

Feminist Recovery Practices and Digital Pedagogies: Teaching Eighteenth-Century Women Poets

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Alas! a woman that attempts the pen
Such an intruder on the rights of men,
Such a presumptuous creature is esteemed,
The fault can by no virtue be redeemed.

--from Anne Finch's "The Introduction" (1713)

IN THE SUMMER of 2012, I was given the opportunity to teach a summer poetry course, and I chose to teach a course on female poets of the eighteenth century. My rationale for the course was that it would allow students to come into contact with poetry that, even as English majors, they would not likely read elsewhere. As I began planning the course, it became clear to me that given certain limitations on our time and prior student knowledge, it would neither be possible nor useful to conduct the course in the manner of a "typical" upper-level literature course during a regular semester. Instead, after some consideration, I decided that the course would combine my desire to trouble the "typical" eighteenth-century canon, as it is conceived in survey courses, with my growing interest in digital humanities and multimodal composition.

As the title of this website indicates, the course was devoted to exploring how to use feminist recovery practices and digital pedagogies in the classroom. The course objectives (below) also included more "traditional" objectives of a literature or poetry course. The objectives for this web presentation (also below) are also multifold. First, I present this information in order to suggest ways in which to create literature courses that are more interactive and digitally-oriented as well as more attuned to feminist recovery practices. Second, I hope that this presentation will make clear the possible "payoffs" for including lesser-taught texts in the classroom.

Course Objectives

The main goals of the course were to:

- introduce students to eighteenth-century British culture and eighteenth-century British women's poetry;
- explore the interactions between the poetry of women and men in eighteenth-century Britain;
- understand the position and oppression of women in eighteenth-century Britain;
- gain an appreciation of eighteenth-century poetic forms and styles; and
- contribute to the popularization of understudied women's literature.

This website explores the various pedagogical and scholarly tools that went into designing the course, sets out the operation of the course, and describes the final projects prepared by the students. In addition to sections on students' previous knowledge, my expectations for the course, the course framework, and information on our materials, there is also a section on the final assignment and an example of one of the student projects submitted for this assignment.

Web Presentation Objectives

The main goals of this website are to:

- introduce scholars of the eighteenth century to digital projects for the literature classroom;
- demonstrate that digital projects actively generate student interest in research and broaden their abilities to write in a digital medium;
- examine the limitations of students and literature courses at the university undergraduate level, especially with regard to eighteenth-century literature broadly and women's literature specifically;
- suggest methods for making students more aware of canon-formation and feminist practices; and

- open up a discussion among scholars on the relation of digital pedagogy and feminist recovery practices in the classroom.

I explain the rationale for using digital pedagogies and feminist recovery practices and their interconnectedness in the sections on rationale, prior student knowledge, and the final student wiki assignment, while the section on the course materials suggests how to make a course of this nature inclusive and diverse.

RATIONALE

Course Rationale, Expanded

The *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Part I, ninth edition, contains the section on “The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century (1660-1785).” In this section, which must also compete with the Medieval and Early Modern periods for space, there is limited room for the literature of a time period that is often misunderstood and under-valued by ‘outsiders.’ Thus, eighteenth-century female authors must vie with canonical writers like Dryden, Pepys, Swift, Pope and Johnson for pages. It should come as little surprise that the eighteenth-century female poets included in the Norton are limited to Aphra Behn, Anne Finch, Countess of Winchelsea, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and Mary Leapor. There is also some representation of women poets in the section “Working Class Geniuses,” which includes selections from the works of Mary Collier, Mary Barber, and Mary Jones. A student in a traditional British survey course might, therefore, have little exposure to eighteenth-century women poets specifically and eighteenth century literature more generally. I use the Norton Anthology as a case study because it is one of the most widely used literary anthologies in the United States. In the words of Sean Shesgreen, the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* is a “hegemonic text” (295), even as other anthologies, such as those published by Broadview and Longman, have gained popularity. Further, anthologies like the Norton are important in the sense that they often dictate what we teach—usually by default. According to Shesgreen, “anthologies control our ways of reading and even shape our conception of what literature is” (295). Therefore, when these same anthologies add women writers but only as “women writers,” these writers are “marked...as marginal [often] through drastic abridgements or ghettoization, as in ‘The Woman Question,’ a subcompartment of ‘Victorian Issues’” (Shesgreen 209). The section on “Working Class Geniuses,” which I mention above, is one type of “ghettoization” of these writers—both as women and as working-class writers.

Thus, when I was given the opportunity to propose a poetry course at Stony Brook University in the summer of 2012, I leaped at the chance and proposed a course

specifically on eighteenth-century female poets. The idea for the course grew out of an introductory literature course for non-majors during a regular fall semester, which surveyed British poetry from 1660 to 1900. As a feminist and queer scholar, I emphasized issues of gender, women's rights, and sexuality frequently in our discussions of poetry that fall, and, at the end of the semester, my students expressed interest in a course on women's poetry specifically.

The thought behind this course was to offer students the opportunity to study the literature and culture of the eighteenth century and, more specifically, the position of women at this historical moment through the concentrated study of eighteenth-century women poets.

Website Rationale, Expanded

This web presentation grew out of the course via a poster session at ASECS 2013 on course design. The desire to share what I had done in the classroom with other eighteenth-century scholars was, like the course itself, linked to my desire to inform and encourage other scholars to combine the growing discipline of digital humanities with the project of feminist recovery.

In the 1980s and 1990s, feminist scholars working in eighteenth-century studies launched various projects to re-discover eighteenth-century women writers. According to Jean Marsden, the goals of these recovery projects, which were often inspired by the work of Elaine Showalter and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, were "to bring long-lost women writers and their works to light, to bring them into scholarly discourse, and to make their works available to students and scholars" (657). Despite their successes and the inclusion of many more women writers in popular classroom anthologies, however, "much remains to be done...recovery work, and the education that accompanies it, is not, and, perhaps, can never be completely finished" (Marsden 658).

Accordingly, the first goal of this web presentation is to argue that a course on eighteenth-century women writers is not only possible but also necessary. In light of the continued ghettoization of women writers on college syllabi, this project argues that courses focusing on women writers (but not necessarily devoid of discussions of their male contemporaries) can be fruitful and enjoyable for both students and instructors.

The second major goal of this web presentation is to demonstrate the usefulness of digital pedagogies in the classroom at a time when the digital humanities and multimodal writing are becoming increasingly central to the conversation about the evolving university. While the idea for the multimodal component of this course (the

course wiki) grew out of the feeling that I "should be" doing digital humanities in my courses, the project ended up serving the purposes of furthering our course goals of feminist recovery.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE



What cruel laws depress the female kind,
To humble cares and servile tasks confined!
In gilded toys their florid bloom to spend,
And empty glories that in age must end

--from Elizabeth Tallet's "Hypatia" (1724)

Who would take the course? What did they know before entering the classroom?

This course focused on introducing students to various aspects of literary feminist interpretation and research through the poetry of eighteenth-century women, primarily those from Great Britain. It was also one of the goals of the course to introduce the students to eighteenth-century literature and culture more generally. It ran at Stony Brook University as a summer course, which meant it was constrained by a six-week time frame as well as by a lack of prerequisites for the course. The course officially ran as an upper-level, cross-listed English and Women's and Gender Studies course. I assumed correctly that for most of the students in the class, this course would be their first introduction to eighteenth-century literature and culture, and that their knowledge of the position and role of women and women writers would be equally small. The course content and structure was therefore designed to take these limitations into account and to address them as thoroughly as possible in the time allotted.

What is the eighteenth century? What were the lives of eighteenth-century women like?

The class size was relatively small; there were twelve students in the class, about half of whom were English majors. There were also a couple of Women's Studies majors, and about four students from various other disciplines, including psychology, biology,

and engineering. This was not unexpected, as the course also functioned as an upper-level general education credit. It was important to me, in this case, to give the students an understanding of the eighteenth century and the position of women during this time.

Students were introduced to the eighteenth century through:

- instructor-led lectures on the time period and on pertinent aspects of the culture;
- documentary and narrative film on eighteenth-century subjects; and
- student research on individual eighteenth-century authors.

Instructor-led Lectures

Class usually began with short PowerPoint presentations (see examples below) by the instructor on the time period, the position of women in eighteenth-century Britain, or the specific authors being studied that day. The presentations included images as well as bullet point information about the eighteenth century. This information included political, economic, social, medical, and everyday aspects of eighteenth-century life, mostly in England.

Documentary and Narrative Film

The course used two films to supplement student understanding of women in the eighteenth century. One was a film made to accompany an exhibit of eighteenth-century costumes at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, entitled *The Eighteenth-Century Woman*. The other film was the much newer production, *The Duchess*, which presents the life of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, during the early years of her marriage to the Duke of Devonshire. The first film introduced students to the material culture of the eighteenth century as well as to a variety of important and powerful women to whom the costumes from the Met exhibit belonged. The second film illustrated the limits that even powerful, wealthy women faced in the eighteenth century. *The Duchess* was also appropriate as students read poems by the Duchess of Devonshire prior to watching the film.

Student Research on Individual Authors

Students were also personally involved in supplementing their understanding of the eighteenth century and eighteenth-century women through biographical research on authors that they carried out during the course of the class. In the second half of the course, students conducted research on a poet of their choice and presented this

information to the class. They were required to provide a visual aide, as the instructor had done in the first half of the course.

STRUCTURE & FRAMEWORK



What Pow'r shall I invoke? Could Heav'n ordain
A respite to this life of mental pain
Might I not then Accuse its stern Decree
That fix'd me first from Happiness and Thee?

--from Ann Yearsley's "Despondence" (1785)

Course Format

In my past courses, students at Stony Brook had expressed a wish to have greater individual choice of materials in the course. I decided to experiment with this possibility in my course on eighteenth-century women poets. I hoped that in allowing students to have some say in the texts we discussed, they might become more invested in the course and the final assignment. Therefore, I chose the authors for the first half of the course and the students chose the authors for the second half (though they chose from a list compiled by me ahead of time). Thus, in the first half of the semester, I picked out the poems, wrote the reading questions, presented the biographical information on these poets (see below) and led the class discussions.

In the second half of the course, after selecting a poet from the pre-selected list students then researched the author, presented on her biography, chose poems for their classmates to read and discuss, and prepared reading questions that the other students had to answer before coming to class. The poems and reading questions were vetted by me before being sent out to the rest of the class, but by and large students were successful in choosing poems that they found interesting and significant for class discussion. In this way, students were active in "editing" our anthology and class list. My usual input as instructor was to limit the number of poems, as students often chose too many for us to cover in one class period.

By giving the students choice over the syllabus content, students were actively encouraged to question the course syllabus and engage in a form of textual criticism, as they often looked for poems outside the anthology to include in the course reading. According to Erick Keleman, "the reasons to bring textual criticism into any classroom are to demystify textual media and thereby to increase students' ability to negotiate and interpret textual mediations" (122). Thus, by having students choose the poems themselves, they engaged in a kind of critical thinking that led them to question the traditional literature classroom and engage actively in feminist recovery of unanthologized poems.

Students also became emotionally and intellectually invested in the poets they chose as the poet became "theirs" through researching her. This sentiment was especially prominent in the case of the two groups that chose Hannah More and Ann Yearsley and ended up presenting the two sides of those women's relationship. In this case, again, the course goals of engaging students in a nuanced kind of feminist recovery project were attained. Jean Marsden warns that often female writers with "views we find distasteful" are neglected by feminist scholars (661). In the case of More and Yearsley, both were included in the syllabus and discussed by the students, and students could decide for themselves whether More's treatment of the impoverished and dependent Yearsley were warranted. The students were offered the chance to study women writers "from a wide range of educational, class, religious, and political backgrounds," therefore encouraging students to look at the "issues...that separate women rather than unite them" (Marsden 661).

Additionally, in the first half of the syllabus, I paired female writers with male contemporaries in order to make it clearer to students how the women of the time were in conversation with their male peers. This was an important addition to the course as it helped us avoid the problem of women's writing in anthologies, as described by Jeanne Moskal. Moskal argues that bringing women's voices into anthologies has resulted in "two versions of women writers' liminality...the women-only and the mixed-sex anthologies...[F]or the teacher the theoretical choice between integrationism and separatism takes the practical form of which textbooks to order and which poems and novels can be fitted into the syllabus" (2). Although I ended up choosing a women's-only anthology for the course, I supplemented it with the works by male authors to avoid such "separatism" and to encourage classroom discussions that showed how women poets were central to the larger literary world of the eighteenth century.

Course Poets

Poets Chosen By Instructor:

The poets I chose to teach in the first half of the syllabus were fairly canonical, as I wanted to insure that we would cover the most well-known female poets of the century. At the same time, however, I also made room to include Phillis Wheatley and Joanna Baillie to make sure that the course would feature authors from outside England as well as at least one author of color.

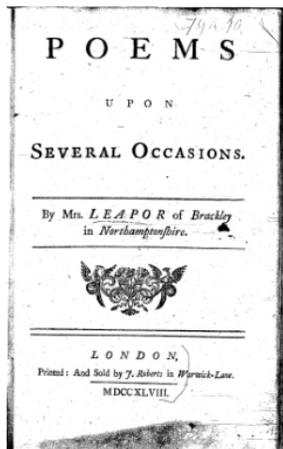
- Aphra Behn
- Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea
- Lady Mary Wortley Montagu
- Charlotte Smith
- Phillis Wheatley
- Joanna Baillie
- Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire

List of Poets the Students Could Choose From:

I compiled a list of poets that the students could choose from so that they would not be overwhelmed by the choices in the Lonsdale anthology and to make sure that students ended up with a poet about whom they could find sources. In this class, the students ended up covering almost the entire list (the only poets not covered from this list were Elizabeth Thomas, Elizabeth Hands and Susanna Blamire).

- Sarah Egerton (née Fyge, later Field; 1670-1723)
- Elizabeth Thomas (1675-1731)
- Elizabeth Tollet (1694-1754)
- Mary Leapor (1722-1746)
- Anna Seward (1742-1809)
- Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1825)
- Hannah More (1745 – 1833)
- Elizabeth Hands (1746-1815)
- Susanna Blamire (1747-94)
- Ann Yearsley (1752-1806)
- Mary Robinson (1758-1800)

COURSE MATERIALS



In spite of all romantic poets sing,
This gold, my dearest, is a useful thing:
Not that I'd have you hoard the precious store,
For not a wretch is like the miser poor:
Enjoy your fortune with a cheerful mind,
And let the blessing spread amongst the kind;
But if there's none but Florio that will do,
Write ballads both, and you may thrive—Adieu.

-- from Mary Leapor's "Mira to Octavia" (1748)

Textbook and Materials

I chose to use Roger Lonsdale's anthology *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets: An Oxford Anthology* because it was compact, the poems were ordered by author, and the authors were presented chronologically. Due to the structure of the course and students' lack of prior knowledge, I felt that working chronologically and by author would best serve our needs. For these reasons I did not use *British Women Poets of the Eighteenth Century*, by Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine E. Ingrassia, which is organized by subject and genre of poem. I supplemented the Lonsdale, however, with poems from other anthologies.

In my attempt to keep the syllabus as diverse as possible, I included a day on Phillis Wheatley's poetry, which was not included in the Lonsdale at all. I also included poetry by Scottish poet Joanna Baillie and working-class poets such as Ann Yearsley and Mary Leapor. My reasoning was similar to that of Julie M. Barst, who argues that "we as teachers realize that one of our most important pursuits is to encourage students to understand and consider the positions of peoples within their own communities and around the world who are different from them, not only in terms of gender, race, and sexual orientation but also in terms of religion, class, cultural beliefs and practices, ethnicity, and in many other realms" (149).

I did not want, however, to present these women as writing in isolation from the major literary and political movements of their time period. Thus, I also included some complementary poems by men that demonstrated how male and female poets of the time period interacted with each other in print and how they influenced each other stylistically. For example, we read John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester's "The Imperfect Enjoyment" alongside Aphra Behn's "The Disappointment," and Robert

Burns's "Ae Fond Kiss" alongside Joanna Baillie's "Woo'd and Married and A" in order to explore how male and female poets used similar forms and styles to explore the same topic from different perspectives.

Resources for Poems:

Backscheider, Paula R. and Catherine E. Ingrassia. *British Women Poets of the Eighteenth Century: An Anthology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2009. Print.

Eighteenth-Century Collections Online. Gale Publishing Group.

Lonsdale, Roger. Editor. *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets: An Oxford Anthology*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990. Print.

Norton Anthology of English Literature Vol. C: Restoration and Eighteenth-Century and Vol. D: Romanticism, as well as the *Norton Anthology of Poetry*

Exploring the Canon: Anthology Activity

When teaching a course on a topic so seemingly narrow and specialized, I felt it was extremely important to convey issues of canonization and feminist recovery practices to the students. The students, though unfamiliar with the time period and content, believed that by virtue of its availability, the course proved the "canonicity" of its content. By contrast, when I mentioned to a (male) colleague (who frequently taught courses on Jane Austen) that I would be teaching a summer course on female poets of the eighteenth century, he jokingly asked me, "Oh, were there any?"

In order to illustrate these kinds of problems to my students, I began the course with an activity in which I brought in various kinds of anthologies of literature for the students to look at in pairs. In doing so, I hoped to make students more aware of the practices of canonization. Laura L. Aull notes that "a limitation to contemporary discussions of survey anthologies is that they imply that canon revision of the classroom consists of making anthologies more inclusive--not by having students engage in anthologizing itself" (498). In order to avoid such limitations, I actively encouraged students to partake in the act of "anthologizing" by actively choosing which poets to read and also by comparing different popular anthologies and their offerings of female poets over time.

Students were instructed to look at the contents of these anthologies and compare them to the syllabus in front of them. Some of the anthologies we looked at were the Norton British literature anthology from the 1960s, one from the 1990s, the *Norton Anthology of Poetry in English*, the Restoration and 18th Century splits of the Norton

and the Longman anthologies, as well as the Lonsdale and the Backscheider and Ingrassia specialized anthologies. In this way, the students were able to identify the ways in which anthologies mold the canon. The activity also illustrated how the poets featured in the course were often marginalized, even in anthologies dedicated to the eighteenth century. Consequently, this activity, completed during the second meeting of the class, illustrated how "anthologies function as shapers of canons, from narrating particular frames for texts to adjusting the original context and appearance of texts in fonts and formats" (Aull 499).

Course Documents

Below is a link to the course syllabus. At the start of the course, the second half of the schedule of readings was empty. This is what the syllabus looked like once the students chose which poets they wished to study.

Also included below are the assignment prompts for the biography, the annotated bibliography, and the Wiki.

FINAL STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

Yes, injured Woman! rise, assert thy right!
Woman! too long degraded, scorned, oppressed;
O born to rule in partial Law's despite,
Resume thy native empire o'er the breast!

--from Anna Laetitia Barbauld's "The Rights of Woman" (1825)

Assignments

The final project for the course was creating a course wiki in which students would combine their biographical research on the author along with research on her literary accomplishments and some close readings of her poetry.

The Wikipedia- style format would give students a sense of how literary canons are formed through literary encyclopedias and what information author entries include and (sometimes) exclude. Students had to look up extant Wikipedia entries on their authors, read them, analyze their weaknesses, and then write their own version. The course assignments leading up to the final project were designed to help students prepare materials for the wiki entry.

The main assignments for the course were:

- a researched, written biography of the author;
- an oral presentation with a visual element about the author and her works;
- an annotated bibliography in preparation for the wiki;
- an online wiki entry for the author; and
- a reflection paper about the wiki activity.

The biography of the author was due half way through the course, and it functioned to prepare the students for the biographical section of the wiki and the oral presentation to the class on their author. The wiki entry was the final project for the course, and it incorporated research and literary analysis elements.

Why a Wiki?

I chose a wiki entry for the final course project because I felt that such a piece of writing would further engage the students in the precepts of feminist recovery and make clear to them how writers are made popular or marginalized in different time periods. Similarly, I felt that since many of the students were not English majors and even those who were had little to no experience with eighteenth-century literature, they would benefit from understanding how literature of the past can speak to contemporary readers through a digital medium.

The idea of multimodal writing and of encouraging students to be "writer/designers" has met with great success in the composition classroom and is currently growing through a variety of digital humanities projects in literary studies. Digital Humanities projects in the eighteenth century currently include the *18th-Century Common*, the digital exhibit "What Jane Saw" as well as the recently-launched website *ABOPublic*. While it was not within the scope of a six-week course to put together an entire website, I opted to use the course wiki section of our class Blackboard page to create our student-researched wiki.

By engaging students with multimodal ways of writing, I hoped to encourage them to see literary study as a dynamic, ever-changing process of research and discovery. According to Cheryl Ball and Ryan Moeller, "this new [multimodal] version of the university...should value different models of learning and nontraditional academic literacies....The focus of communication would have to shift away from writing to include new media designing as a critical literacy composition practice." The wiki project embraced such a philosophy by combining traditional literary research with the online encyclopedia platform. Similarly, as Pamela Takayoshi and Cynthia L. Selfe point out, when students write in "internationally networked digital environments, texts must be able to carry meaning across geo-political, linguistic, and

cultural borders, and so texts must take advantage of multiple semiotic channels" (2). One of the goals of the wiki project was to make students aware of the inadequacy of the existing wiki pages for these authors and the difficulty of making digital texts informative and unbiased.

Similarly, it has been made clear through the work of various scholars that the medium of the wiki itself holds many possibilities for making students more aware of digital communication, the possibilities of modern scholarship, and the continuing gender bias in publicly-available knowledge. Adeline Koh suggests that "Wikipedia editing trains students to think about what constitutes reliable information and what does not, which translates into their academic work." Similarly, using Wikipedia in gender-related projects can serve to make students more aware of "the gender gap in its [Wikipedia's] editors--the typical Wikipedia editor is a thirty-year-old, middle-class, English-speaking college-educated male" (Koh). Thus, our wiki project expanded student understanding of feminist approaches to literary studies and the vital need for such approaches.

The course wiki functioned to make students more comfortable with new forms of literacy while engaging them personally in the project of feminist recovery and critical thinking. According to Elizabeth Dolly Weber, when students work on a course wiki, "[it] guides students to recast and reshape information rather than simply reading it, facilitates individualized research and critical thinking, and encourages students to think creatively and to work cooperatively and collaboratively in ways that are otherwise difficult to achieve in the classroom" (125). The class wiki for our summer course achieved all of these goals in a relatively short amount of time.

Author Wiki Entries

In many cases, the existing Wikipedia entries for the authors we studied in the course were extremely short and lacking in detail (such as the one for Elizabeth Tollet). If an author already had a relatively well-developed Wikipedia page (such as those of Anna Laetitia Barbauld or Mary Robinson), then the students were charged with reading the existing post thoroughly and deciding, through their own research, what was missing, biased or under-developed. Finally, students wrote their own wiki entry on the authors using the Course Wiki tool in Blackboard. As a class, we studied the Wikipedia entries of well-known poets like Alexander Pope and William Wordsworth to get an idea of the general sections of a wiki entry. Together we narrowed the scope of the wiki to the following sections:

- Short Introduction;
- Short Biography;
- Role in the Literary Eighteenth Century and Influence on Future Writers;

- Discussion, with Examples, of Major Themes in Her Work;
- Optional: Other Literary or Non-Literary Contributions to the Historical Record; and
- References List (a minimum of 10 references, including both articles and books).

Students were encouraged to include images and hyperlinks in their wikis to make the entries more interactive. I required the students who were working in pairs to split the sections evenly and to make the authorship of each section clear using their initials. Toward the end of the course, students had time in the computer lab to upload all of their information to the Blackboard site. They then presented their wikis to the class on the last day of the course.

The projects were graded on how thoroughly the students covered each section, the amount and quality of primary and secondary sources used, the depth of literary analysis, and the creativity shown in formatting the entry and in using images.

The final part of the assignment was to write a short reflective paper in which students analyzed what they had learned about the process of researching their poet and what they had learned about the process of canon-formation. The idea for the reflection paper came from my experiences teaching composition classes, where the production of reflection papers are a fairly common practice. In the composition classroom, students use the reflection paper as a way of self-assessing and of verbalizing what they have learned in order to gain insight into where they improved as writers and what still lies ahead.

Similarly, the reflection paper on eighteenth-century women poets was meant as a tool for students to describe their research process and what they had learned from it, as well as to reflect on the project of feminist recovery in a digital medium. The reflection paper encouraged students to consider the choices they had made for the content of their wiki and how it compared to the original Wikipedia page online. Additionally, it allowed me, as the instructor, to learn what methods the students had found the most useful in the classroom and what aspects of the final project were the most stimulating intellectually for the students.

SAMPLE STUDENT WIKI

Here is a sample student wiki. The authors, Benjamin Kramer (BPK) and James Stuart (JAS), gave their permission to reprint their final project for the website. They produced their wiki entry on actress/author Mary Robinson.

Wiki:

Mary Darby Robinson, Forgotten and Re-Discovered

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- Complete List of Theatre Roles (BPK)
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- Themes and Meanings in Selected Literary Works (JAS)
- Memoirs*, Letters, and Posthumous Legacy (JAS)

Introduction

A woman of intractable talent, Mary Darby Robinson was one of the leading English actresses, as well as one of the forerunners of feminist prose, during the Romantic Era in the Eighteenth Century. She was an intelligent, witty, inexhaustible powerhouse of creativity whose legacy all at once serves as an inspirational force and a tragic lesson. For quite some time, Robinson was incomprehensibly sidelined during scholarly research and study of writers in that era. Fortunately, there has been a recent resurgence of interest in her life and work.

Biography (BPK)

Mary Robinson was born in College Green, Bristol in 1758 on November 27th (Robinson 3). Robinson was brought up by her father, Captain John Darby, and

her mother, Hester Seys (Robinson 2). Mary Darby Robinson was one of five children (Lonsdale 468). Robinson's upbringing was not one of wealth, but of constant financial difficulties. Her father often abandoned the family to go on business, leaving them in financial distress (Lonsdale 468). Robinson began her schooling in a school in Chelsea, London (Robinson 468). For financial reasons Robinson's mother opened her own school where Robinson assisted in her adolescent years (Lonsdale 468). Robinson then continued schooling, where she met David Garrick, who would later become her mentor in the world of theatre. However, prior to this Robinson was married to Thomas Robinson in April 1774 at age fifteen (Lonsdale 469). During her husband's imprisonment in 1775, Robinson wrote poetry in order to pay off her husband's debts and cared for their daughter, Mary Elizabeth, who was born in November 1774 (Lonsdale 469). After her husband's release from prison Robinson resumed her pursuit of the stage and with the help of Garrick had her debut performance as Juliet in December of 1776. Robinson became famous for her theatre work and early poetry. Robinson is best known for her role as Perdita in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. This led to her relationship with the Prince of Wales, later to become George IV. She would later be contracted to be his mistress. Robinson was later dismissed from being the Prince's mistress, before the Prince's coming of age (Luria 6). After the loss of this engagement with the Prince of Wales and other men of the time, Lord Malden and Charles James Fox, Robinson's "scandals" became public and tarnished her "celebrity status" (Lonsdale 469). Robinson, who once coveted her celebrity identification, often detested the falsehood and shallowness of society later in her works (Mole 194). Following her theatre career, which ended in May 1780, Robinson began writing again, and became the poetry editor of the *Morning Post*, a literary magazine of the time (Mole 188). As editor, she came into contact with many of her well known literary contemporaries, such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth (Cross 40). Later in her life, Robinson suffered from intense rheumatoid medical problems and passed away on the 26th of December in 1800 (Lonsdale 470), leaving her autobiography, *Memoirs*, unfinished. Robinson only completed up to her affair with the Prince of Wales. However, the remainder was edited by her daughter and published in 1801 with some of her other, older poetic works. Overall, Robinson had a strong influence on the Romantic period and is regarded today as a well-known eighteenth century celebrity, poet, actress, and literary rival to many of her contemporaries.

Upbringing and Education (BPK)

Robinson was brought up by her parents Captain John Darby and her mother Hester Seys (Robinson 2). Although her mother had three miscarriages Robinson was one of five children to be brought up their house in Bristol (Robinson 4). Being a Captain,

Robinson's father was commonly absent in her upbringing. He was often working on shipments and projects. He once took an absence for three years in order to construct a whaling station off the coast of Labrador (Robinson 14). This often placed the family in financial difficulties (Lonsdale 468). However, the family still had some financial means and was able to educate their children. Robinson was first educated at a school in Bristol, taught by the sister of Hannah More, one of Robinson's literary predecessors (Luria 5). Eventually, Robinson's father later left the family for a mistress and America (Luria 5). The remainder of the family departed from London, and Robinson continued her education at a school in Chelsea (Lonsdale 468). Her teacher in Chelsea, Mrs. Meribah Lorrington, fostered Robinson's literary interests (Robinson 21). Out of necessity, due to financial constraints, Robinson's mother was forced to open her own school for girls in Chelsea, in which Robinson assisted (Robinson 27). Her father, who periodically reconnected with the family, was opposed to this and forced Robinson back into education (Lonsdale 468). With her father now back in London, Robinson began to complete her schooling in a school located in Marylebone called the Oxford House, which was run by Mrs. Hervey (Robinson 30). During this period of schooling Robinson began to address desires to pursue a career in theatre. Through her instructor Robinson was introduced to theatre icons such as Thomas Hull, Arthur Murphy, and David Garrick (Robinson 32). David Garrick would later become her mentor and friend in the world of theatre, and later be her largest supporter. However, Robinson's aspiration to perform had to be postponed due to her mother's marriage arrangement. Robinson's mother arranged a marriage with Thomas Robinson, who was an article clerk at Lincoln's Inn (Lonsdale 469). Robinson's marriage was kept secret for a time in order to release him from all youthful debts, secure his inheritance, and keep young women around him to secure social status (Robinson 44). Robinson was alarmed by this request but agreed begrudgingly (Robinson 44). However, Robinson's husband never gained his inheritance, had many scrupulous affairs that he did not even care to hide, and was generally careless for his wife (Luria 6). Robinson bore her only daughter, Maria Elizabeth, on the 18th of November in 1774 (Lonsdale 469). Shortly following Maria Elizabeth's birth, the family was forced to flee from London due to debts owed by Robinson's husband (Lonsdale 469). Robinson's husband was often described as a frivolous and careless about money, and equally careless about his wife (Lonsdale 469). Robinson later accompanied her husband to prison where she cared for her daughter and wrote poetry (Lonsdale 469). Robinson identifies the experience of debtor's prison as some of her first foundations for her poetry (115). By appealing to the Duchess of Devonshire Robinson shared her initial works with the Duchess and came to be in her good favor (Robinson 115). Finally with the assistance of the Duchess of Devonshire, Robinson was able to publish her first work *Poems* in 1775.

Theatre and Societal Status (BPK)

Robinson's debut performance, as Juliet at the Royal Theatre in Drury Lane in 1776, granted her instant notoriety (Mole 186). Robinson instantly became an icon of the social scene during her time. Robinson was breaking the mold of acting and using a different style pioneered by her mentor David Garrick (Mole 187). Her style was more natural and emphasized physical agility and facial expression over the static and declamatory style of previous actors (Mole 187). Robinson's celebrity presence went beyond the stage to painting, novels, essay, and caricatures (Mole 199). Thomas Mole describes Robinson's works as a "multimedia phenomenon, including poems, novels, essays; stage performances, social appearances and fashions; paintings, engravings, and caricatures; newspaper puffs, reviews, and gossip columns" (200). Robinson even took to self-promotion and publicized her plays and writings, which was uncommon for women during this time period (190). Robinson was practiced in the arts of self-promotion, whether in performance or print, argues Thomas Mole (190). Her celebrity identity circulated so widely because it was so appropriated by others in ways that slipped out of her control (190).

Some of Robinson's roles included Fanny in *The Clandestine Marriage* (1777), Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth* (1778), and Cordelia in *King Lear* (Mole 187). Robinson also contributed to the musical farce *The Lucky Escape* (1778) (Lonsdale 469). However, Robinson was most well recognized for her role as Perdita in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. During this performance Robinson shocked audiences and secured her celebrity status (Gamer 2). Performed in front of the royal family, Robinson was addressed by the Prince (Robinson 155). Under the guise of "Florizel," according to Luria, the Prince of Wales began to court Robinson, only known at the time as Perdita (6). Robinson reluctantly received the admiration and courtship from the Prince (Robinson 161). Robinson communicated with the Prince secretly for many months, often advising him to wait until he come of age and then to pursue his interests (Robinson 164). Robinson was eventually requested to meet the Prince by the fall of night and disguised in the garb of man (Robinson 167). This has been noted to fit Robinson's adventurous and promiscuous side (Mole 194). In time, Robinson was engaged to be the Prince's mistress and paid a sum of 20,000 pounds on his coming of age (Luria 6). However, before this time came, the Prince tired of Robinson and the contract was voided (Luria 6). Robinson's offstage performances were often more memorable than her onstage ones, as evident by her affairs and social practices (Mole 188). After this period in time Robinson's reputation faltered, he mindset shifted, and a dramatic change in personality was seen.

Celebrity Status (BPK)

Robinson always identified herself as person who has a “propensity to adore the sublime and beautiful” before she would acknowledge herself as someone of beauty and fame (Cross 39). Robinson later came to show contempt for social media and all the idolized beauty and fame. Robinson complained in her *Memoirs* that the high visibility her celebrity status brought her was nothing but trouble (Robinson 193). Mole states that Robinson argued that “despite being an active participant in it, Robinson indicts celebrity culture as a force overturning all that is natural and distorting all that is beautiful” (194). Robinson later wrote about her now changed opinion of celebrity culture in many of her poems, such as “Stanzas,” “The Fugitive,” and “January 1795.” Although acting and her celebrity status had a major impact on Robinson’s life, the theatre only had a three year impact on her 25 year publishing career.

Literary Contemporaries

By the 1790’s Robinson was a well-known writer and poet, and was viewed harshly by society for her promiscuous behavior. Regardless of the public’s opinion, Robinson continued writing and eventually (January 1790) became the editor of *The Morning Post*, a popular literary magazine at the time (Cross 40). Through *The Morning Post* Robinson was able to search for a contemporary that she deemed worthy of “the sacred intercourse of the soul, the sublime union of sensibility,” or sharing and communication through poetry (qtd. in Mole 41). Samuel Coleridge was the individual to rise to Robinson’s challenge. Although Robinson and Coleridge did not meet until 1800, their correspondence began in the late 1790’s (Cross 39). However, it is suggested that Coleridge and Robinson met as early as 1796 at a dinner party at Godwin’s (Cross 39). Coleridge and Robinson worked together in order to bolster their own and each other’s reputation (Cross 41). Coleridge acted as a huge supporter of Robinson in the literary works that she published. Often writing anonymously or outright, Coleridge played an active role in the endorsement of Robinson, and vice versa (Cross 42). Coleridge often wrote in response to Robinson under the pseudonym “Francini” (Cross 46). Robinson reveled in the praise of “Francini” and used this promotion as a way to further her writing. Coleridge also used Robinson’s poems to advance his own writing style. One of the most acknowledged correspondences between Coleridge and Robinson was in her poem “Ode to a Snow-drop” which appeared in Robinson’s novel *Walsingham Or, the Pupil of Nature* (Robinson 53). In response to Robinson’s poem, Coleridge published his own using the same imagery but elaborating further upon it. Robinson was so pleased with this praise that she published an outstanding response in praise of Coleridge’s poem, “The Apotheosis or the Snow-drop” (Cross 46). This was one of many

correspondences between Coleridge and Robinson. Through the use of similar imagery, settings, and published critiques of the other's literature, Coleridge and Robinson used each other to further their writings (Cross 55). It wasn't until the year of Robinson's death, on the fifteenth of January 1800, that Coleridge and Robinson officially met (Cross 40). After Robinson's passing Coleridge would later go on to be one of Robinson's biggest supporters (Cross 40).

Complete List of Theatre Roles (Robinson 141) (BPK)

Ophelia, in *Hamlet*
Viola, in *Twelfth Night*
Jacintha, in *The Suspicious Husband*
Fidelia, in *The Plain Dealer*
Rosalind, in *As You Like It*
Oriana, in *The Inconstant*
Octavia, in *All for Love*
Perdita, in *The Winter's Tale*
Palmira, in *Mahomet*
Cordelia, in *King Lear*
Alinda, in *The Law of Lombardy*
Mrs. Brady, in *The Irish Widow*
Araminta, in *The Old Bachelor*
Sir Harry Revel, in *The Miniature Picture*
Emily, in *The Runaway*
Miss Richley, in *The Discovery*
Statira, in *Alexander the Great*
Juliet, in *Romeo and Juliet*
Amanda, in *The Trip to Scarborough*
Lady Anne, in *Richard the Third*
Imogen, in *Cymbeline*
Lady Macbeth, in *Macbeth*

Role in Eighteenth Century Literature

Despite being considered a fallen woman after the end of her affair with the Prince of Wales, Robinson's personal life continued to be of great interest to the public. Anything she published— poems, plays, novels, newspaper essays, pamphlets— was in high demand. As a result, she certainly struggled with wanting to be the center of attention and wanting to desperately conceal her private life from society's prying eyes. She once mused, "celebrity culture is...as a force overturning all that is beautiful

and destroying it” (Mole 194). Her prolific works achieved great notoriety and acclaim but she was often criticized for being a hypocrite, likely because of “calculated maneuvers to increase her visibility or her ambition to move up within the social hierarchy” (Munteanu 127). Being deemed “The English Sappho” was the result of a honed talent, and it is obvious she had considerable aptitude in doing so, which earned her numerous literary successes (Curran 66). Robinson strongly believed that talent was far superior to privilege or status (Munteanu 127).

Perhaps as either a way to experiment with her writings or “a theatrical impulse held over from her early years as an actress” (Feldman and Kelley 261) Robinson used at least nine documented pseudonyms to furnish some of her literary works to the public. They included Anne Frances Randall, Laura Maria, Oberon, Sappho, Julia, Lesbia, Portia, Bridget, and Tabitha Bramble. For example, as Oberon, Robinson penned graceful tributes that lavished praises on women whereas when she wrote as Tabitha Bramble, she was sharp and critical (Feldman and Kelley 260). Their voices, individually and collectively, represented Robinson’s messages to the world. She was able to exploit her experiences because “it was assumed that women’s writing revealed their lives; what they wrote was read as a mirror of their selves” (Cross 573).

Romantic Women Writers: Voices and Countervoices, written by Paula Feldman and Theresa Kelley, points out that the “poetry venue provided by a daily newspaper in the 1790s was particularly suited to performative modes of self-representation and, as a result, was especially hospitable to Mary Robinson” (253). Publishing poetry in *The Morning Post* created unique challenges and opportunities for her. She was able to appeal to a far larger audience and was also afforded greater flexibility when it came to subject matter and creativity.

During her time, it was believed that many literary figures drew inspiration from their peers and at times could be construed as plagiarizing. One keen example of this borrowing of ideas can be seen through critical analysis of Wordsworth’s “Ruined Cottage” and “Michael” alongside Robinson’s “Deserted Cottage.” All three poems show significant similarities. It is believed that Robinson’s poem “Deserted Cottage” appropriated many aspects of “Ruined Cottage.” Michael Wiley states in his essay, “Wordsworth responds to such appropriations by re-appropriating and amplifying what Robinson takes from him” (222). Reviewing “...early drafts of “Michael” reveal[s] Robinson’s prosodic importance” (226). This same issue can be found in Robinson’s “Lyrical Tales” and Wordsworth’s “Lyrical Ballads.” Eight days before her death in December of 1800, to the dismay of William Wordsworth, her final collection of poetry entitled *Lyrical Tales* was published. There had been an exchange of poems between Robinson, Coleridge, and Wordsworth prior to the publication of *Lyrical Tales*. Robinson had read, and was inspired by, Wordsworth’s *Lyrical Ballads*. It is true that “*Lyrical Tales* respond in a variety of ways to the *Lyrical Ballads*:

in particular ... both Wordsworth's 'Ballads' and Robinson's 'Tales' ask readers to think actively about the process of reading, and of storytelling" (Bolton 742). It is precisely as Ashley J. Cross posits in her journal article "From *Lyrical Ballads* to *Lyrical Tales*: Mary Robinson's Reputation and the Problem of Literary Debt": there is "a complex web of relations that undoes the possibility of separating categories of self and other, copy and original" (574). *Lyrical Tales* presents an "abundance of voices, modes of representation, and fertile creativity" (Wilson 26) for its readers to enjoy.

Robinson set herself apart from her contemporaries in many ways and often was the target of other poets' appropriation of her work. Unlike her contemporaries, many of her poems did not use authorial voice to direct readers' conclusions to that of her own. She carefully constructed the poems using factual descriptive language in which the readers would irrefutably be drawn to the same conclusion based on societal norms of the time: "In limiting herself to pointing up the hypocrisies of the time, Robinson is extending an implicit critique of any poetry that suggests either the resolution of such contradictions via flights of imagination or, worse, a poet's use of verse as respite from the responsibilities demanded by commitment to material history" (Krapp 79).

Themes and Meanings in Selected Literary Works

Much of Robinson's poetry was autobiographical and speaks of sadness, loneliness, and alienation—emotions that were likely no stranger to Robinson after the gossip and public recoil following her several affairs with the Prince of Wales and Banastre Tarleton. When Tarleton and Robinson's affair ended after fifteen years because of his abrupt marriage to an heiress, Robinson wrote the poems "The False Friend" and "The Natural Daughter" out of anguish and anger. "The False Friend" is a thinly veiled literary characterization that casts Tarleton as a villain while "The Natural Daughter" reminds its readers about an old scandal regarding Tarleton's new wife. Poems such as "The Savage of Aveyron" (about a traveler who comes across an orphan who only speaks the word 'alone'), "All Alone" (about a traveler who tries to convince an orphan he is not alone, even though he has lost both parents), and "The Fugitive" (about a persecuted exile whose family has been massacred) gave insight to readers about the inescapable alienation, heartache, and despair felt by society's outcasts. Her work was paradigmatically Romantic in that she put forth "the diverse and often devastating effects on society of both personal and political social conflicts" (Miskolcze 218). She wrote of orphans and exiles of every kind and characterized them as having "a heightened awareness of mortality" (209).

Not all of her poetry however was filled with gloom. Some of Robinson's other poetry celebrated Nature's beauty, peaceful solitude, and the joys of youth. In particular, her

poem “Reflections” gives the reader a sense of optimism and hope. Robinson scrutinizes the world around her in her poems “January, 1795” and “London’s Summer Morning.” It is apparent that Robinson “participates in the chief aesthetic innovations of the decade [and] chronicles the major news events of the day” (Pascoe 20). Many of her works serve as a valuable window into the eighteenth century because they allow the reader to become the observer.

In 1799, shortly before her death, *A Letter to the Women of England, on the Injustice of Mental Insubordination* was published. In this work of social criticism, Robinson, writing as Anne Frances Randall, contends that it is her “endeavour to prove that, under the present state of mental subordination, universal knowledge is not only benumbed and blighted, but true happiness, originating in enlightened manners, retarded in its progress” (2). It is a reflection of the thinking many female writers during that time put into their writings. Robinson felt very strongly about the unequal dynamic between husband and wife. She expresses her disillusionment about women being pigeon-holed into roles that offered no intellectual stimulation by asserting “that they are not the mere appendages of domestic life, but the partners, the equal associates of man: and, where they excel in intellectual powers, they are no less capable of all that prejudice and custom have united in attributing, exclusively, to the thinking faculties of man (Randall 3). She truly believed that women should be afforded the right to declare themselves as capable of making informed decisions about things that directly affected their own well-being or happiness.

Memoirs, Letters, and Posthumous Legacy

Robinson’s health declined during the year 1800. She passed on December 26, 1800 and was buried in the churchyard at Old Windsor. She was gone, but her daughter made sure she was not forgotten for the next several decades. In her *Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Robinson, Written by Herself*, posthumously edited and published by her daughter in 1801, she detailed her earlier years and education, marriage, affairs, and lamented on how the high visibility her celebrity brought her was nothing but trouble (Mole 193). As a precursor to her recollections she declares that, “The early propensities of my life were tinctured with romantic and singular characteristics; some of which I shall here mention, as proofs that mind is never to be diverted from its original bent, and that every event of my life has more or less been marked by the progressive evils of a too acute sensibility” (Robinson 12). These candid and soulful memoirs are “a highly selective narrative of selfhood that conceals and implies meanings in a tenacious effort to steer clear of the genre of the *histoire scandaleuse* ... and promotes a virtuous intersection between sensibility and domesticity, on the one hand, and creative genius, on the other” (Saglia 722). In a set of original letters presented by Sharon Setzer, Robinson provides poignant accounts of her exhaustion

and anguish as she struggled to evade merciless creditors by using her pen to earn a meager living.

Her life, particularly the highs and lows, give her story an enduring appeal. Robinson truly is a great example of a Romantic poet. Some argue that she is the embodiment of early feminism while others whole-heartedly disagree, citing Robinson's adulterous affairs with famous men as her fleeting claim to fame. In truth, Robinson refused to be confined to the domestic lifestyle that so many women in that time frame were forced into accepting. She was a young wife, a mother, a mistress, and worked her way through multiple careers. While vicious caricatures depicted Robinson as a whore and her affairs fodder for newspaper gossip, her writing and actions flouted the double standards and reaffirmed the female right to autonomy.

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REFLECTIONS ON THE COURSE

The goals of the course (revisited) were to:

- introduce students to eighteenth-century British culture and eighteenth-century British women's poetry;
- explore the interaction between the poetry of women and men in eighteenth-century Britain;
- understand the position and oppression of women in eighteenth-century Britain;
- gain an appreciation of eighteenth-century poetic forms and styles; and
- contribute to the popularization of understudied women's literature

At the end of the course, students had acquired an appreciation of poetic forms (like sonnets, odes, and heroic couplets), read a variety of poems from the eighteenth century by English, Scottish, and American women, and had first-hand experience with literary research using both primary and secondary sources. Through in-class presentations and supplementary readings, students were also introduced to eighteenth-century culture and life in Britain and America, with particular attention paid to the position of women at the time. The course included poetry by women, both rural and London-based, well-known in their own time and obscure, rich and poor, black and white. The course focused on issues of inclusivity, diversity, feminist recovery, canonicity, and community. Students demonstrated their mastery of literary terms and analysis through their final project, and, through the wikis and class discussions, they also showed their new-found interest in the female authors we studied.

Where I feel the course could be improved was with regard to the formal elements of poetry, such as the uses of meter, rhyme, line breaks, etc. While some of these elements were covered in the course, there was not enough time to explore them in-depth. Similarly, in a full-length, semester-long course, there might have been time for students to give a second oral presentation on an element of eighteenth-century life, especially pertaining to women. Instead, the burden of introducing students to the historical period fell to me, the instructor, and was limited by time.

Additionally, it bears mentioning that although my initial hope was that the students would have time to revise the wiki entries and then use them to edit the existing author pages on Wikipedia, the students did not seem overly eager to share their work publicly. Some of them actively expressed their fear of publishing in a public forum. Pooneh Lari notes that this is a fairly common fear of students: "another concern noted about the use of wikis is the idea of 'hidden audience'...Wheeler and Wheeler (2009)...noted that students were aware of a hidden audience of visitors that would

visit the wiki that could be tracked by the hit counter....A simple solution to this problem is to create a password for accessing the wiki, thereby excluding outside visitors" (123).

Another solution to this issue might have been to include time for revision, further class/instructor collaboration, and then edit the Wikipedia pages together, collaboratively. Lari notes, however, that "a community of practice provides an environment for social interaction between learners in which they can have a dialogue and discuss their learning and perspectives" (124). Even though the students ultimately did not publish their wiki entries, they still gained important experiences through the course discussions and dialogues that grew out of the wiki project.

The main goals of this website (revisited) are to:

- introduce scholars of the eighteenth century to digital projects for the literature classroom;
- demonstrate that digital projects actively generate student interest in research and broaden their abilities to write in a digital medium;
- examine the limitations of students and literature courses at the university undergraduate level, especially with regard to eighteenth-century literature broadly and women's literature specifically;
- suggest methods for making students more aware of canon-formation and feminist practices; and
- open up a discussion among scholars on the relation of digital pedagogy and feminist recovery practices in the classroom.

While it may not be practical or possible to run such specific poetry courses at other universities, it may be possible to adapt these ideas and materials to a single unit of a course on poetry, eighteenth-century literature, or even a British survey course. One of the major ideas that guided my choices during this course and the ensuing online project about it was that even the most general courses can accommodate lesser-known writers and works, works by women, lower-class writers and writers of color, as well as digital, multimodal projects and writing.

I hope that this project will inspire other instructors to incorporate course wikis and other interactive, multimodal projects into their classes. Additionally, it is my hope that this web project will also spark further conversation about how such projects can enhance literary studies while working in tandem with projects that focus on issues of equality. Research projects that engage actively in understanding, sifting through, altering and analyzing public knowledge, especially those that focus on issues relating to sex, race, class, sexuality, nationality and empire, can, in a digital forum, leave the classroom and contribute to changing public paradigms of thought on these topics.

Digital projects have the power to engage students in textual studies while also helping them become twenty-first-century thinkers and digital writers.

Final Questions for Discussion

What is the future of the "traditional" literary research paper in the undergraduate classroom?

How might instructors make use of digital forms of writing to make literature courses, from the introductory course to the survey to the upper-level seminar, more effective and student-centric?

What kinds of digital projects are best suited to the literature classroom?

How can digital technologies change/augment classroom syllabuses, "traditional" anthologies, and classroom instruction?

What kinds of projects help students gain first-hand understanding of literary theories and practices, including, but not limited to feminism, queer theory, critical race theory, postcolonialism and transnational conceptions of literature and literary canons?

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