance and Design. My institution has a more restrictive, Volume I subscription, which I have used regularly. This subscription provides access to some historical theatre and film productions, such as the 1948 Olivier *Hamlet* as well as (in my geographic region), some recent productions from

the Stratford Festival (Ontario, Canada) and from the Royal Shakespeare Company. The collection also includes interviews with directors, designers, and writers. Such contextual resources can enable exploration of performance history and changing approaches to interpretation, directing, and acting. The site has interesting features for teaching and learning, such as a tool for bookmarking scenes with a unique web address that links directly back to that moment. The tool can help instructors or students link to a specific scene in a presentation or paper. Overall, my experience of it has been hit and miss. I use it most to find relevant, recent productions, and these offerings are helpful but still limited.

Another important resource is Globe on Film, available through the Globe Player or by institutional subscription via *Drama Online* or *Digital Theatre+* (both discussed below). The site offers a collection of professionally produced versions of Globe plays, usually filmed over a couple of nights and then edited and mixed to eliminate ambient noise and to capture the best takes. At the time of this writing, the site has at least one filmed version of many, but not all, Shakespeare's plays, including landmark productions, such as the 2012 revival of an all-male *Twelfth Night* starring Mark Rylance as Olivia and Stephen Fry as Malvolio. There are two versions of some plays, such as of *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*. Most of the films are of Shakespeare productions, but at the time of this writing, there is also filmed version of *The Duchess of Malfi* and a new play, *Metamorphoses*. The individual subscription is affordable, and it is also possible to rent or purchase individual productions. I have had luck requiring students to rent a couple of the plays as part of the required materials and supplies for the semester. I have also found it helpful to teach the plays in conjunction with other resources

on the Globe's website, such as the podcasts, actor interviews, and lesson plans. As of this writing, the site also provides access to ten of the multinational and multilingual performances produced for the Globe to Globe festival (part of the cultural Olympiad connected with the 2012 London Olympics), which is discussed further below.

Two commercial services are especially robust, providing more functionality and ways of engaging with the plays. Both are only available via institutional subscription, and have catalogs and collections at various price points that include Shakespeare and other classical and modern drama, including plays from the Globe Theatre, the National Theatre, and the Royal Shakespeare Company. *Drama Online*, published by Bloomsbury, aims at a higher education, and describes itself as a “high-quality online research tool for drama and literature students, professors, and teachers” (“About Drama Online”). According to the *Drama Online* website, the collection “features 2,750 playtexts from 1,000 playwrights, 400 audio plays, 345 hours of video, and 370 scholarly books,” thereby offering “a complete multimedia experience of theatre” (“What’s Included?”). Like *Theatre in Video* and the Globe Player, this resource allows for repeat viewing of productions, as well as the ability to create clips of scenes to use for discussion in class. Because the resource allows viewers to access text and performance simultaneously, it offers a helpful way into to comparative analyses and discussion of cuts (and additions). As Niamh O’Leary mentions in her essay in this roundtable, while expensive, this institutional resource can save students money, since editions and plays are available through a single, institutional subscription (see also Lonergan in “Case Studies”). Most drama is available only in English, although *Drama Online* aims to add more international content (Carson 117).

Digital Theatre+ is an independently produced, commercial platform, available through institutional subscription. Like *Drama Online*, this resource features productions by major companies such as the Globe and RSC. While *Drama Online*'s content caters to the university- and post-graduate user (Borsuk 31), *Digital Theatre+* caters more to secondary schools. As Amy Borsuk observes, this platform was “designed with the principal of promoting global access to theatrical performances to inspire students to engage with theatre creatively, and to teach them the necessary elements of theatre scholarship in line with UK educational standards” (27). Robert Delamere, the founder of the site, observes that it usefully facilitates comparative analysis, “reference back and repeat scenes and play speeches and reflect on the heart of the drama or the key questions of the drama” (Delamere in Borsuk 30). He also views the platform as a space where students can remix Shakespeare (or any other drama on the site)—that is, play with the content in their own way, by using a tool that allows students to “curate more adventurously” (in Borsuk 30) by mixing and combining scenes or parts of scenes from different productions in their own “mixed tape” (30).

Individually, or in combination, each of these services offers students and instructors opportunities to view multiple productions, which makes it possible to compare different theatrical interpretations of the text, as well as to explore other elements of theatre, such as stagecraft and acting styles. While these resources are profoundly important, there are also some issues that publishers are still grappling with. One is that publishers are working to keep up with the need for accessibility (Bartley in Carson 118). Most productions available now across platforms have professionally edited, accurate captions.. On the Globe Player, for some time,

none of the English language productions had subtitles, but with a recent reboot of the site, all videos are now available with English captions, and some are available with audio description, but audio description remains less common.

Another issue is that all of these sites are dominated by productions from major British theatres, which can have the effect of establishing a single-British standard for what Shakespeare should look and sound like. Many of these platforms are seeking to diversify by adding more international content (Carson 117). Yet currently, as Christie Carson observes, “there is the danger of providing a canon of texts and performances that reinforce mainstream ideas and conservative values” (121). She goes on to ask, “Does the convenience and flexibility of having these resources as a stable starting point for discussion outweigh the issues of potential canonical entrenchment?” (121). Beyond entrenching a British version of Shakespeare, such productions, if they are not careful to attend to design and lighting, can also engrain a vision of what the Shakespearean actor looks like. Pascale Aebischer makes this point in her analysis of the RSC production of *Hamlet*, starring a racially diverse, primarily Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) cast. In this production, the design and broadcast teams paid little attention to skin color, with the result that the performances of black actors became “inherently less visible, legible and (re)markable than those of their lighter-skinned peers” (*Shakespeare* 190). When lighting, costuming, and set choices mean that the bodies of white actors stand out more than other bodies of actors of color, it makes those white bodies seem more legible as especially suited to Shakespeare.

The criticism on mediated theatre registers one, albeit limited, way to recontextualize and expand student interaction with multi-racial and global Shakespeare, which is through “Globe to Globe” productions, which is a collection of the 2012 Globe performances of Shakespeare by companies from around the world, produced in conjunction with the 2012 Cultural Olympiad. Performances are by companies from around the world and in languages other than English. At the time of this writing, films of ten of these productions can be rented or purchased through the Globe Player. (They are also available through Drama Online.) All ten are filmed in the original language of performance and available with English subtitles. Tom Bird, Director of the Globe to Globe Festival, observes that these productions go beyond the Anglo-centrism of most digital Shakespeare. He hopes that the “an international approach” represented in Globe to Globe “just makes you irreverent toward the plays” (Bell 70), while providing a broader “spectrum of what you could do on stage with Shakespeare” (Bird in Bell 71).

Trends in Pedagogy

Whichever resource one uses, one thing is clear: at this point, there remains a gap between “producer expectations for a platform and the reality of student and instructor usage” (Borsuk 33). One reason for this gap lies the digital skills of teachers and students as well as lack of sufficient pedagogical preparation for teachers in how to use these platforms (33). Distributors have suggested that they need to add more features and do more to help instructors use existing features. In the meantime, it is useful to catalog some ways that mediated theatre has already emerged in pedagogical articles. Many instructors are using these resources, but they are doing

so in a variety of ways and for a variety of ends, ranging from analysis of the language of the text to analysis of theatrical performance and acting styles. Writing in 2007, Sarah Bay-Cheng observed that “no survey yet exists cataloging the use of mediated theatre in the classroom” (38). This portion of the essay goes some way to addressing this gap, but it is not a comprehensive catalog.

Instructors have for some time used films of live theatre in their courses, although these have tended to be used to enhance textual interpretation, and this trend remains strong. Thus, Bruce Brandt discusses teaching a film of the 1976 American Conservatory Theatre production of *Taming of the Shrew* that works to “complicate[] students’ reactions to the text” (174). Another example emerges in the 2020 article, “Of Text and Tech: Digital Encounters with Shakespeare in the Deree College Classroom in Athens, Greece.” Here Anastasia Logotheti surveys a variety of textual and performance-based online resources for teaching Shakespeare to non-native speakers of English. These include the British Library’s digitized items, such as early printed books, manuscripts, annotated play-scripts, and photographs of the filmed performances available through *Drama Online*. In a way that prefigures Elizabeth Charlebois’s essay in this roundtable, Logotheti emphasizes using editions and performances to help students to learn that Shakespeare is constructed through editions and performance. At the same time, while she observes that these approaches can help students to learn more about theatre and theatrical practices, the specific discussion seems to emphasize using digital resources to enhance critical and textual analysis. For instance, Logotheti observes that “students approach textual analysis”

differently, with more “awareness” (44), once they have watched more than one performance and that viewing multiple productions enhances ability with “critical analysis” (45).

Sometimes a faculty member might incorporate mediated theatre to promote analysis and understanding of performance, but find that students have other needs, which are also met by digital resources. This point emerges in Chris Thurman’s essay on digital Shakespeare in the teaching of university-level Shakespeare in South Africa, a country where, he observes, many primary and secondary schools lack basic educational infrastructure. As a result, many students arrive at the university having never seen a play whether live, in a mediated recording, or in an adaption for film. As he puts it in his 2020 article, “Such are the conditions at hundreds of South African schools that even the taken-for-granted practice of playing a DVD is not a feasible option” (53). Beyond this, because of a wider “literacy problem” (54), students have faced a lack of books and other resources in their previous schools. For Thurman, mediated theatre can address some of the challenges to reading and understanding Shakespeare that grow out of these systemic issues, since such films make possible a “multimodal approach to literacy,” one that “incorporates viewing, listening to and participating in the play’s performance,” and can also help with multilingual contexts by “promoting the translation of Shakespeare’s works” (54). Yet, Thurman observes, working in these contexts sometimes requires aiming at high-level analytical discussions, while meeting students where they are. Thus, he has taught classes exploring the politics of performance, such as the filmed adaptation of the RSC’s “African” *Julius Caesar* (2012) which was filmed partly on location and partly on stage, and set in a generic, contemporary African dictatorship. Thurman was interested in the representation of Africa in this

production, and his students “concurred that the production was problematic in treating Africa-as-a-country” (58). Yet, as with many productions, his students appreciated this and other films because the productions helped them to understand the basics of plot and character.

Other faculty incorporate mediated theatre by bringing students to see event cinema, as in Peter Kirwan’s essay in this roundtable. Similarly, Ann Martinez writes about taking students in Ohio to the cinema see the National Theatre’s *Hamlet*, starring Benedict Cumberbatch. Both Kirwan and Martinez consider how event cinema conveys, and relies on, the idea that it is presenting a live event. This point comes across as well in Geoffrey Way’s discussion of RSC Schools Broadcasts, which airs prerecorded performances at a set time followed by a live Q&A with cast and crew. It is interesting to note that each of these essays, focusing on teaching in an event cinema context, have elements that support both older and newer research frameworks for understanding mediated theatre—that is, they present mediated theatre as a loss, a falling away from an original experience, and a gain, a way to access and have a taste of, the real thing. Moving beyond these articles, there is still much to be explored. In particular, there is significant opportunity for instructors to develop pedagogical articles that explore ways of addressing the British-centricity of the current mediated theatre landscape or the questions prompted by filmed productions involving a BAME cast, such as the questions (mentioned above) about lighting that Aebischer in her analysis of the RSC *Hamlet*, starring Paapa Essiedu (*Shakespeare 180–90*).

Yet, for instructors to write such articles, they need access, and there remain issues of access to mediated theatre as it exists now. Even as event cinema has widened access to world class mainly British productions, these are difficult to access for everyone. Where I teach, the

nearest event cineplex for viewing “event cinema” used to be fifty miles away. These showings have not returned with the reopenings after the shutdowns of the Covid-19 pandemic. The events I attended prior to the pandemic had an audience of three or four, including me. Thus it is worth keeping in mind Joe Falocco’s criticism of event cinema. As he points out, outside of metropolitan areas in the U.S. and Britain, such events will never be commercially viable. The crowds they draw are negligible. Furthermore, Falocco observes, students often prefer to see Shakespeare on demand, a point also made by Thurman (55).

What Falocco wrote in 2017 seems even truer now: “The future for Shakespeare on Screen[s] in the twenty-first century lies in open access and interaction with an educational system, rather than in restrictive efforts at cinematic distribution” (65). As we have experienced with Covid-19, we are all more dependent on screens now—even to access, support, and enjoy what was once live theatre. For this reason, the future of Shakespeare on stage likely will rely more and more on screens, especially via “open access” platforms and through “interactions with an educational system.” Instructors, students, and the general population are currently, and perhaps increasingly, likely to be, accessing “live” Shakespeare via mediated theatre. For this reason, it will be useful for all of us to learn more about how this mediation works and for educators to teach these films not solely in terms of text and performance, but with attention to the techniques, possibilities, and limits this particular mode of transmission.

Notes

¹ While Bay-Cheng discusses recordings, Wyver adapts her definition to add the possibility of simultaneous live broadcast (“All the Trimmings” 105).

² An exception is Peter Kirwan’s article in this roundtable.

³ In a related vein, Pascale Aebischer has recently examined how seemingly “‘new’ performance modes” hearken back not only back to the early modern theatre itself, how such modes are “related to and adapt the spatial configurations and modes of spectatorship that govern early modern dramaturgies” (*Shakespeare* 3).

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In Defense of Informal or Embodied Writing: A Note to Editors Half my Age

Gregory Stephens
University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

The kinds of writing I have published after prior careers in journalism and songwriting can be grouped into three areas: cultural analysis (including literature and film criticism), writing studies scholarship informed by General Education curriculum reform in second language contexts, and since 2014, creative writing, both literary nonfiction and fiction. My focus here is on the implications of a struggle to include more personal, reflexive, or even literary kinds of voice in scholarship about writing. That includes both the pedagogy of teaching writing, and the study of writing as a field. My writing about educational contexts has been forged by an ongoing argument with academic editors. I have been *pushing back* against demands for an impersonal style by journal editors since the 2013-2014 academic year. That year in Saudi Arabia, where I designed and implemented a new freshman English curriculum, was a sort of rubicon in several ways. I'll name four influences which have shaped my resolve to prioritize *writing well*, and to help fashion the communicative cultures of writing studies as a resource which could be used for all those in higher education who want to broaden their audience.

After leaving Riyadh, and becoming an English professor in Puerto Rico, my view of the kinds of writing I wanted to practice and teach, and my “stance and engagement” towards academic editors, evolved. First, I dove into a history of argumentation in “rhetoric and

composition.” As I navigated the theory wars, and began submitting pieces for publication, I realized that much of the writing in rhet-comp was just as constipated as that which I had come to detest in much of the humanities and the social sciences.

Second, I taught Creative Writing every semester. In *creative writing studies*, I found people who, like Wendy Bishop and Doug Hesse, argued for coexistence between rhet-comp and creative writing. Creative nonfiction in particular has attracted students and administrators from other disciplines, who wanted tools for communicating outside of specialist bubbles.

Third, it became evident that I was not doing rhet-comp, but Writing Studies as a “disciplined interdisciplinarity.” Educators such as Bazerman and many creative writing scholars insisted that we should resist the temptation to speak the narrow language of disciplinarity. This broader approach to writing has been aided by a re-organization in 2014 by the Modern Language Association. There were five different streams within “Rhetoric, Composition, and Writing Studies,” according to the MLA: creative writing, history and theory of rhetoric, history and theory of composition, literacy, and writing pedagogies. The result has been to *decenter composition*: to refocus on writing in education, and in post-academic contexts, as a collaborative effort in which composition studies was neither centered nor excluded.

Fourth, looking for allies outside the “social justice” tribe, I have been inspired by Academic Literacies. This transnational body of research and practice, pioneered in the UK, has proponents in South Africa and Australia. A key tenet has been the late Brian Street’s arguments against the “deficit model.” Students are not “empty of literacy,” vessels that we can “fill up” with the right kind of literacy. Students, returning adults, and other “non-traditional” learners

bring their own pre-existing literacies, Street and his colleagues argue. In version of “lifespan writing” articulated by Bazerman, and practiced in Academic Literacies, it is crucial to recognize the various literacies that learners bring, and to integrate these into a package of literacies that can serve as “transferable skills” in inter-disciplinary and post-academic contexts.

Culture is at the bottom of any re-thinking of writing, literacy, and the broader purposes of education. Academic Literacies pioneers have often utilized ethnography as a way to understand the literacies of those in our classrooms. The Anthropology of Writing has also had much of value to say about re-thinking writing and education in a more cultural sense.

The preceding overview grew out of a sort of hand-to-hand combat with editors. In fairness, there are a growing number of editors in journals such as *Intraspection* and *Writing on the Edge*, who have carved out space for hybrid writing. What follows, a view from the trenches, was written with a certain throwing of elbows, in order to clear out some writerly space.

The Author’s Note

The following “Author’s Note” was envisioned as an Afterword to my essay “Foucault’s New Clothes: Revisionist Perspectives.” I was responding to comments from editors of *MASKA: Anthropology, Sociology, Culture* (Feb. 2016). They flagged about 25 instances of “informal” writing, which they wanted changed to a formal, academic style. Most of this response was not published in the journal’s public version of my essay. But it has served as a baseline referent for me. I began to recognize that *pushing back against restrictive notions of proper writing*, in an educational/academic context, *had become an emergent genre of writing*, in its own right.

I wrote these comments not merely in response to the editors of the Polish-based journal *MASKA*, who were after all brave enough to print what some may take as attempted theocide (of a theoretical god). Interference with my writerly style has become routine, and I suspect that this is a widely shared experience. I came to realize that most of these editors were half my age. (The allusion to the Jamaican answer songs “Half My Age” and “Twice My Age” is intentional). It seems that a new generation of editors who tried to straighten out my prose were unaware of debates about reflexive, situated, or embodied writing. More seriously, prior generations of social scientists who wrote with style and flair were not even a distant memory. The new journal editors I encountered seemed to take neutered academic writing as the norm.

When I came out of a year in Saudi Arabia in 2014 I was determined to publish a range of my writing and research, on topics as diverse as curriculum reform, film criticism, race relations, social theory, Latin American cultural studies, and creative nonfiction. An editor of the *World Arab English Journal* wrote detailed instructions on how I should employ a certain mode of non-personal “one might conceivably suggest” nonsense. I waved Ken Hyland at him and he acquiesced. But I added a new framing device, justifying the use of the “I.” Such prefatory material, it seems to me, is becoming a genre of writing in its own right. I.E., *why current debates allow me to use readable English as a legitimate form.*

I wrote a piece called “Arguing With a Monument,” published in 2015 by *Comparative American Studies*, but not before prior editors had given me unsolicited advice on both style and content. One recommendation: that I cite a list of other Frederick Douglass scholarship that I had

already explored in my Cambridge UP book, *On Racial Frontiers*. Maybe they presumed they were giving valuable advice to a very green, newly minted PhD barely half *their* age.

Wrestling with editors half my age has become the norm for me. For instance there was a bout of trench warfare with the line editor for a journal publishing my piece “Sacrifice, Faith, Mestizo Identity: Three Views of Che Guevara’s ‘New Man’.” This editor was particularly intrusive. I fired off yet another letter defending my style—insisting on my right to retain a narrative that flows, and has vision. I was willing to not publish, rather than to make all the suggested changes. Again, people higher up the food chain came to my defense. But some younger scholars may not realize that they can fight for their style, and their vision. This is why I’m presenting the present “Author’s Note” as an essay in its own right: I hope to hear from/read about other scholars who are doing hand-to-hand combat with editors in the effort to keep their writerly style intact. 2

In the case of *MASKA*, I decided that this was something of a “teachable moment” for cross-generational dialogue. It informs the sort of reflexive writing I now encourage in grad students. Here’s what I sent them:

“Author’s Note” From “Foucault’s New Clothes: Revisionist Perspectives” in *MASKA: Anthropology, Sociology, Culture*, Vol. 28

The following essay criticizes the abstracted, disembodied, theoretically constipated writing of Foucault and his followers. But to oppose disembodied writing infers an allegiance to embodied writing. Readers will note a good deal of allusive (and embodied) language in my

writing: I teach creative writing and literary nonfiction, after all. The editors of *Maska* have flagged numerous expressions as “informal,” and requested that I formalize them.

As a senior scholar who practiced journalism and songwriting long before he entered grad school, by now I have not only my own writerly voice, but well-developed arguments for my form of “embodied” writing, and reasons for why I want readers to meet me in something other than the dry, neutered style of academic prose. This did not originate with Foucault, but has certainly been made far worse through Foucault’s afterlife with grad students, in particular.

I am conscious of writing, most immediately, to graduate students and young scholars whose first language is, in most cases, not English. During my year as an English professor in Saudi Arabia, I attended academic conferences in Istanbul and Tunisia; there as well as in Riyadh, I got a steady dose of variants of “Global English.” I hear and read this lingua franca every day in Puerto Rico. It has become clear that communicating successfully with global audiences nowadays requires new thinking about how we use words, images, sound, etc.

There are three good reasons for maintaining those “informal” styles of expression that many editors have suggested that I iron out—especially editors working with “Global English.” First the subtitle of this journal: *Anthropology, Sociology, Culture*. I am always happy to begin with anthropology, because through ethnography we find the strongest argument for reflexive writing—and for engaging cultures on their own terms, not merely through theory. Bronislaw Malinowski famously pitched his tent in the midst of a Trobriand Islands village. He went off the beaten path, because the whites who had been living there for years lived apart, and knew nothing about the local culture. This story has been told many times, and was re-told by Ryszard

Kapuscinski towards the end of his book of lectures, *The Other* (2008).

Obviously the story needs retelling, because the message hasn't reached most academics. I seek readers willing to *go to the culture*, and listen to that culture in unsanitized form. A second reason: when I go to literary masters such as Gabriel Garcia Márquez or Carlos Fuentes, and read their political commentary (in Spanish), I expect not only astute analysis, but a literary style that can bring me joy, or make me smile. Sometimes their language may be over my head... but because I have to reach for it, I grow. I could say the same about Shakespeare, or the Greek dramatists, or Cervantes. Much of their prose is not only "informal," but allusive, and at times magical.... And so after I read them, their words come back to me, like music. I don't understand all of this between my ears. Most of our understanding of culture is not merely intellectual.

Finally, the academic arguments for the value of reflexive or embodied writing are by now well-developed. Even social scientists are teaching techniques to their students learned from Creative Nonfiction, because they want their students to be able to speak beyond their specialty, in the workplace, in their everyday life. We insist that academic writing needs to be able to travel, to be open to new views embedded within idiomatic expressions.

When I use a phrase like "to swim with the big theoretical fish," I am thinking of many things, including Hemingway's fisherman who went "out too far" in *The Old Man and the Sea*. But you, my readers, may see something entirely different. That would be what I would hope for: in my revisionist reading of Foucault, I am asking the same thing of you that I would expect you to ask of me. To remind each other that "We grow by moving from the known into the unknown," and that the unknown always requires, to some degree, a new language.

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New Encounters with an Old Course: Rethinking my Composition Course Approaches for a Highly-Diverse Class

Yasmin Rioux
Divine Word College

When I enter a new classroom, start teaching a new class, or am consumed by the beginning stages of planning a semester with a new group of students, I tend to think about this endeavor rhetorically. Who will I encounter? Who are the students? Who is my audience? And who am I this time around, in relation to them? What is my positionality? What is happening in our place or the larger context that will shape and influence my student groups' topics, the form of their writing, or other writing choices? I try to gauge my incoming writing students' interests by exploring their majors and year in college on my roster. I sometimes check out "popular" shows on Netflix, see what is currently being retweeted, or listen to the language of young adults as we sit at opposite sides of a bar or stand near one another in the checkout line.

Teaching at an extraordinarily diverse institution, I also try to examine my roster for potential insights that might give me an idea of where my students are from. Perhaps we have experienced the same location, or some students share language backgrounds. Of course, I remind myself that names are at times only names; my own is a compilation of Persian, French, and Canadian, but I do not identify as any of these! I was born and raised in Germany before moving to the United States at 18, and even though I now have my own little family here, my

identity still includes my German experiences. Based on this duality, I, at times, still struggle to explain the complexities of my own national identity. Despite the inevitable differences that lie between generations or cultures, I feel quite prepared to teach any common writing course and am confident in what I was fortunate to learn at my graduate institution. However, new circumstances, courses, and students always enrich us with new experiences and add to our knowledge and understanding of what we thought we knew.

Context and Adjustments

I started my new position at a rather unique Midwestern institution in early 2017. My job description included teaching Communication and English classes while coordinating the Writing Center. Aside of my school being a liberal arts college seminary – an institution type, which I had never been exposed to prior to my employment – the incredibly large number of international students intrigued me. In fact, international students outnumber US-born and US-educated students. Over 90% of the students hold passports from non-US countries, but maintain citizenship status in countries such as Benin, Kenya, Togo, South Korea, Columbia, Haiti, China, Togo, to name only a few of the 23 countries that are currently represented. Sharing my students' international and ESL or EFL status, I accepted my position excitedly and was ready for a challenge. I felt that my various graduate TESOL credits and Ph.D. program (Composition and TESOL) had sufficiently prepared me for anything that might deal with large numbers of students who did not view English as their first language.

As I started preparing my Academic Writing class, I analyzed my students' background by having conversations with them and other faculty members who had taught at the institution for several years. It became clear that many students were familiar with and accustomed to more traditional European models of education where the professor lectures and fills the students' "empty brains" with knowledge. Based on my students' home countries – most of which are former European colonies and still heavily influenced or/and burdened by this past – they felt at ease with this approach and content with the teaching style. According to a few of my students, a classroom did not need to be a place for reflective and interactive discussion. It also did not have to be a sphere for exploration through questions or group work, which were all things I had learned and began to feel comfortable with as part of my own experiences and education! Some of my students, however, felt comfortable with very traditional student-teacher roles and were not bored or bothered by quietly sitting there to soak up information. We seemed to be at opposite sides of a spectrum, and my power position made me feel awkward as I did not want to impose things, disrespect my students' backgrounds, or suggest that my approach was superior. I had never taught in a very traditional way but thought that my students and I could all compromise and meet in a middle. This might allow all of us to still be happy in our current roles without feeling like our prior knowledge and experiences were constantly lingering in the back of our minds, telling us how bizarre and maybe frightening the classroom was.

I had also never used a textbook for a Composition 1 or 2 class and had never encountered issues or resistance for this approach. Most students had always been happy to save the \$50. At my new institution, however, I felt compelled to use something to emphasize to my

students that they were now entering and becoming part of a new academic discourse community and that their research, writing, and dialoguing would enable them to be part of a larger conversation that was occurring. My students were already accustomed to transcending discourse communities as most spoke at least one other language. Due to this, I assumed that taking an approach that emphasized and explained academic writing as a language variation might be effective. I remember how powerful and enabling the idea of academic writing being a variation of English had been to me once I had learned about it during my graduate years.

I had played with Bedford's *Book of Genres* (Braziller & Kleinfeld, 2018), as I enjoyed the contemporary nature of its texts, the thorough descriptions of generic conventions, the section on multimodal and multigenre writing, and the rhetorical approaches to each genre. However, I felt my students needed something that would allow and encourage them to write themselves into an entirely new discourse community and would do so in an explicit manner. My students are extremely motivated when it comes to improving any aspect of their English literacy practices, so when I decided on Bedford's *Joining the Conversation* (Palmquist & Wallraff, 2017), the name itself even resonated with my approach and mission. Emphasizing to my students that they could envision academic writing as a variation of English seemed to help them conceptualize the context immensely. Framing the course as an interactive, interdependent, ongoing, and existing conversation that they could write and communicate themselves into, agreed with the students' desire to encompass various aspects of the English language. As the text often refers to conversations, it allowed me to continue the discussion of varying interpretations and representations of information and thought. My students and I were able to

easily transform their oral communication into written documents and foreground the similarities and differences between the two, which my students found extremely beneficial.

Outside of textbook adoption, my writing course within this highly international context also called for the inclusion of more detailed course materials that were available and retrievable for students beyond the classroom. I needed to make available information that my students would read, listen to, or even watch, as I wanted to ensure that whatever learner they might be, they could easily engage with the course. Coming to the English language after having acquired German first, I recall how much I preferred the solace of reading in private over orally contributing to an in-class activity. As a student, I liked being able to watch a clip on something that we had encountered in class and that I could use in order to further my understanding about the topic or content. With my own experience in mind, I wanted to make sure that my students could focus on our course content and do so despite their learning preferences. For the first time in my history, I decided to enhance our discussions with PowerPoint presentations. I had always been against lecturing in writing classrooms and was conflicted to change this practice, as I was picturing my favorite graduate professor shaking his head. It almost felt like betrayal as I slowly and secretively created my first PowerPoint for my Academic Writing course. The PPT was about rhetorical situations.

Instead of simply discussing, practicing, and writing on the board, I wanted my students to have access to our discussion, the definitions, examples, links to resources, and YouTube clips where instructors spoke in a way that some of my students might have experienced as being more clear and effective than my words had been. After each class, I uploaded the PowerPoints

to our Learning Management System and encouraged students to use them as resources and guides for potential questions. At some point, I realized that almost every student printed each presentation in its entirety and that students were creating binder booklets as supplements to the textbook. It also became common practice to add and alter slides throughout the class period in order to keep the presentation engaging and a tool to opening interactions and dialogue. After a while, the PPTs became a regular component of my classes and enhanced my students' understanding of the intertwined nature of oral and written communication and language. Adding to the textbook's message, the PPTs enabled us to continuously recognize and talk about rhetorical differences in regard to audience, writer/speaker, and form.

Regarding assignments, I commonly ask my Composition students to write a general research paper as their first graded paper. The topics are up to them, they can choose from MLA, APA, or Chicago, and must limit their exploration of a topic to roughly four pages. When I first assigned this paper to my current student group at my institution, I was met with numerous questions that I was as surprised by as my students were with the lack of more precise expectations and limitations that I did and did not provide. My students wanted to know specifics: what is the minimum page number? Word count? What should the title include? How long is a first paragraph (according to my expectations)? What is a good location for a thesis statement? Among others. Usually, in my experience, writing students were happy to explore and not be confined by too many rules and imposed restrictions. New group, new world! Some students informed me that they were completely unfamiliar with the term "research paper" and did not quite know how to begin. *Joining the Conversation* didn't present sufficient details on the

roles of paragraphs, what an introduction must address, the significance of a title, etc. I, and the textbook, assumed that students were familiar with a research paper, its terms, and basic moves. I had again made a wrongful assumption based on my personal experience and position. I contacted my Intensive English Language Institute colleagues who are housed in the same building as I am. They assured me that the students who were enrolled in my Academic Writing class had most certainly written research papers in their higher-level writing EFL courses and that they couldn't quite understand where the disconnect or lack of information transfer had occurred. In the end, I created another famous PowerPoint in which we toured the research paper like a botanical garden. We examined various essay titles, discussed the importance of a thesis statement, the role of the assignment within our course and the larger academic writing context, and eventually I received wonderfully composed research papers that reflected the student writers' clear comprehension of the assigned piece.

Teaching the basic research paper in such a diverse college setting re-emphasized to me the need to contextualize information and study results. So many times did I find myself starting a sentence with, "According to research...", to then realize that this research was based on an US context, had relied on US-American study participants, and asked questions in a way that reflected an US-American culture, mentality, and mindset. I noticed some looks of disbelief, at times, and realized that I was talking about locally contextualized knowledge like it was the "truth"! I soon started to change my phrase to "According to US-based research...", or "This study was done in the United States, so it might not uphold for other cultures." The question of international validity opened up great discussions and research endeavors that the whole class

participated in. Having completed my post-secondary education entirely in the United States (aside of a study abroad in the Netherlands), I had become accustomed to reading articles and research in my field without comparing it to other locations and contexts and had stopped asking myself how something might be different someplace else. Fortunately, my class reminded me of the importance of raising these questions and critically thinking of place and reality.

For all writing classes, my writing students and I start each day that we spend together with a journaling session. Depending on the class period, these sessions range from seven to fifteen minutes and are completely open in regard to topics, what the students write on or with, and the form their writing may take. I also do not read or grade these assignments as they are intimate, private, and for no one's eyes but my students'. It had become my experience that when I say the usual, "Please finish your current thoughts and put away your writing devices and utensils," things would immediately rattle as students abruptly ended their writing to move on to something else. I always found it quite comical how quick and immediate the response to ending the freewriting had been. In my current context, however, I was surprised at having to repeat my "please put away your writing stuff..." My students quite literally finished their thoughts that did not end with a current sentence. Ending a freewriting journaling session could take five minutes. I did not change the writing requirements for our journaling time. I simply enjoyed the fact that I could also write for a few more minutes and peeked up from my screen once in a while to make sure I could also finish my thoughts before my students ended theirs. This new experience helped me to re-conceptualize and reconsider what time means when I write and ask my students to write. Yes, deadlines are firm, but why must time be so limiting and

imposing when it comes to freewriting? What happens to my students' and my personal writing if it's not bound by any form of time?

In order to ask my students to culminate and present their genre-based proficiencies and awareness at the end of each semester, I frequently assign multimodal or multi-genre pieces that reflect a personally held interest and does so using at least five genres. Most students find this quite interesting and view it as an opportunity for creativity, engagement, and exploration. While my current students also found the assignment exciting and intriguing, the introduction of genres in writing was a bit different. That day's PowerPoint listed about twenty different academic genres, all of which we briefly (or extensively) addressed and collaboratively identified. At the institutions I had taught prior to my current college, students frequently asked for clarification on the syllable structure of haikus, how to write lyrics for an existing melody, or how to produce a pamphlet or brochure using MS office. This time teaching my college writing course, none of these questions were raised and none of the mentioned genres required clarification. Everyone knew the generic guidelines for the questions that my experience had prepared me to answer. What was different, however, was the need to elaborate and explain what "Thank You" notes/cards were. We addressed their purpose, when they are written, who writes them and for whom, what common occasions for "Thank You" notes are, and so forth. I was so focused on what my experience had taught me in regards to what genres I would have to explain and address that I, until that moment, had almost forgotten how "American" the "Thank you" card genre is. Sure, other cultures thank givers of gifts, hosts of parties, or letter of recommendation writers! But I re-realized that, similar to my puzzled students, "Thank You" cards had not been part of

my upbringing, cultural contexts, or commonly encountered genres. Like many other times that semester, I noticed that I had overlooked and assumed something about my course and my students. To this day I have probably written three “Thank You” notes, simply because the “Thank you” card is absolutely not part of my culturally “engrained” literacy practices.

Another interesting encounter with genres and their clear cultural associations occurred when I asked students to compose a brief narrative. It became clear that one of my students, who had moved to the United States only a few months prior from a former communist country, felt uncomfortable with the thought of revealing so much information about himself. He explained that he’d rather write a research paper, which, according to my experience, is quite unusual for an undergraduate writer! Most welcome a narrative over a research piece any day! My student was quite adamant about not writing the paper with too much detail but agreed to adhere to the assignment guidelines without divulging too much about himself. Later that day, his peer stopped me on my way out of the room to explain that some of his country mates felt uncomfortable sharing personal information, simply because that is how they had been raised within their sociopolitical contexts. “Of course! I understand,” I explained, embarrassed that I had never thought of this and been so ignorant to the realities of other cultural influences. “That makes perfect sense. Thank you for letting me know!”

In the End – Moving Forward

The mentioned instances offered fantastic opportunities for the students and myself to discuss what we think and know about writing and how culturally bound and reflective our writing can be. Instances that demonstrated misaligned assumptions re-emphasized the importance to keep in mind how one's identity with all of its complexities heavily influences writing choices, writing behaviors, and writing practices within and outside of one's cultural context. Teaching my course to this particular group of students reminded me to stay open minded and take into account my own context from which my course design stems and my own assumptions that I've created through my cultural background, upbringing, and "re-acculturation" to this subculture within a, to me, foreign culture. Neither my students nor I had grown up in the United States, so as we were trying to integrate our justifications for our reactions and responses to certain textbook and article assumptions, we were able to co-construct and negotiate meaning for our shared culture and the writing we were sharing and creating here.

It was also a good opportunity for me to reconsider commonly held assumptions and reevaluate what I do in my writing classrooms. Not taking into consideration certain common factors had been my oversight, but I hope that this writing helps others to keep in mind some important considerations for their highly diverse composition classes.

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In Defense of Clichés: A Half-Hearted Polemic

Logan Wiedenfeld
Alcorn State University

In a fascinating study of the frequency and placement of topic sentences in expository prose, Richard Braddock came to the scandalous conclusion that, among professional writers, the topic sentence, at least at it is conventionally conceived, is not nearly as common as the contemporary composition textbook would suggest (291). He observes further that of the topic sentences he identifies, many don't appear to govern the content over which they stand in the manner that many of us, myself included, tend to emphasize when discussing topic sentences in the writing classroom (291-92). I can't help but wonder how many of the paragraphs analyzed by Braddock, apparently left unmoored and rudderless, were then characterized by their readers. "Productively meandering," "inquisitive," "paratactic," "inductive," "empirically-minded," "exploratory" – in short, I suspect that from a certain perspective, a paragraph whose aim is unclear from the start need not be a bad one and moreover that there may be occasions in which such an approach is appropriate. In this essay, I want to suggest that something similar happens in our treatment of clichés in the composition classroom. Generally speaking, our training dictates that we discourage them vehemently. I will argue, however, that such an absolute approach is misguided. Indeed, as I hope to demonstrate, clichés can be and often are powerful expressions that link

author and audience, that connote home, warmth, and community, and that, perhaps most scandalously, can efficiently communicate meaning.

Before we get there, we should get some housecleaning out of the way: a task that, as it turns out, isn't nearly as easy as we'd like to think, namely, defining *cliché*. The cliché, we're told, is a kind of hand-me down phrase that is too tattered, too threadbare to function properly. Clichés are "hackneyed," "trite," "stale." Whatever punch they once had has been worn away over time. If we're lucky, clichés communicate truisms or are platitudes. But one gets the impression that many communicate nothing at all. Rottenberg and Winchell's definition from *Elements of Argument* is representative: "A cliché is an expression or idea grown stale through overuse. Cliches in language are tired expressions that have faded like old photographs; readers no longer see anything when clichés are placed before them" (283). Kudos to Rottenberg and Winchell for not relying on a clichéd cliché metaphor. They go on to list a series of clichés "so obvious and so old-fashioned" that even beginning writers are likely to avoid them. We're going to return to this puzzling idea of the "old-fashioned" cliché, but for now it's worth considering the dominant metaphor of the previous accounts. That the undesirable cliché is "stale," old, un-fresh suggests that the desired phrase whose role it usurps is fresh, original, unused—and by extension, alien, unknown, singular. The good deconstructionist would here point to the concept of "iterability," the idea, in other words, that for an utterance to be legible, it must be repeatable, and for it to be repeatable, it must also be tied to the familiar, the unoriginal, the non-singular

(Derrida 7-8). I don't know that we need to follow Derrida much further, luckily, but it's worth pointing out that the pedagogical approach to the cliché—that we should avoid them or somehow, channeling Ezra Pound, “make them new”—depends at least in part upon a naïve and discredited view of artistic originality. In a very good essay that covers some of the same ground as this essay, Ryan Stark connects this view to Romantic perspectives about genius. Citing Nietzsche, Stark observes that the ideal expression for the Romantic “suffers no witnesses” (455). The cliché, as Stark points out, makes the Romantic anxious precisely because it is surrounded by witnesses. We all hear it, and alas, we all say it. But this is precisely the impetus of this essay: isn't that what language is supposed to do? Isn't that how language is supposed to work? Language, one could say, works by consensus. Descriptive linguistics has taught us that language works only to the extent that participants share the same view about how a linguistic system functions, a view which would include definitions of individual signifiers. So, to add another problem to our approach to clichés, it would seem that our knee-jerk denigration of the cliché comes awfully close to indirectly endorsing a language with no interest in communicating at all (which of course is nothing more than gobbledygook with a snooty sheen).

Before I get any further, I should clarify that my defense of the cliché is not absolute. Indeed, I'm a bit uneasy about settling on the scope of my defense. (My polemic, in other words, isn't as toothy and vicious as it could be.) I'm probably as likely as the next composition teacher to circle the phrase “think outside the box” in a student essay and make a bad joke to my office

mate about how users of that phrase unwittingly communicate to their audience that they've actually climbed inside the box and nailed the lid shut. I'm generally comfortable with never seeing again most of the pat expressions and ready-made phrases that offer that cheap gloss of pseudo-sophistication: "The fact of the matter is that," "for all intents and purposes," and so forth. But what about "in the final analysis," a phrase ubiquitous in theory and dear to many critics, including myself? My thinking, biased as it is, is that the latter phrase still functions well. It does its job, even if it does so by way of circumlocution. The other two, I'd argue, are ugly and technocratic, qualities that make it easier to get rid of them, but they too function, though they do so in spite of themselves, largely by consistency of usage. Anton Zijderveld argues that clichés like these work by a kind of magic, that while they carry truth, they do so "not because of their semantic content but because of their repetitive use" (66). Cliches, in other words, break free from their actual significance and come to be perceived as a unit, a whole, not unlike an individual word.

It's worth emphasizing the obvious here: this process whereby an expression, often an intricate metaphor or insular idiom, becomes reified, whereby the individual signifiers assembled are eclipsed and replaced by one signified—this process takes, well, a village. Put otherwise, clichés are the fruit of community, they are tokens of a tightly woven, high-functioning discourse community. These are the shibboleths that insiders all know, the markers of membership. Ryan Stark makes a similar argument. He claims that "what the cliché accomplishes in discourse is a

sometimes slight, sometimes powerful connective pathos ... On a very basic level, the use of a cliché generates such connection with others through the reflective enactment of a shared discourse practice” (454). Cliches, then, are part of the cultural grammar we use to connect with and relate to one another. To use one to the right audience is to suggest a certain kind of ethos, an awareness of and an appreciation for a kinship. I’d take that a step further: clichés help to constitute community. They, the right ones at least, remind us of home, of comfort, of the familiar. Against Nietzsche’s lonely witnessless utterance, I’d here counter George Eliot’s narrator in the *Mill on the Floss*: “What novelty is worth that sweet monotony where everything is known and loved because it is known” (45). I’m with Eliot: there is both beauty and power here in the commonplace, in this case the shared compendium of expressions that are specific to certain discourse communities.

This connotation of familiarity is especially the case for idioms and dead metaphors, the so-called “non-compositional” (Mel’čuk 61) category of clichés that are the most complicated and intricate and beautiful. I’d argue that they’re also the most powerful. Consider, for example, the phrase “falling in love.” One of the exercises I like to do with my students when we discuss clichés is to have them think of alternative expressions for this phrase. Almost in every case, the phrases they come up with are clunky, long, and imprecise. I next have them consider whether this passive account of love, the idea that love is something that befalls us rather than something that we elect to participate in, is an accurate one. Some aren’t so sure. What is clear, however, is

that this and its constellation of related phrases and figures, all of them hackneyed, most of them ancient, has shaped, indeed constrained, how we talk about and probably how we experience the phenomenon we call love.

The last criticism I'd like to put forth about our treatment of clichés in the composition classroom is a response to the oft-claimed idea that clichés are often too approximate in meaning to accomplish the various jobs for which we've deployed them. The way I've put it to my students in years past is that the cliché is to language as the five paragraph essay is to form: both require us to crush material into a space for which it is more or less ill-suited. Our thoughts end up wearing someone else's clothes, a coat a bit longer in the arms or pants a bit tighter in the waist. It's for this reason that Rottenberg and Winchell consider clichés, along with slogans, as "short cuts." We skimp on the process of argument and communication and settle for an approximation. Put otherwise, despite the appearance of economy, clichés are inefficient; they have a tendency to muddy meaning rather than clarify.

While this is sometimes the case, many expressions, precisely because of their repetition, have become quite efficient at communicating meaning. This efficiency is often part of the reason they earn cliché status. Dead metaphors like the phrase "the body of an essay" work well because they have become familiarized. They circumvent the conventional metaphorical circuit, moving us straight from the expression to the ultimate referent instead of making us do the cognitive work of connecting the disparate. We might recall the concept of defamiliarization

popularized by Viktor Schklovsky and the Russian Formalists: For Schklovsky, what distinguished literary language from prose was its tendency to defamiliarize, to make the ordinary seem foreign, “to make the stone stony” (12). As a literary scholar, I feel a bit like a heretic saying so, but I wonder if the stoniness of the stone is best left out of an essay on, say, progressive tax rates. In other words, isn’t it a good thing that a phrase like the “body of an essay” has become unmoored from its unfamiliar literal suggestion (i.e., the metaphorical one)? With art, slowing down cognition by using language in unfamiliar and surprising ways is admirable, beautiful—well worth the extra intellectual work. I still get a shiver of frisson reading certain Wallace Stevens’ poems, and that feeling owes a lot to Stevens’ manner of stripping the givenness from the familiar and linking radically disparate things and ideas by way of metaphor. That said, as Stark points out, a completely familiar metaphor, such as the phrase “a needle in a haystack,” does its job quite well. It doesn’t make us work hard to get at its meaning. We know precisely what the reader or writer means, and in certain contexts—maybe even most contexts—that fact should be acknowledged as a good thing.

So, returning at last to pedagogy, my discussion of clichés in the classroom has shifted over the course of these last few years to better reflect some of the claims of this essay. For example, I will point to the expression “have your cake and eat it too” and read a list of titles from academic databases that make use of the phrase in their wording. Of course, many of these titles use the phrase cheekily, disowning it as soon as it has done its work; apparently, each time

we use a cliché, our writerly shame has us conspicuously draw attention to the fact that we're using them, as if offering a knowing nod to our audience grants us some absolution (or at least allows us to save some face). (In other words, we totally have our cake and eat it too.) Many others, however, rely on the phrase in a straightforward, non-ironic way. This and similar idioms seem especially common in the social sciences and appear in popular science writing as well. In class, we discuss why such phrases often find their ways into the most forbidding and reader-hostile material and how they may be offering the reader a momentary taste of home and comfort before returning to particle physics or biochemistry or whatever. I also have students discuss a pair of lines from one of D. H. Lawrence's essays. In the first one, Lawrence leans on the phrase "putting one's thumb on the scale" ("Morality" 174) to describe how the demands of narrative form often falsify the life ostensibly represented in fiction. In the second, Lawrence writes that "If you try to nail anything down, in the novel, either it kills the novel, or the novel gets up and walks away with the nail" ("Morality" 174). In both cases, Lawrence uses familiar expressions to help describe something unfamiliar, namely the aesthetics of the novel. This shouldn't surprise us given Lawrence's distaste for effete pretension. In any case, the effect of these phrases is that the strange ideas are domesticated, brought home and warmed by the hearth, as it were. In the latter case, the one with the novel walking away with the nail, Lawrence demonstrates a technique that has occupied one of the more interesting and productive positions within the conventional writing instruction involving clichés—namely, that of re-wording, twisting, or

subverting a cliché. What I like about this practice is that the writer is once again afforded the opportunity to, well, have yet another cake to both possess and eat. Lawrence's witticism about the novel resisting being "nailed down" is able both to connect with the reader while at the same time injecting something unfamiliar and surprising into the situation.

What I want my students to leave with is the idea that clichés can be crucial rhetorical tools, and when used in the right context, even in academia, they can be very effective. Perhaps more importantly, I want my students to recognize how community happens, how it's sustained, how, to some degree, it's constituted. I'm convinced that clichés are one of a number of operations, both within and outside of discourse, that probably help to make community and almost certainly bring it into relief as such.

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Pygmalion, Prometheus, and the Art of the Capstone

Theresa Dougal
Moravian College

Investigations into the growth and nature of capstone experiences in college education emphasize the importance of integrating and synthesizing knowledge, often hard to achieve across disparate courses and disciplinary emphases. Melissa Vosen, in “The Case of the Capstone Course: Reflection and the Commonalities between English and University Studies (BUS) Students” settles upon “reflection” as the best “common element” for helping students with disparate course histories to effectively transition from their academic to their future careers (8). Kristi Upson-Saia likewise considers the challenges inherent in providing a culminating experience to students in religious studies, a multidisciplinary field in which a wide range of strategies are employed and little consensus has been reached with regard to best practice (6-7). She concludes that “the capstones that are most successful are those that are carefully linked to their department’s major curriculum, pedagogies, and staffing, that set out to achieve a reasonable set of objectives, and that are aligned seamlessly with the institutional mission, culture, and expectations for assessment” (4). Given the multiple outcomes built into the English major at my own institution, accomplishing these goals posed a challenge, yet the results of our efforts have been encouraging. The capstone seminar I have developed is one in which “creativity,” widely

defined, is the overarching theme, the capaciousness of which allows for related topics and requirements that have effectively served our graduating seniors as well as the department.

Ours is a small department with a curriculum that consciously integrates the study of literature with the study of writing, and so our capstone course must address the needs and interests of students with a variety of curricular emphases. In the course, students synthesize and expand upon what they have learned throughout their English major, producing an extended written project within their chosen genre and constructing a portfolio of work from their major, including a hands-on-learning assignment that is published on campus. Weekly meetings consist of readings, discussion, presentations, and writing centered upon the related themes of creativity, re-creation, adaptation, influence, appropriation, and “repurposing.” Drawing upon the disciplinary skills highlighted in “Introduction to English Studies,” writing, and other courses, students reflect upon writing and literature as powerful and evolving forms of human expression and upon their own participation in practices that emerge from English Studies.

While reflection, as in Vosen’s course, is an important and recurring component of our capstone seminar, the overarching theme that allows the disparate students in the room to share a productive common experience is “creativity.” For English students and scholars, and for writers past and present, the topic and the dilemma of creativity and creative inspiration have long been of intense interest and the subject of lengthy rumination. Two of the most recent explorations of the topic come to us from the fields of psychology and architecture. In *Wired to Create*:

Unraveling the Mysteries of the Creative Mind, Scott Barry Kaufman and Carolyn Gregoire posit that “[C]reative people have messy minds’ (xiii). Kyna Leski employs a weather metaphor to describe mental processes that seem bafflingly disordered: “Like a storm, creativity is bigger than you. It begins before you know it. It is beyond your complete control” (8). The tumultuous messiness of capping our curriculum has certainly been part of our own experience, but in the end, the very open-endedness of the theme of creativity has helped me to gain some control over the multiple, sometimes incongruent demands of a culminating course in English Studies.

As indicated in this article’s title, students read *Pygmalion* – the George Bernard Shaw version – as one of a number of texts that evolve from “creation” stories that go back to the early myths of Pygmalion and Prometheus, including the Shaw play, its multiple adaptations in film, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, and a number of poems and secondary articles. We talk about writing as activism and also the latest developments in creative expression, including writing in the digital age and controversy over “uncreative” writing that relies heavily on digital technology (Zangrando et al. B18-B19). This reading and film viewing are frontloaded in the course, to establish students’ familiarity with the topic and to spur ideas for their projects. Our goal is less to emphasize the specific importance of any one of these texts than to consider the ways in which writers build, adapt and innovate upon the work of previous writers. We read works from all genres, as students have been required to do throughout the major, and we read a book specifically on writing, since our curriculum foregrounds the connections between reading

literature and writing practice. We aim to make certain that, once again in the capstone, students exercise the various skills we have highlighted throughout the major, and that readings and discussion lead them to an idea for a project that best showcases their own individual strengths.

Again, our department is a small one and our capstone must accommodate students with a variety of interests, so the project is the place where students have the opportunity to write in the genre that best reflects their own curricular emphases. Many students write standard critical analyses of literary texts, often on the works we've discussed in class, but we also encourage them to range more broadly and to write on topics that relate to their broader interests, especially since so many of our students have double majors and minors as well as compelling extracurricular activities. A few project titles provide a sense of how students take advantage of the open-ended assignment to write about topics that matter to them: 1) "From Freaks to Greeks: Disability in *Frankenstein* and *Pygmalion*" (by a student applying to a graduate program in disability studies); 2) "The Weight of War: Moral Injury in British WWI Poetics"; 3) "Holocaust Writers and their Works: Inspiration through Experiences"; 4) "Will Shifts in Climate Change Lead to Shifts in Literature?" (ecocritical analysis of Shakespeare, William Wordsworth, and Mary Shelley); 5) "An Analysis of *Pygmalion*: Gender and Language." Since our department's learning outcomes include explicit reference to students' ability to "engage with difficult questions of ethical reasoning with respect to civic, environmental, professional, and intercultural

responsibilities,” many projects engage with cultural and historical contexts, in addition to demonstrating the more standard learning outcomes regarding critical reading and analysis.

Some of our students who have taken a number of writing courses beyond the ones that we require of them to complete the curriculum choose to write projects in a range of creative genres that include short stories, poetry, narrative nonfiction, screenplays, and even a comic book. Students’ topics vary widely but, as with the critical analysis projects, they tend to foreground the creativity theme, and I have seen work that incorporates the topics of biotechnology, spoken word and hip hop poetry, censorship, robotics, and punk rock. To ensure that these culminating projects demonstrate all our learning outcomes, we require students to also write a “critical foreword” that includes peer-reviewed research, citation, thesis-driven analysis, and the annotated bibliography required for all projects. The critical foreword helps bring parity across the assignment and allows the instructor to apply a common grading rubric to all projects.

Two other significant components to our senior capstone seminar are the HLA (Hands-on-Learning Assignment) and the portfolio. The HLA is announced in the gateway course, Introduction to English Studies, is encouraged throughout the major, and comes due in the senior seminar. Students must publish an article for one of four campus organizations: the campus newspaper, public relations, the theatre program, or our Center for Career and Civic Engagement. While some students wait until their senior year to seek out and complete this assignment, many more rise to the challenge much earlier and find a venue for their work that

engages them throughout their college career. Some thus get significant practical writing experience, while all the students end up with at least one published article for their portfolio. This portfolio includes four previous works from the major, with reflective statements, the project, the HLA, a resume, and a culminating reflective essay. The portfolio is submitted digitally, providing the department with a means for assessment and the students with comprehensive documentation of their progress and accomplishments in the major.

The senior seminar and the resulting portfolio provide what we hope is a helpful bridge for students as they move beyond the campus and classroom to engage in the multiplicity of opportunities that are open to English majors who approach their commencement with flexibility and confidence. As we emphasize in the section of the course devoted explicitly to career investigation, English majors may well be the “hot new hires” (Martinuzzi), especially when they combine the creative thinking inherent to their discipline with the reflective life of “principle,” advocated by writers like Henry David Thoreau and many others. A creative capstone may help launch our students into a world that is increasingly mechanistic and conflict-driven, with the skills and values that bring the humanities to bear upon their lives and work.

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