Portfolio Exam

Due by 9:00AM on August 14, 2017 emailed as one continuous PDF to nsilverman@gc.cuny.edu. Exams received after 9:00AM on August 14 and/or not sent as one continuous PDF will receive a grade of Fail.

Name:

This exam includes:

Intellectual Autobiography (1200 word maximum)

Plus three of the following four parts:

Review Essay (12-15 pages, covering three texts published with the last 10 years)

Annotated Bibliography (15 primary or secondary texts);

including 1500 word rationale

Syllabus;

including 1500-word maximum pedagogical account of a single text

Conference Paper (10-page maximum, double-spaced);

including Conference Call for Papers

including 200-word Abstract

This exam fulfills the comprehensive stipulations in the following ways (texts may be repeated):

1. Three different centuries:
   a. Text: Part:
   b. Text: Part:
   c. Text: Part:
2. One Pre-1800 text & One Post-1800 text:
   a. Text: Part:
   b. Text: Part:
3. Two different national traditions:
   a. Text: Part:
   b. Text: Part:

Intellectual Autobiography

I am a transatlantic modernist who focuses on image/text relations and the digital humanities. Throughout my studies, I have been particularly interested in how innovations in technology, media theory, and the visual arts have influenced modernist experiments with perspective and representation, and how digital methods create new avenues for inquiry about visuality and materiality in texts. From an English and Art History background, I entered into graduate school to explore the interrelations between high modernist literature and modernist painting. During my masters, I focused on image/text relations in ekphrastic poetry, graphic narrative, and hypertext fiction, as well as high modernist narrative. While I found this work stimulating, I was also discouraged by what I perceived as my inability to connect my scholarship to my teaching, which caused me to feel isolated and lose confidence in my intellectual work. When I discovered the field of the Digital Humanities, however, I realized how I might contribute in a more social capacity. I found that the digital environment provides new opportunities for interpreting literature that emphasize the materiality and visuality of texts while engaging public audiences. At the Graduate Center, as I continued to focus on DH, my interests also led to questions of identity and embodiment across media, from print to screen. In what follows, I am going to review this intellectual development and sketch my plans for the future.

In my first two years of graduate school, I explored my interest in image/text relations, which I developed from my undergraduate focus in English and Art History. My inquiry here coalesced around two questions: first, what is the relationship between word and image? And second, how does the verbal engage with the visual in literature?

In answering the first question, I was influenced by the work of W.J.T. Mitchell in *Picture Theory* and Jacques Rancière in *The Future of the Image*, whose scholarship on media theory and visual culture offers a framework for thinking about the role of images in relation to language. While Mitchell examines the struggle between the visual and the verbal within the "pictorial turn" in culture, Rancière approaches images as "operations," that are fundamentally dialectical, within what he calls the "representative" and "aesthetic" regimes of art. To answer my second question about image/text approaches to literature, I considered the genres of ekphrastic poetry, graphic narrative, modernist narrative, and hypertext fiction. In particular, I have examined Alison Bechdel's use of verbal and visual narratives, Michael Field and Jorie Graham's subversion of conventional ekphrastic practices, and Caitlin Fisher's use of hypermedia storytelling. Throughout my graduate career, I paid particular attention to the work of Virginia Woolf, whose narrative strategies create patterns of linguistic silence that obscure or delimit meaning. My analysis of her novels, particularly *Jacob's Room* and *The Waves*, found that this silence marks the site where the verbal attempts to transcend its own medium by approaching the ineffability of the visual.

My turn to the Digital Humanities extended my inquiry on image/text relations into studies of materiality. For my master's project, I created a prototype for a digital edition of *Jacob's Room*, which contained the first chapter of the novel, paginated according to the space breaks in the narrative, as well as an annotation tool for readers to respond directly to the text. The aim of the edition was to disrupt the codex form and encourage active reading practices by presenting the text as distinct nodes on the screen and inviting readers to annotate. In my defense of the project, I explained how dividing

the text according to the space breaks informs literary interpretations of its narrative structure. Drawing from Jerome McGann's concept of "deformance," I showed that altering the text in this way is a critical, interpretive act that opens the text to further analysis of its fragmentary nature. In my first semester at the Graduate Center, I continued to explore the relationship between digital and the critical. I examined Emily McGinn, Amy Leggette, Matthew Hannah, and Paul Bellew's online edition of Virginia Woolf's short story, "Mark on the Wall," which digitized the various print versions of this story published during Woolf's lifetime. For this project, which I transformed into the Conference Paper enclosed in this document, I argued that the digital presentation of the print text and its publication history emphasizes the role of time in unfolding the narrative. In my future work, I will pursue this interest in creating and assessing digital projects as tools for scholarly inquiry.

Indeed, practitioners of the Digital Humanities will have to continue to articulate its potential as methodology. Currently, some academics misunderstand or misconstrue the role of the digital in critical work, including prominent Woolfian scholar Mark Hussey. While Hussey explores how some digital resources, like online archives, can enhance the analysis of Woolf's work, he warns that other computational methods create passive readers and critics: "these [methods] require vigilant implementation to avoid the potentially reductive effects of readers becoming users" (264). In prioritizing digital projects that are repositories, Hussey fails to recognize that all digital methods are a starting point for hermeneutics, in which the scholar must interpret, analyze, and extrapolate. In my Review Essay, I examine other academics who distort the interpretive aspect of digital methods. In this essay, the implications of technology has a crucial stake

on the future of literary studies: in order for the Digital Humanities to grow as a field, it will have to work on articulating its intervention.

Over the next few years, I intend to bring my exploration of image/text relations, materiality, and bibliography in digital projects into conversation with Gender Studies. The syllabus enclosed here presents my first step into this field. I have organized the readings across nation, period and genre to interrogate various expressions of gender. After their first encounter with cross-dressing and homoerotics in Shakespeare's comedy, *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*, students will examine the satirical portrait of transgenderism in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography* and the portrayal of Latino machismo culture in Junot Díaz's short story collection, *This Is How You Lose Her*. My aim for this course, which I will teach in the fall, is to raise questions about embodiment and identity across literatures that will stimulate my thinking about engaging with these texts online. Eventually, as more modernist works come out of copyright, I intend to pursue projects and create tools that respond to diverse textual identities and expressions. By exposing me to students' first-hand accounts of these texts, the course will inform how I might approach gender in online environments. If all goes according to plan, this teaching experience will also inspire a digital, pedagogical component of my dissertation.

Works Cited

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From Surface to Distant: A Review of Critical Reading Methods

Best, Stephen and Sharon Marcus. "Surface Reading: An Introduction." *Representations* 108 (2009): 1-21.

Moretti, Franco. *Distant Reading.* London: Verso, 2013.

Ramsay, Stephen. *Reading Machines: Toward an Algorithmic Criticism.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011.

Over the past several years, the advent of the digital humanities has suggested new possibilities for the future of literary studies. The developing affordances of digital technologies encourage a reevaluation of the critical processes of scholarship. Ought scholars to regard themselves as builders, interpreters, or describers? And should they approach the text as data for analysis or a playpen for experimentation?

This review essay examines three recent methods of “critical reading”—surface reading, distant reading, and algorithmic criticism. All three methods assume different roles for the scholar and posit alternative futures for literary studies. Surface reading, according to Sharon Marcus and Stephen Best in “Surface Reading: An Introduction,” attends to the textual surface for what is visually, materially, and affectively immanent, rather than what is concealed or implied (9). Distant reading, according to Franco Moretti in *Distant Reading*, quantifies literary history and textual data through a series of visualizations, such as graphs and diagrams, to test hypotheses in a procedure closer to scientific experiment than traditional literary criticism. Algorithmic criticism, according to Stephen Ramsay in *Reading Machines: Toward an Algorithmic Criticism*, approaches the constraints and objectivity of computational processes as an opportunity for contemplation and conversation. Each of these methods locates the interpretive activity of reading in different places—Best and Marcus on the literal and descriptive level of the

text, Moretti in textual and historical data, and Ramsay in the potentiality of readings that arise from textual transformations—with different implications for the role of the critic in the hermeneutical process. This essay evaluates and engages these alternate perspectives to find what their approaches suggest about the future of literary studies.

In “Surface Reading: an Introduction”, Best and Marcus distinguish between symptomatic reading that seeks to unearth a text’s true meaning by discovering its latent and recurring “symptoms,” and a new method of “surface reading” which registers “what is evident, perceptible, apprehensible in texts” (9). Inspired by a conference on the 25th anniversary of Fredric Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious*, the editors of this special issue of *Representations*, “The Way We Read Now”, expounds the aims and procedures that “attend to the surfaces of texts rather than plumb their depths” (1-2). The editors here propose a useful and exciting critical practice that observes materialities, patterns, verbal complexities, and mediations of texts. Surface reading’s departure from psychoanalysis and Marxism recalls the post-critical reading practice espoused by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You’re So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You”. In this essay, Sedgwick warns that the “hermeneutics of suspicion”, while a useful critical tool, can also delimit the reader’s interpretive faculties to a routinized search for the hidden and the latent.

Best and Marcus begin the essay by defining symptomatic reading as an interpretive practice that locates underlying patterns such as “absences, gaps, and ellipses in texts,” then speculates upon “what those absences mean, what forces create them, and how they signify the questions that motivate the text” (3). After introducing the issue’s contributors and their engagements with symptomatic and surface reading, the authors list

the concrete methods for surface reading: first, in "*surface as material*," the critic considers book history and material conditions, such as publication and circulation (9); second, in "*surface as the intricate verbal structure of literary language*," the critic describes what the text literally says by attending to verbal complexities and densities (10); and finally, the "*embrace of the surface as an affective and ethical stance*" considers the reader's affective response and the experience of reading (10). In the closing section of their essay, "Freedom in Attentiveness," the authors ask how this kind of reading, which eludes hidden truths in favor of apparent ones, can enhance the reader's "experience of texts" (13): by releasing the reader from the burden of finding symptoms, the authors argue, surface reading offers a freedom that initiates a search for more relevant and urgent truth. They conclude, "we would suggest that to begin to challenge the state of things, or the distortions of ideology, we must strive to produce undistorted, complete descriptions of them" (18).

Moving from surface to distant, Franco Moretti pursues a critical practice that recalls scientific methods. *Distant Reading* consists of ten articles that follow Moretti's intellectual development, from theorizing World Literature in the early 1990s toward a "quantitative formalism" in the early 2010s. The articles here progress through Moretti's broad questions about "morphological evolution," or how literary forms travel across time and space, toward more localized examinations about social and economic forces engaging style and plot. Underlying this development is Moretti's deep concern—present from his first book published in English, *Signs Taken for Wonders*—with finding a method that connects history with form. In the introductory essay to this early work, Moretti calls for a "falsifiable criticism":

> In principle, the criteria for testing literary interpretations should be the same as those already in use in every other scientific discipline. One should in other words demand of an interpretation that is coherent, univocal, and complete. And the test will consist in comparing it with data which—in the text or texts that constitute its object—appear contradictory or inexplicable in the light of the hypothesis itself. (21)

Here, Moretti proposes a mode of critical inquiry based on an empirical foundation that facilitates reasonable and verifiable interpretations. In objection to the practice of contemporary literary critics, Moretti points out that "So long as [criticism] continues to revolve around concepts such as 'ambiguity' and the like, criticism will always, inexorably, be pushed into multiplying, rather than reducing, the obstacles every social science encounters when it tries to give itself a testable foundation" (*Signs Taken for Wonders* 22). For Moretti, a preferable critical method would minimize the potential for difference and disagreement. These early reflections reveal two important concerns that will inflect his thinking in *Distant Reading*: first, that criticism aims for consensus, and second, that consensus is achieved through "falsifiable" methods, such as the testing of hypotheses.

In the collection's first major essay, "Conjectures on World Literature," Moretti sets his scope on what Margaret Cohen calls "the Great Unread," which requires the methodology of distant reading: "where distance…allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems" (48). He exemplifies this new method in the subsequent essays, "The Slaughterhouse of Literature" and "Planet Hollywood." In the former, Moretti reads over 100 detective stories to chart the rise and fall of a formal element, such as the use of clues in detective fiction, over time, and in the latter, he maps the distribution of Hollywood movie genres across the globe. Both articles proceed according to the methods outlined in

"Conjectures": Moretti poses a hypothesis, inputs the data, studies the visualizations, and makes inferences. The results are sometimes unexpected, but thoroughly enlightening, and often bring Moretti to reframe his hypotheses. The next group of essays include Moretti's responses to his critics: "More Conjectures" clarifies, refines, or concedes points from the original "Conjectures" about the application of World Systems Theory to comparative literature, and "The End of the Beginning: A Reply to Christopher Prendergast" clarifies the role of hypothesis, interpretation, and explanation. The final two essays illustrate the full flowering of Moretti's quantitative method: in "Style, Inc.: Reflections on 7,000 Titles (British Novels, 1740-1850)," he plots the titles of novels on a graph to see how market forces meet formal ones, and in "Network Theory, Plot Analysis," he diagrams the dramatic interactions between characters in British and Chinese literature. These final essays demonstrate how the method of distant reading has streamlined into the neat processes of hypothesis, collecting and assembling data, and inference.

Also interested in quantitative processes, albeit from a different angle, Stephen Ramsay addresses practices of "humanities computing," which uses computers to count, classify, or "analyze" language. Ramsay mediates between two dominant positions in the current debate about the proper place of computational methods in literary studies: first, the position that computing is less about *doing* and more about *thinking*, or providing an opportunity for reflection: "the actual results are less important than the insights gained from the juxtaposition of mechanism and mind" (ix); and second, the position that approaches computing as a rational, fact-based inquiry offering verifiable conclusions—as a pseudo-scientific method that goes "beyond the beached solipsism that characterizes

modern *discours* and toward its right and proper end in *raison*" (ix). While the first position enlists computation in the pursuit of theoretical ends, the second relies on them as a means of transcending the equivocation and uncertainty of humanistic thought. Ramsay points out that, though they may borrow from and inspire one another, scientific inquiry and humanistic endeavors aim for fundamentally incompatible goals. Indeed, while scientific methods pursue singular answers to questions about objects, humanistic inquiry *experiences* objects through acts of observation that rely on the critic's subjectivity. Rather than solve problems or answer questions definitively, humanist critics engage in readings that are inescapably partial and speculative. In this light, according to Ramsay, computational methods enhance current reading strategies by harnessing the constraints of computation to offer potential new readings: "The computer revolutionizes, not because it proposes an alternative to the basic hermeneutical procedure, but because it reimagines that procedure at new scales, with new speeds, and among new sets of conditions" (31).

Throughout his book, Ramsay puts forth a hermeneutical method that highlights the critic's interventions around the use of computational methods in the hermeneutical process. When used responsibly, computers are "tools… that enable critical engagement, interpretation, conversation, and contemplation" (Ramsay x). Ramsay's proposed method of text analysis, "algorithmic criticism," takes the constraints of computation as an opportunity for reflection on the ways that critics change and transform the texts under their scrutiny. Activities such as compiling word frequency lists, diagramming social relationships, or plotting various textual data are grounded in inherently critical moves, such as asking questions or identifying problems. Drawing from Jerome McGann and

Lisa Samuels' concept of "deformance," or the deliberate distortion or transformation of texts ("Deformance and Interpretation"), Ramsay suggests that critics employ computational methods to select or rearrange textual data into new forms, or "paratexts," for further reflection and analysis. Ramsay maintains that all critical reading is a deformative activity insofar as it prioritizes certain textual data, such as formal patterns, words, devices, over others and delivers a new, alternative text: "To read a poem *as* a postcolonial artifact, *as* evidence of generic protest, *as* cultural touchstone (the preposition in each case signaling a deformation) is to present a narrative that depends upon a number of discrete (de)formal procedures" (51). Combining mechanism and mind, Ramsay proposes "that we channel the heightened objectivity made possible by the machine into the cultivation of those heightened subjectivities necessary for critical work" (x). For example, in his analysis of Virginia Woolf's novel, *The Waves*, Ramsay uses a computer program to generate lists of distinctive terms uttered by each of the six speakers in Woolf's novel. Ramsay emphasizes how this method "puts forth not the [original] text, but a new text in which the data has been paraphrased, elaborated, selected, truncated, and transduced" (16). To say, as a result, that the word frequencies "confirm" or "verify" what other critics have argued about the characters assumes that literary criticism aims for singular answers. Rather, the point of such an exercise is to "unleash the potentialities" of the text, offering opportunities for new readings (33). Ramsay point out that "we are not trying to solve Woolf. We are trying to ensure that discussion of *The Waves* continues" (15).

In some ways, all the critics in this essay prioritize the surface level of language, particularly linguistic patterns, as grounds for interpretation. In what follows, I will

explain how these critics' divergent methods cohere into similar critical practices before examining their different conceptions about the role of the critic. There is significant overlap between surface reading, distant reading, and algorithmic criticism in that all three practice selective reading—that is, picking out certain details from texts to analyze—with or without the aid of computers. For example, both surface and distant reading focus on historical or material contexts, such as publication history and the non-canonical archive; and both surface reading and algorithmic criticism invest immense importance in finding patterns in texts, even if they direct this activity toward different ends. Also, distant reading and algorithmic criticism rely on the visualization or arrangement of textual data to stimulate analysis. Moretti's graphs and maps function similarly to Ramsay's textual transformations which "stand alongside the other [original text], impressing itself upon it and upon our own sense of what is meaningful" (12). Interestingly, in describing his diagram of character interactions in *Hamlet*, Moretti addresses this network of character-relations as something like Ramsay's "paratext":

> Though Horatio is an old fixation of mine, I had never fully understood his role in *Hamlet* until I looked at the play's network structure. The keyword, here, is 'looked'; what I took from network theory was its basic form of visualization: the idea that the temporal flow of a dramatic plot can be turned into a set of two-dimensional signs… that can be grasped at a single glance. (211)

Moretti's diagram of *Hamlet* enacts something analogous to Ramsay's "deformance," which involves transforming texts into new configurations (such as diagrams or word frequency lists) that stimulate potential readings. Seen in this light, the space between distant, surface, and algorithmic criticism seems to collapse.

Despite their similarities, these methods position the critic in different roles within the interpretive process. For example, surface reading limits the critical act to description

in a way that actually perpetuates the impulses that drive symptomatic reading. The authors' exigence—that surface reading is better or preferable to symptomatic because it discloses the truth or meaning more readily on the surface of texts—maintains symptomatic reading's conviction that criticism aims to register *correct* descriptions of a text's meaning or its relationship to reality. Both methods, in other words, assume that criticism seeks to describe (or demystify) "something accurate and true about [texts]" (16). This desire to read accurately and faithfully prevents the critics from capitalizing on the phenomenal affordances of surface reading. It re-directs what is, potentially, an aesthetic turn toward doing the work of cultural criticism; for, rather than embrace the surface for its own sake, exploring its material qualities, they angle for describing and explaining the ideological forces operating in texts. Indeed, Best and Marcus admit their motives on the final page of their essay:

> We began this essay by asserting the distance we would like to take from the type of symptomatic reading we inherited from psychoanalysis and Marxism, but in concluding we note that the work of assembly and the desire for a more complete view of reality are also aims of both schools of thought, which is one reason they remain central to the critics whose works we have assembled here. (19)

The editors here concede that both methods pursue "a more complete view of reality," though they maintain throughout the essay that meaning is more readily discoverable on the surface rather than the depths. Their intervention would gain more traction and urgency by explicitly addressing how surface reading, as an interpretative method, complicates the practice of "reading" from depth to surface. For example, the editors might emphasize how attention to language, forms, and patterns might open a space for alternate readings, or readings that are independent of cultural significance. Certainly, surface reading strategies may be directed toward exploring the ambiguities or

uncertainties of language and form, but its current frame, this method limits literary criticism to "accurate" or "correct" interpretations.

Moretti's method, like Best and Marcus, diminishes the agency of the interpreter. As a miniature archive of Moretti's development, *Distant Reading* documents his repeated attempts to understate the role of the critic in analysis. The culmination of Moretti's quantitative method appears among the final set of essays, particularly in "Style, Inc.: Reflections on 7,000 Titles (British Novels, 1740-1850)," where he plots data about book titles on a series of graphs in order to speculate on market forces. In the introduction of this essay, Moretti lays out his process:

> In what follows… I *describe* a major metamorphosis of eighteenth-century titles, and *try to explain* its causes; next, I *suggest* how a new type of title that emerged around 1800 may have changed what readers expected of novels; and finally, I *make a little attempt* at quantitative stylistics, examining some strategies by which titles point to specific genres. Three sections, three pieces in the large puzzle of the literary field. (181-2; emphasis mine)

Moretti's language here clearly depreciates the significance of his contribution. No longer tackling the big questions of "World Literature" from his previous essays, he now limits his inquiry to the more modest "pieces in the large puzzle of the literary field." His choice of verbs— "describe", "try to explain", "suggest" and "make a little attempt"— reveals his attitude toward his intervention. Though his speculations are provocative, Moretti presents them as *supplementary* to the visualizations. Nonetheless, his insights belie this modest language. Several pages into his argument, Moretti summarizes his reasons for the shortening of book titles over time: "As the market expands, titles contract; as they do that, they learn to compress meaning" (204). None of the graphs make this argument—they are incapable of doing so. Moretti asks the questions: "by 1800 the number [of words in the title] had already dropped to 5 to 10 percent. Why?"

(184); and answers them: "between the size of the market, and the length of the titles, a strong negative correlation emerged: as the one expanded, the other contracted" (188). Further on, as graphs multiply and speculations become more sophisticated, and Moretti adds a little note: "Here is a modest example of what quantitative stylistics could do: take those units of language that are so frequent we hardly notice them and show how powerfully they contribute to the construction of meaning" (207). Indeed, the graphs are powerful, but they're hardly capable of plotting themselves, identifying trends, and speculating upon them, which Moretti does so masterfully.

In direct contrast to Best, Marcus and Moretti, Ramsay emphasizes and even celebrates the work of the critic. For Ramsay, all readings, even those that employ computational methods, depend on the critic's capacity for rhetoric and analysis. Indeed, he would have discussion of texts, such as *The Waves*, continue indefinitely. But this position invites a host of questions: is the goal of literary criticism to continue the conversation *ad infinitum*? Do "false" readings exist? Ramsay continually asserts that humanistic study aims for the possible rather than the factual: "criticism is concerned not with determining the facts of the text, but with the implications of the text in its potentialized form. The computer, if it is to participate at all, can only serve to broaden that potentiality" (67). But, assuming that computational methods liberate the textual terrain, and offer more opportunities for the analysis of form, what compels these analyses toward making logical and reasonable arguments? Ramsay answers: "the goal, after all, is not to arrive at truth, as science strives to do. In literary criticism, as in the humanities more generally, the goal has always been *to arrive at the question*" (my

italics, 68). For Ramsay, one question continually leads to another, and so on, and rhetorical coherence appears to be the only standard:

> The understanding promised us by the critical act arises not from a presentation of facts, but from the elaboration of a gestalt, and it rightfully includes the vague reference, the conjectured similitude, the ironic twist, and the dramatic turn. In the spirit of *inventio*, the critic freely employs the rhetorical acts of conjecture—not so that a given matter can be settled, but in order that the matter might become richer, deeper, and ever more complicated. (16)

The analysis centers around the rhetorical ability of the critic, whose only goal is to convince the reader of her position, regardless of "fact". Here Ramsay's significantly diverges from Moretti, Best and Marcus: rather than aim for agreement about a set of facts about the text, Ramsay relies the art of persuasion. While the rest of these critics use literature to gain some kind of understanding about culture or history, Ramsay plants his stake firmly in the rhetorical. However, Ramsay's insistence on the potentiality of readings actually results in a serious limitation: in forsaking the facts, Ramsay confines the scope of his influence, alienating his much of his literary (not to mention public) audience, particularly those invested in historical or cultural interventions. If Ramsay's goal is to continue the conversation for the sake of style and speculation, who but the most hardened humanists will listen?

The three methods—surface reading, distant reading, and algorithmic criticism—position the critic in a way that affects the future of literary studies. Among them, only Moretti appears to push literary criticism forward in a significant way. He embraces the work of quantitative stylistics as part of a collective effort: in the introductions to each chapter in *Distant Reading*, he describes many of his experiments as failures that, in harnessing a "fantastic opportunity, this unchartered expanse of literature", expand and illuminate the terrain for interpretation (89). Moretti admits that "once you have *really*

been proved wrong, the argument is no longer about you; it's about a world of facts that everybody agrees to share" (108). Aiming for a similar goal, Best and Marcus narrow interpretive activity to description and explanation of texts toward "a more complete view of reality" (19). However, their fear or over-reading or misinterpreting literature suppresses the exciting possibilities for surface reading. In aiming only for accurate and true interpretations that have cultural or historical significance, surface reading preemptively excludes potential readings about various "surface" qualities of texts that play on uncertainty and ambiguity. While Best, Marcus and Moretti enlist the critic in the search for facts or views of reality, Ramsay celebrates the critical process for its own sake. He would likely view Moretti's failures as successes because they allow for rhetorical interventions. However, Ramsay's liberation of the critical field ultimately pursues a conservative project, exchanging the desire for accuracy with solipsism: "our fear of breaking faith with the text may also need to give way to a renewed faith in the capacity of subjective engagement for liberating the potentialities of meaning" (57). His insistence on the importance of rhetoric and potentialities of meaning alienates those who do not already view criticism as a self-sustaining, valuable and rewarding exercise. In this way, Ramsay preserves a public conception of literary studies that Moretti describes as "the embarrassing pantomime where the literary historian is in fact the person who expounds the commonplaces everybody knows in a string of well-turned and persuasive sentences" (*Signs Taken For Wonders* 24). Because Best and Marcus essentially continue their critical forebears' project under new conditions, and Ramsay promotes an arguably isolating form of literary criticism, only Moretti appears to move the field forward in a wholly progressive way.

Works Cited

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English 220 Syllabus
Fall 2017

English 220: Introduction to Writing about Literature

Learning Objectives:

With an emphasis on close reading and analytical writing, English 220 is intended to develop in students the analytical and interpretive skills necessary for both written and verbal critical response to literature that is firmly grounded in the text. It also establishes a common knowledge base, however minimal, in literature in English, and it equips students with the vocabulary and techniques for describing and analyzing literary works, with an emphasis on developing critical writing skills specific to literary analysis. In addition, the course develops in students an appreciation and understanding of the aesthetic qualities of literature, as well as an awareness that literature is part of a larger ongoing cultural, social, and historical dialogue that informs, influences, and inspires our experience. By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. Write thesis-driven analytical essays on all three genres (Poetry, fiction, drama) that incorporate evidence from the literary texts and demonstrates close reading skills.
2. Write an analytical research paper of at least 6-8 pages that demonstrates close reading skills and the appropriate use of evidence from literary texts; the ability to create a clear thesis statement; and the ability to incorporate and engage scholarly critical sources as part of a well-organized, thesis-driven argument.
3. Discuss fiction, poetry, and Shakespearean drama verbally through the use of close reading skills and, where appropriate, basic literary terminology
4. Demonstrate some familiarity with literary criticism in class discussion or writing, or both.
5. Demonstrate the ability to compare and/or contrast literary works.

Required Texts:

Twelfth Night, by William Shakespeare, ed. Mowat and Werstine; Folger Shakespeare Library, Mass Market Paperback, Simon & Schuster; ISBN-10: 0743482778; Price: $5.61 on Amazon. (editions and prices subject to change)

Orlando: A Biography, by Virginia Woolf (Annotated Edition); ed. Mark Hussey; Harcourt, ISBN-10: 0156031515; Price: $10.81 on Amazon. (editions and prices subject to change)

*All other texts will be provided online in PDF version.

Assignments and Grade Distributions:

Close-reading essay (4-5 pages): 15%
Response paper (1-2 pages): 15%
Research Paper (6-8 pages): 40%
Final Exam: 5%
Participation (attendance, homework, and class discussion): 25%

Class Schedule:

Date	Assignment
W1: Mon., Aug. 28	introductions and syllabus overview; in-class Diagnostic Essay;
Thurs., Aug 31	John Donne, “Woman’s Constancy” & “The Flea”
W2: Mon., Sept. 4	**No Class**
Thurs., Sept. 7	*Twelfth Night*, Act I; homework due
W3: Mon., Sept. 11	*Twelfth Night*, Act II; homework due
Thurs., Sept 14	*Twelfth Night,* Act III; homework due
W4: Mon., Sept. 18	*Twelfth Night*, Act IV homework due
Tues., Sept. 19	**CUNY Thursday** *Twelfth Night*, Act V
W5: Mon., Sept. 25	Lindheim, "Rethinking Sexuality and Class in Twelfth Night." *University of Toronto Quarterly*, vol. 76 no. 2, 2007, pp. 679-713. discuss thesis statements, organization, and evidence
Thurs., Sept. 28	**Topic and Quotes for paper 1 due** Shakespeare sonnet 130, Spenser *Amoretti* sonnet 64
W6: Mon., Oct. 2	**Draft of paper 1 due** Peer review
Thurs., Oct. 5	**Paper 1 due via email** James Joyce, “Eveline”
W7: Mon., Oct. 9	**No Class**
Thurs., Oct. 12	Joyce, “An Encounter”; homework due
W8: Mon, Oct. 16	Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* chapter 1; homework due
Thurs., Oct. 19	Woolf, *Orlando* chapter 2; homework due
W9: Mon., Oct. 23	Woolf, *Orlando* chapter 3; **Response Paper 1 due**
Thurs., Oct. 26	Woolf, *Orlando* chapter 4; homework due
W10: Mon., Oct. 30	Woolf, *Orlando* chapter 5; **Response Paper 2 due**
Thurs., Nov. 2	Woolf, *Orlando* chapter 6; homework due
W11: Mon., Nov. 6	Critical essay #1 (on *Orlando*);
Thurs., Nov. 9	Critical essay #2 (on *Orlando*) **Precis due**
W12: Mon., Nov. 13	Emily Dickinson, “Wild Nights, Wild Nights”; **Paper 3 proposal due**

Thurs., Nov. 16	Dickinson, "I am afraid to own a Body--" & "I dwell in Possibility"; homework due
W13: Mon., Nov. 20	In-class practice essay for final exam **Paper 3 outline due**
Thurs., Nov. 23	**Thanksgiving;**
W14: Mon., Nov. 27	Junot Diaz, *This Is How You Lose Her,* "Alma"; homework due
Thurs., Nov. 30	**Paper 3 draft due**; peer review day, part 1
W15: Mon., Dec. 4	Diaz, *This Is How You Lose Her,* "Miss Lora"; homework due
Thurs., Dec. 6	**Paper 3 revised draft due**; peer review day, part 2
W16: Mon., Dec. 11	Diaz, *This Is How You Lose Her,* "The Cheater's Guide to Love"; homework due
Thurs., Dec. 14	**Paper 3 due via email**

Final Exam: TBA

Rationale:

This iteration of English 220: Introduction to Writing about Literature teaches students to analyze arguments, generate ideas, and take and support positions about literature. The course builds on the critical writing and research skills taught in its prerequisite, English 120: Expository Writing, by exposing students to British and American fiction, drama, poetry, and literary criticism. Here, students will continue to develop their critical writing and research skills while being introduced to the new skill of close reading. The written work of the course consists of a series of writing assignments and daily homework that culminate in a final research paper: the homework will spur students' oral and written response to the texts; the close reading paper will introduce students to formal analysis, argument, and organization; the response papers will engage students with the central source text for their research papers; and the precis writing exercises will teach students to summarize and respond to criticism. By introducing students to a regular writing practice and the skills of critical reading, summary and analysis, this course

design scaffolds students' progression toward the final research paper.

The readings in the syllabus were selected for the way they relate to the course theme of gender and facilitate formal analysis. Over fourteen weeks, students will read a play by William Shakespeare, poetry by John Donne and Emily Dickinson, and fiction by James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Junot Díaz. These readings approach gender from different perspectives: some approaches include Donne's subversion of Petrarchan conventions in erotic poetry, Joyce's exploration of cultural constructions of gender, and Dickinson's preoccupation with embodiment and eroticism. Besides centering on the theme of gender, the readings also facilitate the formal study of literature: Shakespeare's play, the first major text of the semester, sets the thematic and formal foundation for the course; the poems by Donne and Dickinson offer students the opportunity to study figurative language in depth; and the stories by Joyce and Díaz present different narrative points of view, particularly first-person and free indirect discourse, that will prepare students to analyze the structure and voice of the longer and more challenging text by Woolf.

The theme of gender resonates across the texts' divisions of centuries, national traditions, and genre. For example, the main characters from Woolf's novel, *Orlando: A Biography*, and Junot Díaz's collection of short stories, *This Is How You Lose Her*, interrogate the relationship between gender expression and nationality. *Orlando*'s narrator recounts the long life of an English nobleman who undergoes a mysterious sex change while living in Turkey. After her transition, Orlando's awareness of the tension between cultural and essential constructions of gender emerges particularly in her habits of dress. When Orlando changes out of her Turkish trousers to sail back to England, the narrator reveals, "it was not until [Orlando] felt the coil of skirts about her legs and the Captain offered, with the greatest politeness, to have the awning

spread for her on deck that she realized with a start the privileges and penalties of her position" (Woolf 113). Indeed, one of the "penalties of her position" upon moving back to England is Orlando's disenfranchisement and inability to hold property. Jessica Berman argues that *Orlando* "mak[es] national belonging both what Orlando longs for from the hills of Turkey and what her transformative experience in Turkey forever undoes" (Berman 221). Similarly to Woolf's novel, Díaz's short story collection also explores the association between gender and nationality. Yunior, the young Dominican-American narrator, attributes his inability to sustain romantic relationships with women to the examples of his philandering brother and father. Raised and socialized within a Latino machismo culture in the United States, Yunior operates under what José David Saldívar calls a "racial and gender coloniality" (322). Saldívar explains that Yunior "allow[s] us to see how his culture's heteronormativity and his masculinist ideas about women so often leave him feeling utterly disconnected or alienated from his lovers, family, and community" (325). Internalizing his identification as a Dominican-American, Yunior expresses the resiliency of culture in a narration that intersperses English and Spanish words. He describes his brother and father as "sucios", or cheaters, and Yunior cannot overcome what he regards as this inherited trait. When Yunior begins his first affair at the age of sixteen, he admits, "You had hoped the gene missed you, skipped a generation, but clearly you were kidding yourself. The blood always shows" ("Miss Lora" 161). For Yunior, nationality and gender expression are conflated to prevent him from overcoming his romantic struggles. As opposed to Orlando, who associates her gender ambivalence to the variability of her clothes, Yunior attributes his gender expression to blood.

With Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, students will have the opportunity to study the theme of gender in depth. The play depicts the events following a shipwreck, when a pair of twins,

Viola and Sebastian, are stranded separately on the fictional island of Illyria. Adopting the disguise of a male page, Viola enters into a love triangle with a Duke and a Countess. When Sebastian finally appears on the scene, the triangle is ruptured, and the play ends with marriage. This resolution reveals how “the combination of masculinity and femininity in the love-object... accomplishes what neither could by itself” (Hayles 70). Viola, by incorporating both the masculine and the feminine in her impersonation of Cesario, initiates a complex web of sexual attraction in the play that eventually facilitates her marriage with the Duke and her brother’s with the Countess. Casey Charles argues that “the gender ambiguity of Viola/Cesario in fact sets the stage for the representation of a plethora of desires: homoerotic attraction between Orsino and Cesario, heterosexual attraction between Orsino and Viola, and lesbian attraction between Viola and Olivia” (132). Impersonating a gentleman, Viola can achieve an intimacy in her conversations with the Duke, and her androgyny as Cesario in disguise compels the Countess to eventually accept Sebastian in Viola’s place. Cesario’s gender ambivalence also inflects her brother’s effeminacy as the object of his best friend’s devotion. Antonio’s “openly amorous language”, “smacking of Petrarchan love” enhances Sebastian’s feminization (Pequigney 202-203). Lindheim affirms, “The Elizabethan audience’s first, external, impression – [Sebastian] looks like his sister! – is reinforced ‘internally’ in his conversation with Antonio. His exquisite sensitivity to the quality of his friend’s feelings and the obligation it lays upon him might well be seen as a woman’s trait” (683). In portraying him as a suitable stand-in for Cesario, Sebastian’s feminization works with Viola’s cross-dressing to make the final romantic alliances possible. Throughout their study of this play, students will be encouraged to interrogate such gender ambivalences.

The opening scene anticipates the play's subversion of gender norms by characterizing desire as fantastical and protean. Students will practice a formal analysis of this scene, answering the following prompt: "How does this passage characterize desire?" This particular lesson will focus on the use of metaphor, particularly in how the Duke describes love throughout the passage. The scene depicts the Duke musing on his attraction to the Countess:

> If music be the food of love, play on,
> Give me excess of it that, surfeiting,
> The appetite may sicken and so die.
> That strain again, it had a dying fall.
> O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour. Enough, no more,
> 'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
> O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou
> That, notwithstanding thy capacity
> Receiveth as the sea, naught enters there,
> Of what validity and pitch so e'er,
> But falls into abatement and low price
> Even in a minute! So full of shapes is fancy
> That it alone is high fantastical. (I.i.1–15)

Students here will be instructed to engage in a multi-step process of close reading. First, they will identify the speaker, audience, and message of the passage; then, they will examine its figurative devices and, extrapolating from their findings, they will address the theme of desire. In this passage, the Duke makes two central comparisons between love and appetite and love and the sea. The first eight lines elaborate the metaphor of love as an appetite, driven by by taste and smell ("sweet sound that breathes… stealing and giving odour"), and ultimately exhausting the lover ("Enough, no more"). The next seven lines extend this description of desire by evoking the boundlessness and unpredictability of the ocean. The Duke addresses cupid ("O, spirit of love"), comparing him to the ocean that, due to its magnitude, cannot show changes in size ("naught enters there"). The passage ends with a pun on the word "fancy", which connotes both attraction

and imagination. After examining the use of metaphor throughout the passage, students will find that desire is characterized as a fickle appetite, driven and sustained by a boundless imagination and whimsical pleasures. They will discover how this passage, by presenting desire as fantastical and unpredictable, sets the stage for the impending play on gender subversions.

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Conference Paper: Call for Papers

TEXTUAL EMBODIMENTS

Wednesday, May 31 – Friday, June 2

University of Maryland
College Park · Maryland · United States

The Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH) and the Andrew W. Mellon-funded African American Digital Humanities Initiative (AADHum) invite your participation in "Textual Embodiments," the Society for Textual Scholarship's International Interdisciplinary Conference for 2017.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

As always, the conference is open to submissions involving interdisciplinary discussion of current research into particular aspects of textual work: the discovery, enumeration, description, bibliographical analysis, editing, annotation, mark-up, and sustainability of texts in disciplines such as cultural studies, literature, history, musicology, classical and biblical studies, philosophy, art history, legal history, history of science and technology, computer science, library and information science, archives, lexicography, epigraphy, paleography, codicology, cinema studies, new media studies, game studies, theater, linguistics, and textual and literary theory. Considerations of the role of computational methodologies, tools, and technologies in textual theory and practice are of course welcome, as are papers addressing aspects of archival theory and practice as they pertain to textual criticism and scholarly editing.

Especially welcome are interdisciplinary papers addressing the theme of Textual Embodiment in the fields of Black Diaspora Studies, Indigenous Studies, LGBTQ Studies, Latinx Studies, Disability Studies, Women's Studies, and Critical Theory.

Conference Paper: Abstract

This talk examines how a digital edition of Virginia Woolf's short story, "The Mark on the Wall," engages with twenty-first-century paradigms for perception. The digital edition, developed for a 2014 issue of *Scholarly Editing: The Annual of the Association for Documentary Editing*, offers miniature archive of the story's print witnesses published between 1917 and 1944. My examination questions how the experience of being online and the affordances of the digital edition might change the way that one interprets Woolf's story. To answer these questions, I consider New Media theory, particularly Mark Hansen's theory of perception in *Feed-Forward: On The Future of Twenty-First-Century Media*. Here, Hansen draws from Alfred North Whitehead's reconceptualization of subjectivity to explain how twenty-first-century media operates beyond the human in ways that simultaneously marginalize and expand her perceptive capacities. My examination approaches this contemporary condition as a starting point for thinking through the reader's engagement with the "versioning edition" of "The Mark on the Wall." Hansen's model informs the affordances of the digital edition that supply the textual history of the story while preventing the user's physical engagement with the texts. I conclude that this environment alerts the reader's perceptual capacities to elements that might otherwise elide her notice, such as function of time across the levels of text and narrative.

Conference Paper: Script

Speculating upon Virginia Woolf's "The Mark on the Wall"

[SLIDE 1] This talk explores how the digitization of Virginia Woolf's short story, "The Mark on the Wall," encourages users to consider the evolving impact of Woolf's revisions on the story over time. This digital project presents the editorial development of "The Mark on the Wall" through six print editions. My examination asks how the exposure to the text's publication history in digital form might change the way that we read and interpret Woolf's story. To answer this question, I borrow from New Media theory and Speculative philosophy, which offers a model for thinking through twenty-first-century technologies and their impacts on human perception. This framework allows me to approach the online environment as one that determines the user's access to the text. In simultaneously expanding and limiting access, the format of the digital edition provides extensive information about the textual witnesses, while structuring the user's engagement with them. In what follows, I explore how the user's access might stimulate her interpretive activity. I take our contemporary media moment, when technologies record, analyze, and present information often beyond the user's awareness and control, as a useful starting point for situating our perceptual encounter with the online text. With this in mind, my inquiry aims to answer the following question—how does the engagement between reader and text, facilitated by digital environments, allow for different interpretations of Woolf's story?

Before moving forward, I will first summarize Woolf's story and then briefly describe the digital edition. Then, I will offer a framework from New Media theory, specifically, Mark Hansen's theory of twenty-first-century technology affecting

perceptual processes. Finally, applying Hansen's model, I will engage in a close-reading of Woolf's text that re-examines how temporality, emphasized by the digital edition, functions across the bibliographic and formal levels of the text. I conclude that the material affordances of online edition encourage a new reading of its narrative elements, particularly the function of time in *mediating* the story itself.

First, a brief description of "The Mark on the Wall". Woolf's story follows the thought process of an unnamed female narrator as she speculates upon the identity and origin of a mysterious mark on the wall. The narrator begins by recalling when she first noticed the mark, and conjures the details from her memory—the fire burning, the smoke from her cigarette, the flowers in a bowl, and the light falling upon her book. Then she proceeds to speculate about the mark, wondering whether it was left by the apartment's previous inhabitants, and why it was put there in the first place. Each of her speculations sparks another train of thought, leading the narrator to wonder about abstract problems such as the futility of knowledge and the precarity of possessions, to name a few. As she follows these trains of thought, the mark on the wall continually draws her back to the room, and the narrator appreciates how it grounds her meditations: "Indeed, now that I have fixed my eyes upon it, I feel I have grasped a plank in the sea... Here is something definite, something real" (par. 13). Yet, after being re-assured by the physical presence of the mark, the narrator slips once again into speculation, to be interrupted finally when another person enters the room. The story ends abruptly:

> Everything's moving, falling, slipping, vanishing … There is a vast upheaval of matter. Someone is standing over me and saying—
> "I'm going out to buy a newspaper."
> "Yes?"

> "Though it's no good, buying newspapers ...... Nothing ever happens. Curse this war! God damn this war !... All the same, I don't see why we should have a snail on our wall".
> Ah, the mark on the wall! For it was a snail. (par. 13)

Someone enters into the room and speaks to the narrator, disrupting her thought process. When this figure identifies the mark as a snail, the narration ceases. He forecloses the possibility of further speculation.

[SLIDE 2] Developed by Emily McGinn, Amy Leggette, Matthew Hannah, and Paul Bellew of the University of Oregon, the online edition of "The Mark on the Wall", which the editors call a "versioning edition", contains all six versions of Woolf's short story that were published throughout her lifetime by the Hogarth Press. **[SLIDE 3]** This digital project appears in a 2014 issue of *Scholarly Editing: The Annual of the Association for Documentary Editing*. As a "versioning edition," it offers the full text of the six print witnesses of "Mark on the Wall," which are compiled into a composite text with editorial changes indicated by hyperlinks **[SLIDE 4]**, and offers scanned images for each print witness, which the user can select and browse individually. So there is a composite, deep text, presenting a single version of the story that displays the author's revisions over time, and additionally, a series of scanned images for each witness **[SLIDE 5]**. The images exhibit the material factors of the edition, such as the type, format, and illustrations. **[SLIDE 6]** The editors maintain that the edition presents Woolf's textual changes and editorial decisions that illustrate the "relations between thought, writing, and printing; the interactions between verbal and visual elements in the textual object; and the physical factors of creative labor" ("Introduction"). According to the editors, the aim of this edition is to "explore what digital processes and platforms can reveal about print artifacts" ("Introduction").

Taking up their call, I examine the experience of reading and interpreting Woolf's work within its new digital context. I specifically look to how the text's presentation over time engages or reinforces its narrative themes and strategies. Here, I refer to twenty-first-century media theories, hoping that that they may provide starting points or analogues for thinking through the act of reading in an online environment. At this point, I am careful to keep my inquiry firmly speculative. I will not argue that Woolf's text enacts these theories, or that the digital edition requires their application. To do so would be anachronistic at best, and intellectually limiting at worst. My aim is not to settle whether the text fits nicely with theories about twenty-first century media, but to see what such frameworks might offer or suggest for those thinking about the experience of engaging with texts online. I believe that my method aptly engages a text that is self-conscious about the speculative process and that my speculations offer a necessarily honest and open-minded approach toward reading in digital environments.

Mark Hansen offers a provocative framework for thinking about human engagement with twenty-first-century media which draws from the speculative empiricism of Alfred North Whitehead. In his book, *Feed-Forward: on the Future of Twenty-First-Century Media*, Hansen explores how technological media determines human perception. Hansen here examines twenty-first-century technologies that sense, compute, and analyze data beyond human awareness or control: He explains that "computational processes occur at time frames well below the thresholds constitutive of human perceptual experience, [and] they seem to introduce levels of operationality that impact our experience without yielding any perceptual correlate" (4). Hansen argues that, computational processes, in influencing human experiences, distribute perceptual

capacities between humans and their environment; He points out that "Life in the twenty-first-century media networks reveals something that has perhaps always been the case, but that has never been so insistently manifest: agency is resolutely not the prerogative of privileged individual actors" (2). Hansen examines how perception, agency, and subjectivity are distributed across what he calls a "worldly capacity for self-sensing." Here, he builds on Whitehead's early twentieth-century speculative philosophy to approach subjectivity as distributed and relational among humans and machines. Responding to the tradition of post-Cartesian subjectivism, where the thinking subject distinguishes the world's phenomenal appearance from its physical reality, Whitehead proposes a speculative philosophy that invests all objects with subjective power. Hansen explains,

> Whitehead's reform of subjectivity aims to balance the solipsism of modern, post-Cartesian subjectivism with an 'objectivist' principle as to the datum of experience; to do this, Whitehead stresses the necessity of recognizing that every datum of experience is composed of external things that are nonetheless *immanent in subjective occasions of experience*… Put in more straightforward terms, Descartes indubitable cogito must be reconnected to its 'objective' source: the worldly material, the 'objective datum', catalyzing its emergence. (9)

By building off of Whitehead, Hansen can expand the terrain of perception beyond the human in order to situate agency among "global patterns of activity across scales in networks" (2).

Hansen adapts Whitehead's reconceptualization of subjectivity to explore what twenty-first-century technological environment means for human perception and agency. Hansen argues that Whitehead's theory well informs "the shift from an agent-centered perceptual modality to an environmental sensibility", because it explains how the human subject's relationship to technology changes the terms of subjectivity (9). Rather than

simply consuming media, humans are entering into a new relationship with media where subjectivity operates within and beyond the human. What Hansen describes as twenty-first-century "atmospheric media" prevents humans from seeing themselves as separate or autonomous subjects; in fact, humans are "composed as subjects through the operation of a host of multi-scalar processes, some of which seem more 'embodied' (like neural processing), and others more 'enworlded' (like rhythmic synchronization with material events)" (3). Whitehead's thinking allows Hansen to approach the complex sensory terrain that envelops and extends beyond the human and into media environments: "literally swathed in a multi-scalar and dispersed sensory surround, our (higher-order) subjectivity acquires its power not because it incorporates and processes what is outside, but rather through its direct co-participation or sharing in the polyvalent agency of myriad subjectivities" (12).

Here we approach Hansen's central intervention on Whitehead's thought: he argues that, while technology expands the scope for human perception across new sensory environments, it also impedes the human's immediate sensory experience of the world. Because media have become self-sensing and proliferating, they simultaneously subsume what was formerly within the domain of human perception and expand perceptual capacities across new sensory terrains: twenty-first-century media "open[s] up perception, beyond perception proper, to the material processes that do not manifest in sense perception but that nevertheless are necessary for its occurrence" (20). This process of opening perception is also accompanied by the marginalization of perception; Hansen points out that "to access this domain of sensibility, humans must rely on technologies to perform operations to which they have no direct access whatsoever" (4). Through

processes that sense, analyze, and compute, twenty-first-century technology feels *for* the subject in a way that expands the subject's sensory reach while diminishing her direct apprehension of the world. Hansen offers the example of writing technology that achieves a similar effect: "Like writing—the originary media technology—twenty-first-century media involve the simultaneous amputation of a hitherto internal faculty (interior memory) and its supplementation by an external technology (artifactual memory)" (4-5). Writing functions as an ancient, technological analogue to contemporary media: direct, physical experience with objects is replaced with a more indirect yet expansive experience of the interface.

It is precisely this exchange between direct and indirect experience that I want to explore in the versioning edition of Woolf's "Mark on the Wall." First, on a material level, the edition expands the reader's access to the text across time, evident in the editorial documentation, while marginalizing her direct engagement with the witnesses as physical, time-bound objects. **[SLIDE 7]** It presents a main text with the variants and images of witness that are accessible through hyperlinks and a drop-down menu. The editors explain that "the digital platform allows the user both to read the text as a whole, without interruption from the codes and annotations of a variorum, and to discover the alterations by clicking open the text box" ("Introduction"). However, while the edition expands the user's visual and haptic access to the text's different versions, it also marginalizes her holistic engagement with the individual texts as physical objects. Though the access to multiple versions would be extremely difficult to facilitate off the web, the user still misses the physical experience of handling these artifacts. In this way,

thinking back to Hansen's model, this versioning edition expands the user's reach across multiple witnesses while diminishing her physical engagement with the text.

In addition to the material level, Hansen's model suggests a further implication on the level of narrative. Allowing us to expand our perceptual capacities to things we might not directly feel but nonetheless experience, the edition opens up a reading of *time as an agent* in the story. In emphasizing how time determines our experience with textual objects, our engagement with the online texts point to time's role *within* the story as an agent that compels the narrative to unfold and then, abruptly, to cease. The story begins with the narrator remembering, "Perhaps it was the middle of January in the present year that I first looked up and saw the mark on the wall" (par. 1). Later on, at the climax of the story, the intrusion of another person causes the narrator to lose hold of her speculations. **[SLIDE 8]** She sputters— "A tree? A river? The Downs? […] Everything's moving, falling, slipping, vanishing… There is a vast upheaval of matter. Someone is standing over me"—and her speculations break down. In contrast to the rest of the story, which ranges through the narrator's thought processes, the interruption here locates the narration firmly in the present, unfolding action. In the short dialogue that follows this interruption, the intruder identifies the mark on the wall as a snail. The story then ends with the narrator's realization, "Ah the mark on the wall! For it was a snail" (par. 17). In these lines, temporality again is confused: speaking as if she had forgotten all about it, the narrator finally identifies the mark in the past tense, "for it *was* a snail." Indeed, this switching between past and present occurs repeatedly throughout the story, from its beginning as a recollection upon past events that expands into the present, in ways that nearly elides the reader's notice. The narrator shifts between her speculations, memories,

and present day obscures the chronology, muddling past recollections with present meditations. As it progresses, the narration seamlessly integrates past with present, so that by the end of the story, they seem to have merged. These ambiguities and mergings signal the important role that time plays in *mediating* the story itself, and especially, in bringing it to a close. Additionally, the editorial changes in the final line, which removes the word "for" from subsequent editions, reinforces on the bibliographic level the effect of time on the narrative. The presentation of the text over time in the versioning edition alerts the reader to the role of time in the story, as an active agent in the storytelling.

This attention to time in the narrative complicates a previous critical interpretation of "The Mark on the Wall," which identifies a perceptual, rather than temporal, break that ends the story. In his influential book, *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics,* Jesse Matz attributes the story's abrupt ending to Woolf's perceptual rupture with the mark on the wall. Matz shows how the narrator constructs the story in a speculative mode by posing questions and attempting to answer them: "Woolf moves dialectically through a series of different perceptual alternatives, and discovers in the process itself the best one" (182). Rather than ascertain the mark's identity, the narrator prefers to engage of this process of mediation between the outside world and her mind. According to Matz, the attempt to sustain a perceptual unity is ultimately undermined by otherness of the object asserting its division from the perceiving subject, when the object's inevitably escapes the subject's grasp. Thus, in Woolf's story, the speculation ends when another character points out that the mark is actually a snail. Matz explains that "Woolf's narrator has lapsed. So the 'story' must end… because the mark has been materially identified and placed in its proper relation" to the subject (186).

Using Hansen's model, which expands the potential terrain for perception to include time, we might suggest that the story ends due to a temporal, rather than a perceptual, interruption. Hansen's model allows for this reading because it offers a framework that invests a previously overlooked component—such as time—with agency within an expanded perceptual environment. Indeed, while the versioning edition presents a reading of time on a material level—the story's editorial development between 1917 and 1944—it also points to a reading of time *within* the story, on the level of narrative. This attention to time as an agent allows the reader to see how the story enacts a more complex and expansive process of perception than Matz proposes. Hansen's model opens our consideration to the function of time across bibliography and narrative, in which our access to the text over time points to the ways that time operates in the narrative.

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Speculating upon Virginia Woolf's

"The Mark on the Wall"

By Student Seven

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About

THE ANNUAL OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR DOCUMENTARY EDITING
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Comparing Marks: A Versioning Edition of Virginia Woolf's "The Mark on the Wall"

Go to: Edition

Introduction

Emily McGinn, Amy Leggette, Matthew Hannah, and Paul Bellew

Focusing on a single work of short fiction by the British modernist writer Virginia Woolf (1882–1941), this project presents a case study of small-scale digitization. As the first product of her home publishing enterprise, the Hogarth Press, established in 1917, "The Mark on the Wall" links Woolf's writing method to her editorial practices as a printer. By providing a multifaceted context for comparing versions of Woolf's short story, this edition of "The Mark on the Wall" explores what digital processes and platforms can reveal about print artifacts.

Woolf is largely considered one of the canonical figures of Anglo-American modernism, a period of literary and artistic production dating from roughly 1890 until about 1940. Born to a well-to-do London family, Adeline Virginia Stephens was raised with a deep appreciation of art and literature that would characterize much of her life. As a young adult, she became associated with a group of artists, writers, and intellectuals dubbed the "Bloomsbury Group" —named after the London neighborhood where most of the members lived or congregated —which included, among others, writer Lytton Strachey, economist John Maynard Keynes, and intellectual Leonard Woolf, whom she would marry in 1912. Despite her eventual literary

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SCHOLARLY EDITING

THE ANNUAL OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR DOCUMENTARY EDITING
2014, VOLUME 35

Comparing Marks: A Versioning Edition of Virginia Woolf's "The Mark on the Wall"

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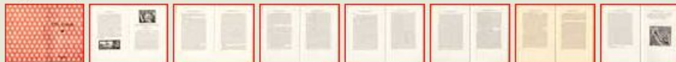
Select a Witness

Current Witness: Woolf, Virginia. "The Mark on the Wall." In *Two Stories*. Richmond: Hogarth Press, 1917.

Page Images for this Witness:



green text = presence of grammatical or stylistic alterationred text = presence of variance and annotated note

THE MARK ON THE WALL

Perhaps it was the middle of January in the present year that I first looked up and saw the mark on the wall. In order to fix a date it is necessary to remember what one saw. So now I think of the fire; the steady film of yellow light upon the page of my book; the three chrysanthemums in the round glass bowl on the mantelpiece. Yes, it must have been the winter time, and we had just finished our tea, for I remember that I was smoking a cigarette when I looked up and saw the mark on the wall for the first time. I looked up through the smoke of my cigarette and my eye lodged for a moment upon the burning coals, and that old fancy of the crimson flag flapping from the castle tower came into my mind, and I thought of the cavalcade of red knights riding up the side of the black rock. Rather to my relief the sight of the mark interrupted the fancy, for it is an old fancy, an automatic fancy, made as a child perhaps. The mark was a small round mark, black upon the white wall, about six or seven inches above the mantelpiece.

people who had this house before us would have chosen pictures in that way—an old picture for an old room. That is the sort of people they were—very interesting people, and I think of them so often, in such queer places, because one will never see them again, never know what happened next. They wanted to leave this house because they wanted to change their style of

next. She wore a flannel dog collar round her throat, and he drew posters for an oatmeal company, and they

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Note

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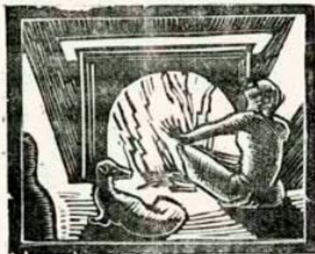
PREV

"Dad, I want to marry a girl"—a really nice girl—"but she's not one of us: will you give me your permission and blessing?" Well I don't believe in it. Our women are as good, better than Christian women. Aren't they as beautiful, as clever, as good wives? I know my poor mother, God rest her soul, used to say: "My son," she said, "if you come to me and say you want to marry a good girl, a Jewess, I don't care whether she hasn't a chemise to her back, I'll welcome her—but if you marry a Christian, if she's as rich as Solomon, I've done with you—don't you ever dare to come into my house again." Vell, I don't go as far as that, though I understand it. Times change: I might have received his wife, even though she was a Goy. But a servant girl who washed my dishes! I couldn't do it. One must have some dignity."

He stood there upright, stern, noble: a battered scarred old rock, but immovable under his seedy black coat. I couldn't offer him a shilling; I shook his hand, and left him brooding over his son and his graves.



THE MARK ON THE WALL

By

VIRGINIA WOOLF

Perhaps it was the middle of January in the present year that I first looked up and saw the mark on the wall. In order to fix a date it is necessary to remember what one saw. So now I think of the fire; the steady film of yellow light upon the page of my book; the three chrysanthemums in the round glass bowl on the mantelpiece. Yes, it must have been the winter time, and we had just finished our tea, for I remember that I was smoking a cigarette when I looked up and saw the mark on the wall for the first time. I looked up through the smoke of my cigarette and my eye lodged for a moment upon the burning coals, and that old fancy of the crimson flag flapping from the castle tower came into my mind, and I thought of the cavalcade of red knights riding up the side of the black rock. Rather to my relief the sight of the mark interrupted the fancy, for it is an old fancy, an automatic

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PREV

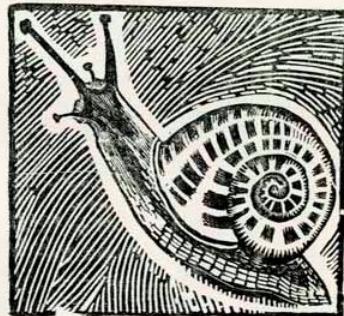
sensation of being wood; then there is the grinding of the storm; then the slow, delicious ooze of sap. I like to think of it too on winter's nights standing in the empty field with all leaves close-furled, nothing tender exposed to the iron bullets of the moon, a naked mast upon an earth that goes tumbling, tumbling, all night long. The song of birds must sound very loud and strange in June; and how cold the feet of insects must feel upon it, as they make laborious progresses up the creases of the bark, or sun themselves upon the thin green awning of the leaves, and look straight in front of them with huge diamond-cut red eyes. One by one the fibres snap beneath the immense cold pressure of the earth; then the last storm comes and, falling, the highest branches drive deep into the ground again. Even so, life isn't done with; there are a million patient, watchful lives still for a tree, all over the world, in bed-rooms, in ships, on the pavement, lining rooms where men and women sit after tea smoking their cigarettes. It is full of peaceful thoughts, happy thoughts, this tree. I should like to take each one separately—but something is getting in the way ...Where was I? What has it all been about? A tree? A river? The Downs, Whitaker's Almanack, the fields of asphodel? I can't remember a thing. Everything's moving, falling, slipping, vanishing...There is a vast upheaval of matter. Someone is standing over me and saying—

"I'm going out to buy a newspaper."

"Yes?"

"Though it's no good, buying newspapers......Nothing ever happens. Curse this war! God damn this war!...All the same, I don't see why we should have a snail on our wall".

Ah, the mark on the wall! For it was a snail.



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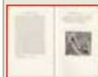

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How readily our thoughts swarm upon a new object, lifting it a little way, as ants carry a blade of straw so feverishly, and then leave it. . . . If that mark was made by a nail, it can't have been for a picture, it must have been for a miniature—the miniature of a lady with white powdered curls, powder-dusted cheeks, and lips like red carnations. A fraud of course, for the people who had this house before us would have chosen pictures in that way—an old picture for an old room. That is the sort of people they were—very interesting people, and I think of them so often, in such queer places, because one will never see them again, never know what happened next. She wore a flannel dog collar round her throat, and he drew posters for an

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the ground again. Even so, life isn't done with; there are a million patient, watchful lives still for a tree, all over the world, in bedrooms , in ships, on the pavement, lining rooms, where men and women sit after tea, smoking cigarettes. It is full of peaceful thoughts, happy thoughts, this tree. I should like to take each one separately—but something is getting in the way . . . . Where was I? What has it all been about? A tree? A river? The Downs ? Whitaker's Almanack ? The fields of asphodel? I can't remember a thing. Everything's moving, falling, slipping, vanishing . . . . There is a vast upheaval of matter. Someone is standing over me and saying :

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Ah, the mark on the wall! It was a snail.

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