Victorian Culture and Experiential Learning

Historical Encounters in the Classroom

Edited by

KEVIN A. MORRISON

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PART I

Foundations

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Victorian Studies, Experientially

Kevin A. Morrison

When I first approached the contributors whose chapters appear in this volume about writing on Victorian culture and experiential learning, a coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) had not yet been declared. By the time that the files were readied for submission to the publisher, a global vaccination campaign, unevenly implemented and exposing significant inequities in access and distribution, was well underway. In the meanwhile, many of us wrote our chapters while teaching students virtually or, when mitigation effort permitted, in a mix of in-person and virtual formats. Indeed, while several of us offered classes that never met in person and that were taught asynchronously online, others provided instruction synchronously at the times the class was scheduled. Still others taught hybrid/blended classes that had both online and in-person components, the latter within the bounds of social distancing requirements and, thus, classroom capacity. Although some resumed in-person instruction at scheduled class times sooner than others did, all were, at various points, affected by partial or full campus closures.

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The constraints to and disruptions of instructional delivery meant that many of the experiential learning practices about which we have written could not themselves be employed through this period. By contrast, the transition to synchronous, asynchronous, and hybrid/blended modalities did not negatively impact approaches to instruction that stress active student engagement with course materials. In fact, an online environment provides considerable support for active and engaged learning in which Zoom or Microsoft Teams breakout rooms replace in-class group work. Additionally, non-graded questions and instant polling, video-based quizzes, and other techniques keep students engaged in digital learning.

While enhanced digital technology made the transition to virtual classrooms in a pandemic relatively seamless, if not more logistically challenging and workload intensive, learning through experience is a pedagogical approach that—at least for now—probably works best face-to-face. Of course, long before the pandemic, historians and contextually oriented literary scholars have debated whether working with digitized primary sources is as effective as consulting original documents and objects in archives and special collections. As Linda K. Hughes has argued, while search engines may uncover the discursive web of mass print culture, it is not a substitute for turning the pages of nineteenth-century periodicals and newspapers in order to understand "how print organizes itself locally, materially, and temporally" (2014: p. 20). If, for Hughes, working with both physical and digitized copies of newspapers and periodicals can yield insights that either method alone cannot, for others the unique specificity of manuscript texts offers a privileged experience for which digitized versions is no match. "Unlike printed books," Peter Beal contends, "each manuscript is peculiar: it is physically and ontologically unique." He continues:

> Even multiple scribal copies of the same work, perhaps made by the same individual, are each a separate edition of that work, each one subject to contingent circumstances of production, readings, and interpretation, decisions of presentation within given traditions, and the influence of contemporary readers. And when we turn to the physical evidence itself—to matters of paper, ink, and its application, as well as handwritings—we become even more aware that, ultimately, for all the usefulness of modern technology, there is no substitute for the original. (1998: p. vi)

Although neither Hughes nor Beal are concerned with experiential learning per se, both stress embodied research methods in which directly handling and touching manuscripts is a form of knowing. When instructors arrange visits to university libraries and special collections or organize field trips to research centers, these experiential learning activities are often guided by such notions.

Some have argued that any activity which engages learners in direct experiences on which they subsequently and intensively reflect constitutes a form of experiential learning. Thus, among many others, community-based research projects and service-learning opportunities, fieldwork, museum-based education, fieldtrips, archive-based teaching, outdoor adventure programming, study abroad, co-op placements, internships, labs and live simulations might all properly considered experiential. Indeed, many undergraduate and graduate programs require such experiences as part of their curricula. Take, for example, medicine, in which anatomical dissection is considered a key component of one's formal training (Korf et al. 2008; Vitali et al. 2020). Likewise, for students studying law or business, clerkships and internships are ways to gain experience in professions they intend to enter as well as exposure to potential employers (Strauss 2017). From the applied sciences to hospitality administration to nursing to law and business, any number of disciplines that require hands-on components were severely impacted by the public health emergency surrounding the global pandemic.

Unlike apprenticeships and clerkships, work-based learning, internships, and other opportunities that provide students with relevant professional experience, the study of Victorian literature and culture does not require learning through experience. One could spend a semester reading fiction from Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (s. 1860–1861) to Marie Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895), studying Pre-Raphaelite art, or reflecting critically on the British empire and its historiography without arranging for students to ever set foot in a special collections reading room. One can provide an introduction to industrialization and the New Poor Laws without taking students to a social history museum or offer a broad overview of the arts and crafts movement without, say, visiting William Morris's Kelmscott Manor in the Cotswolds. But arranging learning activities that enable students to apply the knowledge they have acquired in the classroom as part of a specific experience may foster greater understanding and awareness as well as promote deeper connections with the course material.

This book aims to be a resource for instructors who are interested in bringing the past alive for their students and increasing their historical empathy through experiential forms of learning. While sharing a common historical field, the contributors hail from multiple disciplines, including art history, human biology, biological anthropology, and English literature. Ranging from assignments that involve students editing and annotating a primary work to producing an array of digital projects, and from participating in study abroad programs to taking part in service-learning initiatives, the chapters in this book will furnish readers with strategies for creating historically empathetic classrooms. Although the focus of the collection is on Victorian Britain, the pedagogical approaches outlined in each chapter should have broad appeal.

Historical Empathy

Like its related terms, pity, compassion, and sympathy, empathy is a highly fraught concept. The term first entered the English language in 1909, when the English psychologist Edward Titchener translated the German word *Einfühlung* from the aesthetician Robert Vischer, who had coined it in 1873 (Wispé 1987: p. 18). It is thus a relatively recent addition to the psychological lexicon, although, as Marjorie Garber observes, it has a Greek analogue: *empatheia* (2004: p. 14). The foundational promise of empathy—that it enables one to understand, and therefore share, the feelings of another—has been subject to trenchant critique for its voyeuristic, solipsistic, and narcissistic tendencies (Berlant 2004).

Indeed, for Paul Bloom, empathy is illusory. Drawing on research in psychology and cognitive science, Bloom defines empathy as the capacity to "*experience the world as you think someone else does*" (2016: p. 16; emphasis in original). He traces the roots of empathy to the Scottish enlightenment, although he admits—in a conflation of two separate concepts—that "they called it 'sympathy'" (16). For Bloom, empathy is a blinding emotion. In its myopia, empathy can actually impede moral thinking.

In the nineteenth century, sympathy was, of course, a highly vaunted social virtue. It is, remarks the narrator of George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, "the one poor word which includes all our best insight and our best love" (1859: p. 264). In Eliot's formulation, sympathy is both intellectual and affective. One feels for another and, in so doing, engages in an "imaginative transportation beyond the boundaries of the self and its most egoistic claims to a recognition of the differences between self and other" (Argyros 1999: p. 1). Sympathetic identification may lead to an ameliorative act or to the expression of solidarity and identification with another. It is, in other words, "a way of relating" (Wispé 1986: p. 318).

For many social and cultural historians who utilize it as an interpretative tool, empathy is not to be confused with sympathy. Even Bloom seeks to differentiate between an emotional empathy, which he finds wanting, and a cognitive empathy, which he lauds. "There is the capacity to understand what's going on in other people's heads, to know what makes them tick, what gives them joy and pain, what they see as humiliating or ennobling," he avers. Bloom continues: "We're not talking here about me feeling your pain but rather about me understanding that you are in pain without necessarily experiencing it myself" (2016: p. 36). Although Bloom does not make a case for historical empathy, his notion of cognitive empathy resonates with it. For what historical empathy requires is the reconstruction of context to understand why a person or people acted in ways that they did and, therefore, how they inhabited their social worlds.

Unlike sympathy, empathy is primarily a cognitive activity. It is, in Lauren Wispé's terms, "a way of knowing" (Wispé 1986: p. 318). Beginning in the 1970s, a number of historians identified empathy as an essential prerequisite for researching and writing about the past. In fact, although he does not use the term, E. P. Thompson was perhaps one of the first to advance the notion of historical empathy in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963). Arguing against then-influential schools of historical thought whose practitioners, he believed, approached their subjects in condescending and patronizing ways, Thompson played a leading role in establishing history from below—a form of historical narrative that situates ordinary working people in their discrete times and circumstances. For historians following in Thompson's footsteps, one of their main tasks is to engender empathy for those persons from the past whose voices they have recovered or reconstructed (Hitchcock 2015; Eley 2005). It is, Peter Lee once argued, "central to history, one might say structural, in that without it history cannot begin" (1983: p. 40). In his view, empathy facilitates one's connections to historical personages and, by grasping their points of view, enables us to understand their motives and actions better. Without empathy, Lee concluded, the researcher is unable to effectively utilize archival materials to construct an accurate historical narrative.[1]

Although there is a robust literature on the "beneficial curricular and dispositional student outcomes" of utilizing empathy as a tool for historical understanding (Endacott and Sturtz 2015: p. 1), surprisingly few studies consider its overlap with another pedagogical practice—experiential learning. This is, perhaps, because experiential learning often engenders affective responses in students with which many instructors remain uncomfortable. Yet the individual whose affective engagement with the past produces what we might call "a sense of history" need not confuse bodily awareness, intuitive intellectual perception, or feelings for a historical personage with what was actually thought, felt, or experienced at the time. As a process of cognitive and, when combined with experiential forms of learning, affective engagement, historical empathy can be a powerful mechanism for immersing students in the study of the past and provoking their historical thought. Although not all contributors utilize the concept of empathy to the same degree, the chapters in this volume, taken as a whole, contribute to the overarching argument that experiential learning can promote cross-historical empathy in meaningfully productive ways.

Experiential Learning

Regardless of how each contributor assesses the importance to one's teaching practice of inculcating in students a sense of cross-historical empathy, all share a belief in the efficacy of experiential learning. But how is this concept defined? Some years ago, David A. Kolb outlined a theory of learning that sees it advancing through a cycle: from specific experience (doing something rather than studying it) to reflective observation to abstract conceptualization (engendering a theory of what one has observed) before culminating in active experimentation (putting into practice all that one has learned). Since the publication of his highly influential *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (1994), a wide variety of activities have employed the term.[2] In a second edition to *Experiential Learning* published in 2015, Kolb sought to distinguish his theory of "how experience is transformed into learning and reliable knowledge" from any particular form of learning, including "service-learning, problem-based learning, action learning, or team learning" (2015: pp. xxi, xviii–xix). Nevertheless, many of these approaches incorporate elements of Kolb's theory, particularly the importance he assigns to active reflection, or draw from the same wellspring, including the writings of John Dewey and William James.

This book does not elaborate a theory of experiential learning or indeed subscribe to a singular set of principles. Instead, it is intended to provide instructors with different ideas for implementing effective active-learning strategies in their classrooms and providing a context for such hands-on approaches. Although it goes by different names, such as learning by doing, learning through experience or action, and learning through exploration, experiential learning challenges "a content-driven curriculum" in which instructors impart knowledge, often in the format of a lecture, and students demonstrate their mastery of this information through quizzes, examinations, and papers (Wurdinger 2005: p. 5). Indeed, as Wurdinger and Carlson have noted, instructors tend to utilize lectures because this is the format in which they were themselves taught. In addition to lectures, they commend to readers' attention other learning processes such as "discussion, group work, hands-on participation, and applying information outside of the classroom" (2010: p. 2).

One form of experiential learning popularized in recent years goes by the name "Reacting to the Past" (RTTP). Conceived in the 1990s by Mark C. Carnes, this approach covers moments in history when controversial ideas were the subject of significant public deliberation. Students read primary source documents and historiography about the event and are assigned a historical personage whose life and views they must research. After writing several papers over a period of many weeks, students prepare presentations and formal speeches in the guise of their characters. The exercise culminates in a debate in which students defend a particular stance on an issue. For example, a game on Charles Darwin and the controversy surrounding the publication of *The Origin of Species* (1859) divides students into representatives of competing natural and teleological worldviews (Driscoll et al. 2014). Because there is no pre-established outcome, students must attempt to persuade other characters—played by their fellow classmates—to accept their philosophical worldview. At the conclusion of the debate, students determine which side has won.

Unlike many other forms of classroom instruction, RTTP is largely student-directed. Although instructors oversee the class sessions and provide them with grades on their oral and written work, the students themselves construct the historical setting in which the event occurred and they collaborate and compete in self-directed ways. A student's grade depends on one's written work, which includes standard academic papers and the scripts they use in the role-playing exercises. Such role-playing, Carnes has argued, taps into students' manifest interest in "subversive play worlds" evident in the range of activities—from drinking contests to video games—that occupy their non-study hours at university (Carnes 2014: p. 64). Instructors use these written assignments and oral presentations to assess a student's understanding of the values and beliefs of the individual to whom they have been assigned as well as knowledge of their social world.

Although designed for the history classroom, a number of RTTP games are appropriate for literary studies. Joan Varnum Ferretti has written about her use of the *Stages of Power: Marlowe and Shakespeare, 1592* game in her Cultural Foundations course at New York University, which analyzes human achievements in art, music, literature, and drama. According to Ferretti, through their “immersion in Elizabeth England, students gain the knowledge and skills they need to experience and interpret the meaning of texts for themselves” (2018: 96). As Ferretti points out, several games, including *Frederick Douglass, Slavery, Abolitionism, and the Constitution, 1845*; *The Trial of Anne Hutchinson: Liberty, Law, and Intolerance in Puritan New England*; and *Red Clay 1835: The Cherokee Removal* are particularly useful in courses on American literature. Yet, with the exception of the game on Darwin, none has a direct bearing on the Victorian period.

RTTP is not without its critics. As Carnes summarizes these concerns: “They say that role-immersion games encourage students to *think* that they have stepped into the past and interacted with people in different times and places, but this is wrong.” “Historical understanding does not come from pretending to be a historical figure,” he continues, “it comes, if at all, through the rigorous study of the historian’s craft” (2014: p. 249). This is a charge Carnes refutes. Indeed, proponents of the RTTP method argue that students develop intense affective connections with the individuals whom they study. Through staged debate with other characters, they also develop empathy for the lives and circumstances of others profoundly different from their own. On this basis, RTTP has been hailed as a particularly “innovative” technique for engaging students with the past (Olwell and Stevens 2015: p. 561). Whether RTTP is more effective than other forms of active learning in the teaching of historical content has yet to be ascertained. In fact, preliminary studies suggest “no statistically significant difference” between outcomes when utilizing RTTP and other methods (Gasper-Hulvat 2018: p. 122). At the same time, such studies also underscore that hands-on approaches enable students to achieve greater mastery over historical content than traditional instructional methods alone.

Because the focus of any given RTTP game is on persuasion through speeches, the process and outcome of the game may very well differ from the way in which a historical event actually unfolded or concluded. Moreover, because RTTP games are designed to last several weeks or, in some cases, an entire semester, the traditional curriculum that role-immersion is intended to complement can, in fact, be sidelined or heavily overshadowed. Even if the first objection could be overcome and there were a variety of games from which one could choose, the instructor of Victorian literature and culture who is interested in experiential approaches but reluctant to cede such a significant amount of time to a single activity has relatively few resources. Less than two decades ago, Tanya Agathocleous and Ann C. Dean pointed out how the predominance of the research monograph and the edited collection of scholarly essays in literary studies had left little room for pedagogical guides and instructional resources to which teachers might turn for ideas and inspiration. As graduate student instructors in the 1990s, Agathocleous and Dean had been trained in "teaching composition and had been exposed there to the burgeoning literature on that subject," yet could not find "equivalent books on teaching literature" (2003: p. 1).

In fact, the Modern Language Association (MLA) first started publishing volumes in its Approaches to Teaching World Literature series in the 1980s. Whereas Agathocleous and Dean would have found a limited number of titles in this series when they were graduate students, the list now includes hundreds of volumes dedicated to teaching the works of an individual author or a single masterwork. Since the 1990s, a wide variety of guides to the pedagogy and teaching of literature have appeared. Although the MLA series covers an array of authors and historical periods, other publishers offer an increasing number of field-specific books. These range from broad collections on pedagogy, such as Jeanne Moskal and Shannon R. Wooden's *Teaching British Women Writers, 1750–1900* (2005), to books focused on individual Victorian-era writers, including Jason D. Martinek and Elizabeth Carolyn Miller's *Teaching William Morris* (2019).

The past two decades has also seen the appearance of a spate of publications on experiential learning in humanities-based disciplines. Within literary studies, a large percentage of this work has been devoted to Shakespeare. These include guides for instructors interested in incorporating theater-based activities into their classrooms, such as Charlton (2012), or reflective essays on teaching that, while narrowly focused on Renaissance drama, are intended to have broader applicability. For example, Jessica Riddell, Shannon Murray, and Lisa Dickson argue that, unlike the decidedly individualized experience of readings poems and novels, "theater is both a visual and communal engagement." "It is a challenge," they continue, "to capture this medium in a traditional lecture-based classroom and harder still to convey its three-dimensionality to undergraduate students" without utilizing experiential methods (Riddell et al. 2021: p. 173). Although Riddell, Murray, and Dickson demonstrate how valuable the experiential classroom was for students studying Shakespeare, they suggest, perhaps inadvertently, that theater more readily lends itself to such active-learning techniques. Presumably, then, poems and novels fall within the parameters of "a traditional lecture-based classroom."

Although case studies of and auto-ethnographic reflections on experiential teaching practices have been prevalent in other fields for some time, there is a growing interest among teachers of Victorian literature and culture in utilizing hands-on approaches. Many publications introduce readers to such methods as part of wider remits. A special issue of *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* (2016) on "Teaching Nineteenth-Century Literature and Gender in the Twenty-First-Century Classroom," edited by Lara Karpenko and Lauri Dietz, includes reflections by a number of undergraduate students who contributed directly to its production. Enrolling in Karpenko and Dietz's "Special Topics in English: Editing an Academic Journal," which was taught in spring 2016, students were tasked with selecting one of their own as managing editor and formulating the "evaluative criteria for article submissions—another foundational task that would guide the majority of our work for the semester." In these students' estimation, the task of producing "an issue of a scholarly journal from start to finish" was fulfilled because "cooperative learning bridged the gap from sixteen individuals to one learning community" (Braus et al. 2016: n.p.).

Whereas the special issue of *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* is focused on a single but powerful experiential learning model, Jen Cadwallader and Laurence W. Mazzeno's recent *Teaching Victorian Literature in the Twenty-First Century: A Guide to Pedagogy* (2017) provides a range of examples. In their contribution to the volume, "Teaching Dickens by the Numbers: A Case Study of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*," Julia McCord Chavez and Robert C. Hauhart outline an approach to teaching serial publication that includes requiring students to devise an "appropriate" ending for Charles Dickens's unfinished work. "Our goal in doing so," they note, "is to create an environment in which students can fully immerse themselves in the world of serial publication." They continue: "We find that through this method students gain a deeper appreciation of the craft and nuance of Victorian serialization, as practiced by the 'inimitable' Dickens" (2017: p. 36). In her chapter to Cadwallader and

Mazzeno's volume, "Teaching About and Through Computing: Victorian Record Keeping, Data Management, and the Class Edition," Constance Crompton explores "both Victorian digitality and modes of teaching digital editing." Crompton shows how Victorians at two different junctures in the period put a stop to "opportunities for digitality" before considering some of the "ways Victorian Studies scholars can use digital humanities projects, specifically the creation of digital editions using the XML language of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI), or other digital tools, in the classroom to support discipline-specific learning outcomes" (2017: p. 212). Finally, Jen Cadwallader's own contribution, "Adventures in Living Like a Victorian," outlines a number of experiential assignments she asks students to undertake over the course of a semester to assist them in gaining "sharper insights on our readings and on our wider course goal: to more fully grasp both the alterity of the past and the continuities between past and present" (2017: 261). Other chapters prove equally insightful.

In *Study Abroad Pedagogy, Dark Tourism, and Historical Reenactment: In the Footsteps of Jack the Ripper and His Victims* (2019), I outline the steps that I took in my near-decade-long experience of teaching study abroad programs to develop my own experiential practice, and I share these reflections as a means of enabling others to examine their own practices. Partially a defense of short-term study programs against criticism that they do little to inculcate in students a sense of global citizenship and are limited in their ability to develop cross-cultural competency, I explore what a program on the Whitechapel murders of 1888 can contribute to the realization of these goals. By providing examples of syllabi, assignments, and ways of evaluating student work, and informed by my own reflections, student's informal essays and anonymous evaluations, the book offers specific advice about planning effective study abroad programs—from efforts to recruit students, to identifying sources of financial support, to ensuring the academic success of the enrolled students, to teaching on a sensitive (and sensationalized) topic (see Fig. 1.1).

One of the distinguishing characteristics of *Victorian Culture and Experiential Learning* is its embrace of the multidisciplinary promise of the field by including diverse disciplinary approaches, experiential learning activities, and topics. This book is divided into four sections. Part I consists of this introduction and a second chapter that provides a pre-history of modern practices of active and experiential learning. Andrea Korda's "Experiential Learning in the Victorian Classroom: What Can We Learn

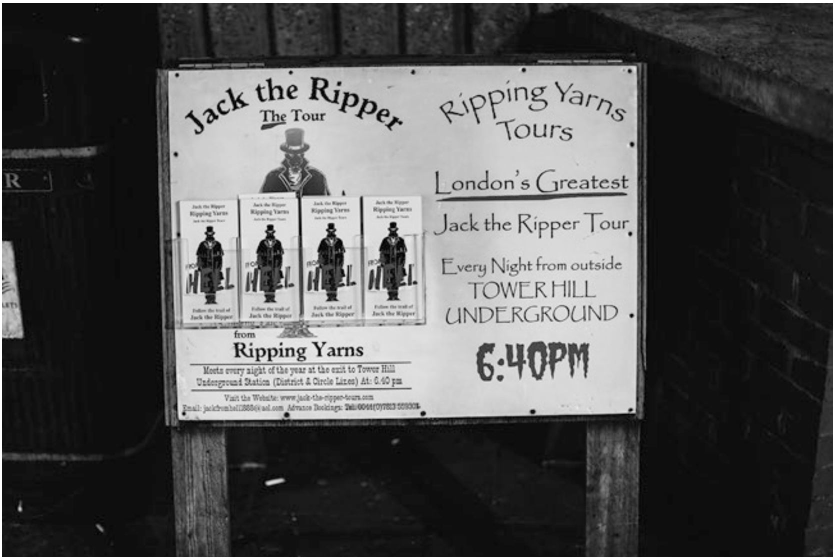
Jack the Ripper
The Tour
Follow the trail of Jack the Ripper
from
Ripping Yarns
Meets every night of the year at the exit to Tower Hill Underground Station (District & Circle Lines) At: 6.40 pm
Visit the Website: www.jack-the-ripper-tours.com
Ripping Yarns Tours
London's Greatest
Jack the Ripper Tour
Every Night from outside
TOWER HILL
UNDERGROUND
6:40PM

Fig. 1.1 Advertisement for Jack the Ripper walk. (Photograph by Shendrew Balendran. (© Kevin A. Morrison))

from the Object Lesson?" argues that hands-on instruction and active engagement emerged as an alternative to the rote forms of education with which the period is more commonly associated.

Part II consists of four Chapters on class-based activities. In Chap. 3, "Bridging the Distance: Learning Victorian Literature through Creative Projects," Klaudia Hiu Yen Lee illustrates how projects that involve students in creative engagement with the past promote self-reflectivity and historical understanding. Janice Schroeder, Barbara Leckie, and Jenna M. Herdman assess in Chap. 4, "Working with Mayhew: Collaboration and Historical Empathy in Precarious Times," the distinct benefits and conceptual shortcomings of experiential learning in the context of a repeatedly taught graduate seminar in which students participated in the production of a critical edition of a primary source. In Chap. 5, "Cooking the Victorian Recipe: An Experiential Approach to Cookbooks in Victorian Studies," Helana E. Brigman recounts her experiences teaching a course that combines literary analysis of Victorian cookbooks with food preparation activities, and which illuminates for students a distinct prose form as well as period-specific domestic labor practices. In Chap. 6, "Virginia Woolf, the Historical Sense, and Creative Writing," Heidi Stalla discusses the methods she employs to have students form their own distinctive connections to challenging literary texts.

Part III includes four Chapters on activities that take place outside of the formal classroom space. In Chap. 7, "Play, Craft, Design, Feel: Engaging Students and the Public with Victorian Culture," Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi and John Plunkett contend that active learning is most effective when it provides students with insights into embodied cultural practices, such as utilizing kaleidoscopes or stereoscopes in museal settings to understand Victorian visual culture or researching hobby books to create period handicrafts. In Chap. 8, "Learning in Archives: Fevers, Romances, Methodologies," I focus on my use of special collections and archives as sites of instruction to facilitate student engagement with primary sources and object-based learning. I argue that integrating a series of visits within a single semester and asking students to undertake sequential assignments based on archival materials can help them become active creators of knowledge. Peter Katz and Sarah Tanner consider in Chap. 9, "Mapping Feeling: Geography, Affect, and History on the London Streets through Study Abroad," how chance encounters and experiences on an educational tour overseas can illuminate for students a range of issues concerning the management of the poor and infirm in the Victorian period. Andrew Libby and Jennifer Cullin discuss in Chap. 10, "Genetics, Eugenics, and the Text of Real-World Experience," their requirement that students complete twenty hours of volunteer work at a nonprofit agency servicing those with physical and cognitive disabilities in order to think through Victorian and modern efforts to maximize the reproductive occurrence of desired heritable characteristics.

The final chapter, "The New Experiential Learning," serves as a coda. Laura Green surveys the growth of experiential learning in a wide variety of institutional contexts through the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. Epigraphically framed by a stanza from "Ulysses," Alfred, Lord Tennyson's 1842 poem, Green's chapter reflects on her own experiences and those of her colleagues at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts, and considers how opportunities for experiential learning by liberal arts students can assist them in charting their own educational pathways.

Notes

1. Indeed, John Fea has more recently argued that one must approach the past with empathy but also that—through studying unfamiliar times and places—the historian's capacity for empathy and humility is further refined (2013: pp. 61–62).
2. Not all have accepted the basic premises of this theory (Bergsteiner et al. 2010). Yet Kolb's work remains foundational.

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CHAPTER 2

Experiential Learning in the Victorian Classroom: What Can We Learn from the Object Lesson?

Andrea Korda

The famous classroom scene from Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* leaves us with the impression that fact-grinding ruled the day in Victorian classrooms (Dickens 1854: pp. 11–18). But there was much discussion among Victorian educationists about how to avoid the dangers of rote learning, or what psychiatrist James Chrichton-Browne called "brain forcing" ([1883] 1998: p. 338; Birch 2008: pp. 26–28; Cordner 2016: pp. 7–10; Midgley 2016: pp. 692–95; Robson 2012: pp. 57–64; Schroeder 2017: p. 683; Winter 2011: pp. 243–54). Criticisms of rote learning appeared regularly in school inspectors' reports, and methods of active learning were recommended as an antidote to rote learning. One school inspector warned that "mere verbal explanations, as every one will perceive, are of no use whatever; but when practically illustrated before their eyes by experiment, they become not only one of the most pleasing sources of

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instruction, but absolutely one of the most useful" (Report 1848: p. 17). Another inspector encouraged teachers to "make the acquisition of knowledge not a burden to the memory, but step by step a continual discovery on the part of the children under his charge." He went on to explain, "it is not the teacher's duty to do everything for the children, but to lead them to do all they can for themselves. … When children are engaged in listening to what is told them, their minds are in a great measure passive, but they are active when required to find out something for themselves" (Report 1854: pp. 130–31).

To encourage this form of engaged learning, some school inspectors recommended introducing object lessons into classrooms, a method that depended on students' first-hand engagement with objects (Report 1845: pp. 247–51; 1850: pp. 270–75; 1857: pp. 556–57). Victorian object lessons have their roots in the work of educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827), and they were popularized in Britain by the author and educator Elizabeth Mayo.[1] In the introduction to her widely read book of object lessons, *Lessons on Objects*, Mayo explained, "the end proposed was rather to excite the mental powers to activity, than to provide them with knowledge" (Mayo 1837: p. 3), thus emphasizing the process of learning rather than its products. She also warned teachers to avoid "telling too much to their pupils," explaining that "great evil arises from such a mode of instruction: their minds remain almost passive, and they acquire a habit of receiving impressions from others" (pp. 3–4). In contrast, Mayo insisted that students learn from their own experiences with objects, so that they may work toward "gaining mental power by the exertion of their own faculties" (p. 4).

Mayo's discussion of the object lesson, and the wider Victorian critique of rote learning, recalls American educational theorist David A. Kolb's assertion that experiential learning "is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes." To elaborate, Kolb explains (citing educator Jerome Bruner) that "the purpose of education is to stimulate inquiry and skill in the process of knowledge getting, not to memorize a body of knowledge" (Kolb 2015: chap. 2). For Kolb, experiential learning thus provides an antidote to what Paulo Freire called "the 'banking' concept in education," where "instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat" (Kolb 2015: chap. 2; Freire 2017: p. 45). Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and advocate of critical pedagogy, could not be further ideologically from Mayo, who worked to extend Christian education across Britain and its colonies through her work at the Home and

Colonial School Society. But on the point of the teacher's role they sound somewhat similar, with Mayo explaining, "the object itself should be presented to the children; that their knowledge be acquired by themselves, instead of all being simply communicated by the teacher" (Mayo 1846: p. 53).

In this chapter, I bring contemporary discussions of experiential learning into conversation with Victorian object lessons with two objectives in mind. First, by applying twentieth- and twenty-first-century experiential learning theory to the object lesson, I aim to draw out some of the challenges and contradictions in this Victorian pedagogical practice. Two challenges discussed today in contemporary scholarship on experiential learning were also challenges for Victorian educators—whether or not they identified them as such. In the chapter's first section on "Process Versus Outcomes in Victorian Object Lessons," I consider contradictions that arise in Victorian object lessons between the process of learning, based on the student's individual observations, and the lesson's objectives, which highlight specific information and ideas that students were expected to absorb. In the chapter's second section, I consider how feminist critiques of the mind-body dualism that commonly informs experiential learning theory can help us understand the workings of the Victorian object lesson. Bodily experience is central to experiential learning, and these critiques can help us understand which bodies and which experiences were privileged in the Victorian classroom.

My second aim in this chapter is to use my analysis of the Victorian object lesson to help us think critically about the challenges we face when introducing experiential learning into our own classrooms. I attend to this second aim by way of conclusion as a means of reflecting on what we can learn from Victorian education. Drawing on the essay by Ronjaunee Chatterjee, Alicia Mireles Christoff, and Amy R. Wong on "Undisciplining Victorian Studies" (2020), I propose that a form of experiential learning that values diverse experiences and knowledge can help us move toward undisciplining our teaching.

Process Versus Outcomes in Victorian Object Lessons

Given that the emphasis of experiential learning is on the process of learning, rather than on its outcomes, one persistent challenge in experiential learning concerns assessment. As one research team has pointed out, "Research consistently shows experiential learning yields positive effects… but assessing a direct effect toward learning goals is not simple." They explain, "students learn through experiential projects, but there is little evidence that they are all learning the same thing" (Cyphert et al. 2016: p. 420).

Mayo managed this challenge by instructing teachers on how to direct students' observations. In the first lesson of *Lessons on Objects*, featuring glass, Mayo explains, "the glass should be passed round the party to be examined by each individual." She then goes on to belabor the point in a footnote while also offering a strategy to ensure that students arrive at the correct observations: "By this means, each individual in the class is called upon to exercise his [sic] own powers on the object presented; the subsequent questions of the teacher tend only to draw out the ideas of the children, and to correct them if wrong" (Mayo 1837: p. 5). The questions provided in the model lesson prompt students to deepen their engagement by making comparisons, such as when the teacher asks students to feel the glass again and then compare it to the pieces of sponge tied to their slates (p. 6). Other questions prompt students to extend their engagement with the properties of glass by looking around for objects in the room made with glass, or by recalling other substances that share the properties of glass. As we can see from this example, though Mayo insists that students should acquire knowledge on their own through observation, she is also very clear about what that knowledge should comprise.

This potential contradiction continues in Mayo's *Model Lessons for Infant School Teachers and Nursery Governesses*, which elaborated on the type of lessons offered in *Lessons on Objects* with the purpose of providing a more comprehensive guide to teachers for bringing object lessons "into practice in the school-room" (Mayo 1848–49: p. iii). *Model Lessons* provides much more information on each object than *Lessons on Objects*, and also clearly articulates the appropriate lessons to be derived from each object. Many of these lessons conclude on a religious note. The lesson on water, for example, explains that "because water is necessary to man, God has given every country and abundant supply of it" (p. 22); the lesson on wool describes it as "the clothing which God gave [the sheep] to keep it *warm*" (p. 23); and a lesson on feathers suggests that "God has given [birds] a very *light clothing*, that they may fly in the *air*" and goes on to explain that feathers therefore provide evidence that "God takes care of the *little birds*, much more will he take care of *us*" (p. 29).[2]

Another object lesson, this one provided by *The Educational Record*, a periodical circulated by the British and Foreign School Society to teachers, provides a further example of this mismatch between the theory of the object lesson with its emphasis on experience and the learning outcomes to be achieved. *The Educational Record* regularly published lesson plans in its pages, and one "Sketch of an Object Lesson" from 1855 focused on the topic of "Hair." The notes provided for the lesson begin by focusing on the properties of hair and on providing specialized terminology, such as sheath, root, and gland, which could match a student's observations. The lesson then goes on to list the uses of hair as providing protection from injury, cold, heat, and moisture. The lesson to be gleaned, in the end, concerns "*God's wisdom*" and "*God's goodness*" (J.B. 1855: p. 105).

These two examples, and many others that could be offered here, provide evidence that the experience of the object lesson required careful management in order for students to arrive at the correct outcome—one that was after all far more dependent on information provided by the teacher than on anything that could be experienced on one's own in the schoolroom. This gap between providing information (very much based on Freire's "banking concept" of education) and emphasizing the process of observation (based in the principles of experiential learning) did not escape the notice of educationists once object lessons were integrated into the official school curriculum in the 1880s and 1890s.[3] In 1895, a circular addressed to Her Majesty's Inspectors titled "Object Teaching" warned of this difference between the object lesson, which relied on the students' powers of observation, and providing information, what the author called "information lessons" ("Circular to H.M. Inspectors" 1895: p. 530).

By this time, publishers had stepped in to provide resources to help teachers deliver their object lessons. A search of the WorldCat database demonstrates that the number of books with the term "object lesson" in their titles increased dramatically over the course of the 1880s and 1890s. While some of these books advertised specimen boxes that could be purchased to accompany the lessons, or encouraged teachers to gather objects for use in the classroom, most provided teachers and their students with a variety of pictures that could help teachers fulfill curricular requirements. For example, Blackie and Son's series of *Object-Lesson and Science Readers* were "especially adapted for use in schools in which Object Lessons or Elementary Science form a class subject" (*Blackie's* 1893: preface). The lessons include some of the objects found in Mayo's lessons, such as glass and paper, as well as a number of animals, such as "The Cat," "The

Horse," and "Busy Bees." Each lesson includes a numbered list of facts about the topic accompanied by engravings that illustrate the lesson. In the first lesson on "The Cat," students observe two pictures of a cat's paw: "Under Side of Cat's Foot, showing the soft Pads" and "Cat's Foot, showing the Claws." On the same two-page spread, with text appearing side-by-side with the images, students read the following points:

> 6. The next time you nurse pussy, look at her paws. You will see that on the under side of them are soft pads. These help her to walk along without noise. Touch the pads; you will find them smooth as velvet, and soft as india-rubber.
> 7. But the little pads do something more for pussy. When she jumps from a wall or tree, they keep her feet from being hurt.
> 8. Her paws have very sharp claws. There are five to each front foot, and four to each hind foot. You cannot always see the claws. When pussy does not want to use them, they are drawn back, and hidden away in their sheaths or cases. (*Blackie's* 1893: pp. 6–7)

The emphasis on the divine seen in earlier object lessons is absent, but the work of observation is still tied to specific information to be learned, and later assessed, turning this into an information lesson rather than one that is based on experience.

The use of engravings rather than objects (or animals in this case) flattens the experience of the lesson, reducing it only to what can be gleaned visually through a black-and-white image. Furthermore, the proximity of the illustration to the words on the page narrows the gap between sensory experience and the information to be learned, with the result that there is very little room for reflection to take place in between a student's looking and reading. It is this space for reflection that allows learning to be conceived as a process, one that involves the mind and body of the student in a reciprocal process of knowledge creation (Kolb 2015: chap. 2). Without this space for the student to reflect on, and also intervene in and challenge, the relationship between experience and information, learning remains rooted in the "banking concept" of education. This latter model is safer, ensuring that students will meet assessable learning objectives by "receiv[ing], memoriz[ing], and repeat[ing]" knowledge (Freire 2017: p. 45). Parna Sengupta makes a similar point in her discussion of object lessons in India, where she explains that a "substitution [of pictures for objects] ultimately minimized the encouragement of self-discovery (handling objects for themselves) for didactic instruction (being given lessons on pictures of objects)" (Sengupta 2003: p. 98).

Though Victorian object lessons were based on a theory that privileged the student's own observations and experiences, much like twentieth- and twenty-first-century experiential learning, in practice they often fell short of this ideal. As one school inspector noted, "The object lessons in these schools do not always strike me as very happy. This is one of those things apt, if not very good, to be very bad. The vicious practice, rather than the excellent idea of Pestalozzi, the founder of the system, is not unfrequently pursued, and the children's tender brains are assaulted with hard and long words which cause them to stare and gasp" (Report 1862: p. 175).

Art historians Ann-Sophie Lehmann and Frederiek Bennema have pointed out that teaching practices that aim to incite curiosity and care, in contrast to those that aim to meet definite and assessable objectives, are risky pursuits. But they insist, using the words of educational theorist Gert Biesta, that these are "beautiful risk[s]." In an insightful essay that proposes we abandon "teaching by rote" in favor of care-filled "teaching by heart," Lehmann and Bennema explain that such teaching "demands care, time, space, people—in short, money." They elaborate further:

> But because education does not produce commodities quickly and its economic impact is less visible than that of material, governments tend to take the beautiful risk only in times when means are plentiful. Most of the time, the risk is not taken at all. The current norm, for instance, is mostly formed by output-directed forms of teaching that predominantly address the mind, and allow for a streamlined assessment of so-called learning outcomes. (Lehmann and Bennema 2019: p. 198)

This description helps explain some of the failures of object lesson pedagogy. Resources were poured into British education over the course of the nineteenth century, but there was an accompanying emphasis on efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and results. In 1862, the Committee of Council on Education introduced a system of payment-by-results that rewarded schools based on the performance of individual students on the day of inspection. Even when this system was relaxed with the introduction of the new curricular code of 1882, known as Mundella's Code, schools still underwent annual inspections and teachers were expected to deliver results (Midgley 2016). This was not a climate that encouraged risk-taking, even if they were beautiful risks. The result of avoiding such risks, according to

Lehmann and Bennema, is that "education threatens to become bloodless," as well as "unbearably dire and boring" (p. 198). Perhaps that is exactly what the one school inspector was describing when he spoke of the assault on "children's tender brains" that prompted the students "to stare and gasp."

The Challenge of Embodied and Situated Knowledge

Another challenge that educational theorists raise in relation to experiential learning theory concerns its reliance on a dualistic divide between the body and the mind, where experience is presumed to rely on the body, while reflection on that experience is presumed to take place in the mind. Elana Michelson critiques these assumptions, explaining that "Kolb's learning cycle rests on the mind/body dualism, distinguishing the use of body for concrete experience and active experimentation from the reflection and abstract conceptualization of the mind" (Michelson 2015: p. 80; Michelson 1998). Other scholars have followed Michelson's lead, explaining, "the body does not just hold the raw material for learning, but is itself a site of experiential learning" (Jordi 2011: p. 187). Furthermore, bodies are always embedded within particular situations and in particular, social and political contexts which form part of the learning process; as Seaman and Rheingold explain, "experiential learning is always a social accomplishment that is situated in particular practices and social communities" (Seaman and Rheingold 2013: p. 169; Kuk and Holst 2018).

Such criticisms of experiential learning clearly apply to the Victorian object lesson. The interchange between objects and information, and between words and images, found in the lessons described above left little room for students' embodied or community-based knowledge to intervene in the learning process. This becomes particularly clear when we look at object lessons on raw materials or manufacturing processes that would have been familiar to many British working-class children whose families and communities worked with such materials, such as in cotton mills or in coal mines, or lessons on materials that Mayo refers to as "foreign," which would have been introduced to students in British colonial schools. As Parna Sengupta has explained, "the object lesson was exported to the British colonies at the same time that it became popular in Britain itself. In nineteenth-century Britain and India, government officials, missionary educators and radical pedagogues regularly evoked the object lesson as a means to modernize and elevate both primary schooling and teacher training" (Sengupta 2003: p. 98). As a result, many Indian children learned about local resources, such as pepper and rice, from British publications and from British teachers.

In Mayo's lessons and in object lesson school books that came later, there is no mention of the experiences or knowledge that children from diverse backgrounds may have brought with them into the classroom. Throughout these lessons, the author and teacher remains the expert, guiding students on what to experience through their bodily senses. Sengupta relates an anecdote reported by a British teacher in a North Indian missionary school, and the story is telling: "One day, I asked, 'What is the use of the cow's tail?' 'To pull,' was the ready answer—the only right one from anyone acquainted with the Indian bullock-*gari* driver and his habits. So I had to tell them that it hurts to have her tail pulled quite as much as it hurts a little girl to have her ear pulled" (Sengupta 2003: p. 109). Here, the teacher corrects the child's understanding, which is based on her own experience and on local, situated knowledge, replacing it with a different understanding of the cow's tail that is imported from Britain, along with the teacher and the picture of the cow that was used in the lesson.

The neglect of students' embodied and situated knowledge in Victorian object lessons certainly isn't a surprise when we consider the ideologies informing British educational practices. Though aspects of Mayo's pedagogical methods appear progressive due to her advocacy of active learning based on first-hand experience, her ultimate aim was "the Christian education of the people." In the preface to *The Quarterly Educational Magazine*, a periodical launched by the Home and Colonial School Society in 1848, Mayo explained the necessity of this Christian education in terms of Chartist threats to the social order that had been mounting over the course of the 1840s, writing that "a mere secular education is no panacea for political, any more than for social or individual ills" (Mayo 1848: p. iv). Mayo's brother Charles made a similar argument in *Practical Remarks on Infant Education*, explaining that "it is very important to accustom [the children] to consider what is their right position in society. Teach them that the different grades of rank are established by the Lord, and that each has its appointed work, as each member of our body has its appointed office" (Mayo and Mayo 1837: p. 49).

These remarks suggest that object lessons were not so much a means of inviting students to engage with their individual bodily experiences, but were rather a means of training the body to experience the world in specific ways that would yield the desired results—that is, a form of British imperial seeing and knowing that would accept the world as it was and thus help maintain the social order (Korda 2020a). Through this process, which involved asking the appropriate types of questions and making observations that are relevant to those questions, students would be encouraged to disregard embodied or community-based knowledge that they brought with them into the classroom in favor of the seemingly detached viewpoint of the teacher, a viewpoint that was mired in the ideologies of British Christianity and Empire.

Conclusion: What Can We Learn from the Object Lesson?

As I studied the contemporary literature on experiential learning, I was prompted to look two ways: back to Victorian object lessons, as I've done in the previous two sections, as well as "Process Versus Outcomes in Victorian Object Lessons" and "The Challenge of Embodied and Situated Knowledge," as well as forward to the teaching of the Victorians that we do today. In looking forward, I was particularly struck by one article that called for "a reflexive process of experiential learning which begins with a deeper analysis of one's positionality and situated knowledge and how these shape our interpretations of … global citizenship identities" (Tiessen 2018: p. 2). The author, Professor of International Development and Global Studies Rebecca Tiessen, goes on to explain that "an advanced reflexive process that incorporates a critical analysis of positioning (identities, locations and social relations) may incorporate a post-colonial lens that shapes our understanding of positionality in the context of particular historical relations around colonial power and domination" (p. 4).

Power and domination were certainly at play in the Victorian classroom, and specifically in the object lesson, as students learned about resources extracted from around Britain and its colonies and about the ways that such resources enriched Britain. Another layer of ideological meaning was added to these teachings when students were instructed that these resources, the benefits they offered, and the current social order were all God-given and required their gratitude, while the bodies employed in the extraction, transport, and transformation of resources were rarely mentioned. As historians and literary scholars of the Victorian period, we are attuned to these relationships of power and domination, and much of our teaching—whether experiential or not—likely grapples with these historical relationships.

Paying attention to the ways that these relationships were left out of Victorian object lessons can remind us of our own students' embodied and situated knowledge of the British Empire and of nineteenth-century power relations. Christina Sharpe, author of *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, identifies this kind of knowledge as "gained from and of the everyday, from what Dionne Brand calls 'sitting in the room with history'" (Sharpe 2016, 12; quoted in Chatterjee et al. 2020: p. 369). Brand's powerful words are worth returning to and considering further. She explains: "One enters a room and history follows; one enters a room and history precedes. History is already seated in the chair in the empty room when one arrives. Where one stands in a society seems always related to this historical experience" (Brand 2001: p. 25). Of course this is true for our students, who have varied relationships to and knowledge of colonization that they have learned from family histories and by navigating the world in their own particular bodies, and they bring that knowledge and those histories with them into the classroom when we ask them to engage with Victorian material and literary cultures. For all of us, the history of the British Empire is already sitting in the classroom before we even begin the lesson.

An article by Ronjaunee Chatterjee, Alicia Mireles Christoff, and Amy R. Wong in *Victorian Studies* on "Undisciplining Victorian Studies" began with a quote from Sharpe's *In the Wake* that called for "undiscipline," explaining that "the work we do requires new modes and methods of research and teaching; new ways of entering and leaving the archives of slavery, of undoing the 'racial calculus and … political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago' and that live into the present" (Chatterjee et al. 2020: p. 369; see also Bauer et al. 2021). Perhaps experiential learning offers one such path toward a new mode and method of teaching, so long as we choose to leave behind our pre-planned learning outcomes that rely on particular viewpoints that arise from particular bodies. What if we opened up the gap between objects and information, experience and knowledge (or perhaps closed this gap, treating them as one), in order to not only make room for but also value the diverse bodies, histories, experiences, and viewpoints that our students bring into the classroom? Such an approach embraces experiential aspects of experiential learning by emphasizing process and embodied, situated knowledge. This approach also demands care and time, and the kind of risk described by Lehmann and Bennema, but it might be a beautiful risk, one that can help "undiscipline" the field of Victorian Studies by inviting students to intervene in and challenge the field through the lens of their own varied histories and experiences.

All that said, we must remember that Victorian pedagogies and the Victorian materials that we engage with in our classes are based on racist structures that privilege a white, British, Christian, upper-class (including middle-class, in contrast to working-class) viewpoint. The examples I have provided above suggest ways that object lessons worked to disseminate this viewpoint while supplanting other ideas and ways of knowing. But the methods of the object lesson were also used to objectify and dehumanize others who were not invited to share in the dominant viewpoint as equals. Human beings were put on display as objects of study and as commodities, treated no differently from other types of resources extracted from across the empire. This history of dehumanization is also in our classrooms with us, and so, even as we seek to make room for all of our students' diverse histories and experiences, we must also remember that there is an unevenness in the ways students are prepared or willing to engage with these histories. For some, a lack of knowledge or awareness of the histories of colonialism and dehumanization affects their abilities to come to terms with these difficult histories. For other students, their knowledge of this history of dehumanization is *already* embodied and situated, and has already been experienced in too many classrooms. The risk for these students is much greater, and we need to keep this at the forefront of our thinking when we attempt to take risks with experiential learning.

NOTES

1. For information about Pestalozzi and about Elizabeth Mayo, see Carter 2018, Korda 2020a, and Sengupta 2003.
2. I have discussed how natural theology informs the Victorian object lesson in Korda 2020a.
3. Over the course of the 1870s and 1880s, in response to concerns about the prevalence of rote learning in schools as a result of the stringent payment-by-results policy introduced by the New Code of 1862, revised curricula gradually moved toward emphasizing students' observational capacities. The Revised Code of 1882, also known as Mundella's Code, mandated that object lessons be used in all elementary science classes so that students would learn from first-hand observation of objects. In a further revision of 1895, object lessons were made mandatory for all students (Report 1882: p. 134; Report 1895: pp. xi–xii and 315; Korda 2020b: pp. 57–60).

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PART II

Class-Based Activities

CHAPTER 3

Bridging the Distance: Learning Victorian Literature Through Creative Projects

Klaudia Hiu Yen Lee

Teaching Victorian literature today poses various challenges. As different educators have noted, how to develop students' close reading skills and historical imagination are among some of the major challenges that they often face if they are to introduce readings and materials that precede the contemporary present.[1] And while the Victorian period is widely considered the golden age of the novel, and works such as *Middlemarch* (1871–72) and *Bleak House* (1852–53) serve as excellent illustrations of literary craftsmanship and of how literature can engage with the social milieu in which they are set, their length sometimes makes them difficult to include in the undergraduate syllabi, given a course's time constraints. This is especially so if the nature of the course, such as the one I will discuss in this chapter, is expected to cover different literary texts across time and genres. Teaching Victorian literature in a Hong Kong classroom may at first glance appear to be a tall order, given the distance between students' lived experience and the socio-cultural contexts of Victorian literature. Yet my experience with introducing selected literary texts, especially

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works by Charles Dickens (1812–70) and Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), in undergraduate literature courses has shown that students have often been able to find aspects of the literary texts to which they can relate. More importantly, I share Sara Atwood's suggestion that our goal is both to ask students to be aware that "the nineteenth century was just as, if not more, transformative and bustling than today, a period of intense intellectual, technological, and social ferment that led not only to the achievements of our own age, but to many of our most pressing problems as well" (Atwood 2017: p. 181), and to encourage them to be open-minded toward different ideas and practices, even though at times these may create discomfort.

My major considerations when developing a course that engages with literary texts produced in different historical periods include the following: how the course can deepen students' understanding of the close relationship between socio-historical contexts and various forms of literary production, how to develop students' literary analytical and interpretative skills, and how the texts can be taught in a way that students will find them relatable. Entitled "Literature Across Time," the course aims to introduce students to literary texts produced in different historical periods. As a nineteenth-century researcher, I placed much emphasis on demonstrating to students that debates on questions such as those pertaining to literary value, authorship, and the literary marketplace of the nineteenth century have continued to evolve and take different forms throughout literary history. When I recently offered this thirteen-week course, I began by exploring issues germane to literary studies: What is literature? How is the notion of 'canon' being defined, debated and contested? What is the relationship between the broader socio-historical and cultural contexts and the production of literary texts? What constitutes narrative?

In the second week, selections from William Blake's (1757–1827) *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* were the focus of attention. Blake's poems served as excellent illustrations of how the use of illustrations and images in literary texts and book production is not only a contemporary phenomenon but also one that has long existed in print culture in various parts of the world. The images of child labor and the suffering of the poor and the underprivileged as portrayed in poems such as "London" and "Chimney Sweeper" also paved the way for the discussion of Dickens's "The Signal-Man" (1866), a short story that highlights class divide and one that also captures a strong sense of the uncertainties associated with technological advancement and the rapid pace of industrialization. The issue of class that this story highlights and the elements of fiction that this session introduces form a natural transition to the study of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), a novel that foregrounds questions relating to art and morality while engaging with the philosophy and debates surrounding Aestheticism at the turn of the century. For many students, the writing style of nineteenth-century texts was less familiar than that of modern and contemporary literary texts, such as Susan Glaspell's (1876–1948) *Trifles* (1916), Jean Rhys's (1890–1979) "The Day They Burned the Books" (1968), and Kazuo Ishiguro's (b. 1954) *Never Let Me Go* (2005), which were also included on the syllabus. Yet they often expressed an interest in some of the thematic concerns, such as the meaning of art, and an individual's existential crisis against the broader social changes to which many nineteenth-century literary texts respond.

In "Global Victorians," Melissa Shields Jenkins raises a key question about the teaching of Victorian literature today. She asks, "Are we training our students to master the facts of the Victorian era, or to apply knowledge gained from unfamiliar texts to new situations (and vice versa)?" (Jenkins 2017: p. 4) This question is particularly pertinent in the context in which I teach Victorian literature in Hong Kong. As a course that emphasizes the importance of situating literary production within specific socio-cultural and historical contexts, I believe it is important to raise students' awareness of the fact that each literary text is culturally specific and historically contingent, while also encouraging students to approach these texts from fresh perspectives. Thus, I believe that a balance must be struck between developing students' historical awareness while also giving them an opportunity, in Jenkins's words, to "apply knowledge gained from unfamiliar texts to new situations." Incorporating creative projects in addition to the critical essay that students were required to write in this course was one way of addressing these different needs and pedagogical purposes.

The teaching of Victorian literature in Hong Kong has created an opportunity for students to reflect on the close relationship between history and literature, not least because the development of the city was inseparable from British colonial politics during the heyday of the British Empire and, most importantly, because of the complexities surrounding Sino-British relations that persist to this day. Episodes that feature Dorian Gray visiting the opium den in the dockland might be seen mainly as a plot device that foregrounds his double identity, yet they also provide opportunities for students to explore questions of race and class, and the metaphorical and political significance of opium during that period. Questions of cultural assumptions and stereotypes that Wilde invokes in the novel also help students reflect on their own and on the cross-cultural currents underlying various literary and cultural productions. When introducing the aesthetic movement in class, I not only aimed to provide the cultural contexts of Wilde's novel, but most importantly, I invited students to consider the meaning of art by raising their awareness of the evolving sense of beauty in society that, in turn, influenced various artistic practices and as Wilde himself demonstrates, ways of living.

To illustrate how a specific artistic movement could have an impact on different spheres of life, I showed students a short video, "Cult of Beauty: The Aesthetic Movement 1860–1900," produced by London's Victoria and Albert Museum, so that they could see how the aesthetic ideals of this movement not only influenced literary production but also other cultural forms, such as architecture and painting. To demonstrate to students how the present has always been shaped by the past, I began my lecture on Dickens with a broadcast of that part of the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics featuring Victorian England undergoing rapid industrialization and modernization. The uprooting of the country's agricultural base and its replacement with an industrialized London, epitomized by the towering chimneys vividly represented in the ceremony, are a powerful visual reminder of the different social classes comprising British society, and of the historical trajectories that led to the contemporary present.

The examples of creative projects that I provide in this chapter focus on Dickens's "The Signal-Man" and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, both of which emerged as the most popular texts chosen by students for their group projects when I recently offered "Literature Across Time." Following university guidelines, I taught the course online. The popularity of these two texts stemmed partly from the fact that nineteenth-century texts were introduced in the first half of the course, and so students had more time to prepare for their projects. I selected Dickens and Wilde not because their works have attained canonical status, but because they provide effective counterpoints and contrasts enabling students to examine the various relationships between Art and Life they explore.[2] It is also worth noting that although this chapter focuses on projects that responded to these texts, there were other texts that had previously inspired students to generate their creative responses. These include Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), Arthur Conan Doyle's (1859–1930) *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), Charlotte Brontë's (1816–55) *Jane Eyre* (1847), Mary

Shelley's (1797–1851) *Frankenstein* (1818), and William Wordsworth's (1770–1850) *Prelude* (1850). In my department, as literature courses are usually structured around themes or genres, nineteenth-century texts have often been incorporated in courses such as "Literature and the City" and "World Literature in English." While this can be limiting if one wants to delve in detail into various facades of nineteenth-century literature and culture, it also provides an opportunity to show students how some Victorian concepts and ideas, as well as literary forms, continue to evolve and develop throughout different historical periods.

Creative Projects

> I think no matter what approaches we choose for the creative project, it forced us to explore the historical and cultural settings of the literary works before we started our writing. For my group's work, we did discuss the possible inspiration of Charles Dickens writing "The Signal-man," such as the hierarchy under industrialization and the rail crash that happened to Dickens.[3] (Student 1)

This is one feedback on the creative projects that I have collected as part of my ongoing effort to enhance students' learning experiences. Student 1's group had produced an impressive creative project using an e-book format to tell the story. When asked about the choice of medium, Student 1, who had suggested this format, said, "We wrote the story chapter by chapter as it is easier for us to divide our work, but we did hope to follow the original format so as to be more consistent with Mugby Junction." What particularly impressed me was not only the narrative techniques that the group had deployed, but also the small details that it had considered. For example, the group created an e-book cover that spelled out the original print context of "The Signal-Man"—that is, it is one of the short stories from the collection titled *Mugby Junction*. To connect this publication with its context, this group added a subtitle: "The Extra Halloween Number of All the Year Round," a reference to the Halloween that was approaching when their project was submitted. Each chapter was written by one of the group members. While the plot of the narrative largely follows the original story, the rewrite has considerably strengthened the portrayal and revelation of the emotional turmoil of the signalman through the use of first-person narration, and efforts were made to foreground the collective experience of what the signalman suffered by including episodes featuring the demise of his predecessors. All these served the purposes of the rewrite that the group listed on their creative response rationale—that is, to reveal and highlight the "isolation, dehumanization and collective isolation of individuals within a system." In many ways, this group's creative response foregrounded some of the major purposes of incorporating this project in the course: to rethink how they could creatively respond to a set text covered in class, students would need to study the text in detail and consider questions related to theme, characterization, and plot before deciding on the specific approach they might wish to adopt.

The creative project, which was one of the assignments for the course, gave students the opportunity to use an approach different from the traditional essay form in order to engage with the literary texts covered in class. It also encouraged them not only to be creative but also to exercise their critical thinking and close reading skills when considering aspects of the texts that they might want to respond to, shed light on, or at times contest. For example, they could recast a marginal female character to the center when they develop a short story in response to their chosen text, should they want to write 'against' the gendered assumptions that might be implicit to that text. In this way, even though some of the texts they had studied might be 'canonical' Victorian texts, they could still generate critical and creative responses with the potential to shed new light on the text, or to engage with some of the key topics or debates in Victorian Studies.

In a course that aimed to develop literary interpretative skills and historical awareness, I made sure that students would exercise their close reading and critical interpretative skills when working on the project. Each group has to write a Creative Response Rationale, under which they were required to introduce their chosen topic and theme, as well as the purpose and focus of their creative response. For example, students could consider how their creative response might capture or comment on specific aspects of the original work, such as those relating to plot, character, setting or style, or any idea or theme pertaining to their selected literary text. They also needed to explain their approach and the medium chosen for the project. Students could choose to submit a written response in the form of a short story, creative nonfiction, playscript, poetry, or literary journalism, or they could produce a video or an audio recording, such as radio drama. Students could also include images, such as photographs and illustrations, in their written responses. To inspire them to think outside the box, I suggested few possible approaches:

(a) Rewrite part of the story from the point of view of another character;
(b) Adapt part of the novel, or a selected narrative, into a stage play (students can present their work as a playscript and/or a videotaped performance);
(c) Re-situate and adapt a story into a different cultural, societal, or historical setting when engaging with a major theme of the text;
(d) Create a short piece of work (such as a short story, poem, or a short video) in response to a key idea in the text;
(e) Create a digital literary magazine or a chapter of an e-book in order to explore the interface between literature and journalism, or the impact of the form of publication on the representation of the text.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, though it did offer a good idea of the diversity of approaches that students could adopt for their project. During the project planning stage, students were required to submit an abstract that outlined their project topic and plan, so that I could give them feedback on their ideas and approach. As the projects evolved, they could also raise further questions related to both the content of their project and the processes of presenting their project on a course-dedicated blog.

The reason for asking all groups to upload their projects to a blog was to encourage the sharing of ideas and their projects with their classmates and, potentially, a wider audience. At the same time, having to publish on a public platform also encouraged them to consider issues of presentation, register, and their intended audience—all of them key considerations for publication. I chose WordPress as the platform on which students' works were curated because it is easy to use; as this was a course that focused on developing students' literary interpretation and analytical skills, it was important to convey the clear message that students were not tested on their proficiency on information technology; rather, the blog mainly served as a virtual platform through which students could read others' work and interact with one another. Clear instruction guidelines on how to upload the projects to the blog were posted on it. I asked each group to leave comments or feedback on at least two other groups, so that there could be dialogue and communication among various groups and, in the process, some new reflections and observations could be made and shared. Toward the end of the course, each group would give a short presentation of their project to the whole class, during which they could address any questions or comments raised via the blog or in class.

Along with “The Signal-Man,” another text that several groups chose was *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. When asked why they did so, Student 2 said that the novel was particularly “impactful” to him because, although published more than one hundred years ago, some of the ideas were still relevant to today’s world. “We have a lot of like sayings in Hong Kong, like how your face, how your look depends on your fate… but I think the *Picture of Dorian Gray* is actually reminding us that looks are important but they should not overweigh the importance of inner beauty, because if you have a person that is good on the outside but rotten in the inside, then it’s really bad.” Student 2’s group featured a Dorian-like Korean K-Pop singer who relies on plastic surgery. Using an online magazine format, each of the four group members used a specific writing style and medium—including twitter, an opinion piece, an editorial, and a newspaper article—to represent different facades of his life, as well as his interaction with the media, as a way to illustrate the celebrity culture in which his public persona is projected. The different layers of connections that the project established with the novel included the contrast between outward appearance and inner self, and the ideas of beauty and morality. The strong intertextual relationship between the source text and their project was established despite what appears to be the drastic change in time, setting, and character depicted in the group’s narratives. Reflecting on their experience of writing the story, Student 2 noted, “We’re going to transfer it into a modern world and so it actually deepens our understanding of the novel because we need to take certain elements that we think are suitable in today’s world for our story.” But there were also challenges during the process of creating a new character, as Student 3 (another group member) put it: “When I was doing the project, when I was (doing) my article, I was kind of starting to think if Oscar Wilde was feeling like that, like how much of yourself are you putting into this piece of work. It’s like, do you be as creative as possible or do you still reserve some part of yourself for the sake of objectivity, something like that.” Student 3’s reflection relates to one of the topics discussed in class: the close relationship between life and art that this novel explores and one which also underlines Wilde’s artistic practice and personal life. In terms of pedagogical implications, these reflections foregrounded the opportunity that creative projects provide to encourage students to consider not only some of the key thematic concerns and elements of fiction, but also the role of the author in generating and developing a creative work.

There were ten groups in my class, and the approaches that they adopted were very diverse. The group discussed above much exploited the potential that the virtual platform had afforded them and chose to create an online magazine that was contemporary both in outlook and in content. The short story form proved to be a popular genre that several groups adopted, with a few re-situating the narratives within the context of Hong Kong society. When reading these narratives, what becomes increasingly obvious is how students had carried out an in-depth study of the key narrative strategies that the original story adopts when they considered how they were going to develop their own narratives. In one of the stories, students made excellent use of the recurring phrase "Everything was cut off abruptly" to create the sense of suspense and horror that characterizes the original story, "The Signal-Man," while also making use of internal monologues to reveal the doubts and anxieties of the signalman. The use of this refrain was undoubtedly inspired by the original story, where the phrase "Halloa! Below there!" and its variations are repeated throughout Dickens's narrative, and most significantly, the last time it appears it has inadvertently stoked fear in the signalman, who has associated this shouted greeting with the specter—whether it is real or imagined—that has plagued his life and indirectly contributed to his death.

One of the groups chose to combine the written narrative form with a radio play focused on the episodes that feature some of the most dramatic moments in their narrative. They made use of different sound effects to capture the psychological disturbance of the unnamed narrator, who in the group's narrative is an emotional and lonely man. While this group intended to use the audio elements to enhance the dramatic effect of their project, in some ways those elements reflect the different sensory data surrounding students today and illustrate how they might consider incorporating some of these multimodal elements when generating their own projects.

Collaborative Learning

The study of literature primarily involves private acts of reading and writing. In the classroom context, students shared their opinions and interpretations of the readings. As students often remarked, these group discussions were valuable in helping them understand the co-existence of different perspectives and approaches to literary texts. While group discussions are an integral part of any collaborative project, how to move from discussion to consensus-building is key to any collaborative act. Working in a group setting also means that students had to learn to negotiate different viewpoints and perspectives, and in practical terms, they had to try to find the time to carry out tasks that required team effort in order to produce a project that, while allowing for diversity, was also consistent in tone and style of representation. This collaborative effort, if executed with consideration and goodwill, could contribute to students' active learning and develop their social and team skills (Kirschner 2001; Resta and Laferrière 2007). Various scholars have attempted to pinpoint key features of collaborative learning, with Angela M. O'Donnell and Cindy E. Hmelo-Silver suggesting two major elements of collaborative or cooperative learning: "mutual influence and equality of participation" (O'Donnell and Hmelo-Silver 2013: p. 2). As the students cited above testify, at times the group-based nature of the project also affected how that project was developed and presented. While students decided to create projects comprising different parts that enabled them to use different styles and at times different perspectives, some groups also chose to write stories that followed a linear plot or a single point of view. In projects like these, the challenge of reaching common ground and blending different ideas and fragments into a coherent whole would undoubtedly be much greater.[4]

In recent years, there has been a growing body of research that focuses on exploring how online or social media platforms can facilitate collaborative learning. Given the global Covid-19 pandemic, such critical inquiries will undoubtedly continue attracting much attention. I think that it is of fundamental importance to consider how information technology is being used to facilitate student learning and, in the context of a literature group project, how this form of assignment can be designed to encourage group dynamics and participation. I believe that hosting student projects on a blog is a valuable contribution to this goal because by using a single virtual platform, students become more aware of the potential and constraints of this online medium when creating and presenting their projects. As such, they would be much more informed when providing feedback on each other's work, especially when it came to its affordances and constraints. The dialogues and conversations that the interactive features of the blog facilitated also created a learning environment more attuned to students' everyday life when many of them were familiar with how to use social media platforms to express their ideas and observations.

While this was not the first time I incorporated creative projects as one of the assessment tasks in survey-type undergraduate courses, I believe that the collaborative and creative nature of this project was particularly suited to a time when a great deal of teaching and learning was conducted via online teaching and learning tools. Most students I spoke with have used Google Docs as a platform for collaborative writing, as it allows for real-time collaboration and also records the history of their changes. Each group appointed an 'editor' who was responsible for uploading the project to the blog. To ensure that the project could be integrated with the overall course design, I tried to bring in elements of collaborative learning in classroom teaching. Taking advantage of the online tools that Zoom (the teaching platform used by my home university for online teaching during the pandemic) has provided, I incorporated activities, such as breakout group discussions and annotation tasks, when asking students to undertake close readings and interpretations. I found that using annotation tools on Zoom was particularly useful in teaching because annotation could draw students' attention to the details of the literary text, while also encouraging all of them to contribute to the meaning-making of any act of literary interpretation. In addition, students were also required to undertake a few in-class written reading responses. Thus by the time they needed to work on their creative projects, they (hopefully) had already acquired the close reading skills and literature writing skills that the project demanded and were already familiar with sharing their ideas and observations through group discussion and annotation or other written tasks.

When asked about how the online learning environment might have affected their collaboration, Student 4 said that they usually held Zoom meetings for group discussions and used Google Docs for collaborative writings. The benefits of online communication, this student suggested, was that they could overcome any constraints of physical meetings, as they could hold meetings at any time of the day. She also pointed out that their group worked well because all four members had been friends before they began this course, and their mutual trust certainly helped in different stages of the projects. Yet, as she noted, it would be much harder for those students who, for various reasons, were placed in a group without any prior opportunity to meet in class or in other face-to-face social contexts. Another student pointed out that her study life could also become more draining when using Zoom for classes and project meetings increasingly blurred the line between work and private spaces, as everything took place in a domestic context. It was especially challenging because she shared a room with her sibling, and so it had been difficult for her to focus on her own work and her classes, as her sibling was sometimes doing the same thing simultaneously. Responses like these serve as a strong reminder of the constraints and limitations of the online learning environment, even when students have few problems accessing the Internet and electronic devices.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the use of creative projects in encouraging students to engage with Victorian literature in a survey-type undergraduate course that I taught at my home institution. My experience of incorporating creative projects in literature courses has confirmed my belief that this type of project has a great deal of potential in drawing students' attention to the narrative strategies of the literary texts and the socio-historical and cultural contexts under which they were produced. At the same time, creative projects can also encourage students to be creative and to apply their knowledge and literary skills to create a narrative, or narratives, which can establish an intertextual relationship with the original text, albeit one which also reflects their creativity and originality. While the traditional critical essay form continues to serve a very important function in developing students' critical writing skills, familiarizing them with academic conventions, and preparing them for further studies, creative projects can also give them the opportunity to use an alternative medium to express their ideas and to publish those ideas for dissemination to a wider audience. Such projects can also help them gain a deeper understanding of the challenges that many authors face when they consider what to produce and how their literary production can be presented to their intended readers.[5]

Notes

1. Of course, colleagues from different parts of the world have adopted different pedagogical approaches to address this. See for example, Kooistra 2008. Experiential learning in Kooistra's classroom means the "hands-on practices with poems and pictures on the printed page" (Kooistra 2008: p. 43). For discussions of the challenges of teaching Victorian literature in contemporary classrooms and the different ways of engaging with students, see Allen-Emerson 2017, Jenkins 2017, and Deis 2017.
2. For a discussion of other approaches to teaching non-canonical Victorian authors, see Poster 1977 and Smith 2017.
3. The interviews cited in this chapter were conducted in English.

4. For a general discussion of the challenges of collaborative projects, see Rogat et al. 2013.
5. I would like to acknowledge the support of a Teaching Development Grant for the project "Literary Studies Beyond the Classroom: A Web-based Platform for Students' Literary Creative Projects" (Project No. 6000652). This grant provides funding to hire a project staff to construct and maintain a course-dedicated website to curate students' creative projects. I would also like to thank Kenny Luk for transcribing the interviews cited in this chapter.

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CHAPTER 4

Working with Mayhew: Collaboration and Historical Empathy in Precarious Times

Janice Schroeder, Barbara Leckie, and Jenna M. Herdman

> *How shall the young become acquainted with the past in such a way that the acquaintance is a potent agent in appreciation of a living present?*
> —John Dewey (1938: p. 23)

> *[We read] and lo! the absent are with us; the past becomes present; the dead are brought to life.*
> —Henry Mayhew (1842: p. 2)

Comprising four volumes, the second of which Henry Mayhew stopped writing mid-sentence, *London Labour and the London Poor* is a famously unfinished work.[1] It is also a difficult text to teach. In the spring of 2016, we began what would become the three-year process of editing Mayhew's voluminous *London Labour* for a teaching edition for Broadview Press (see Fig. 4.1).

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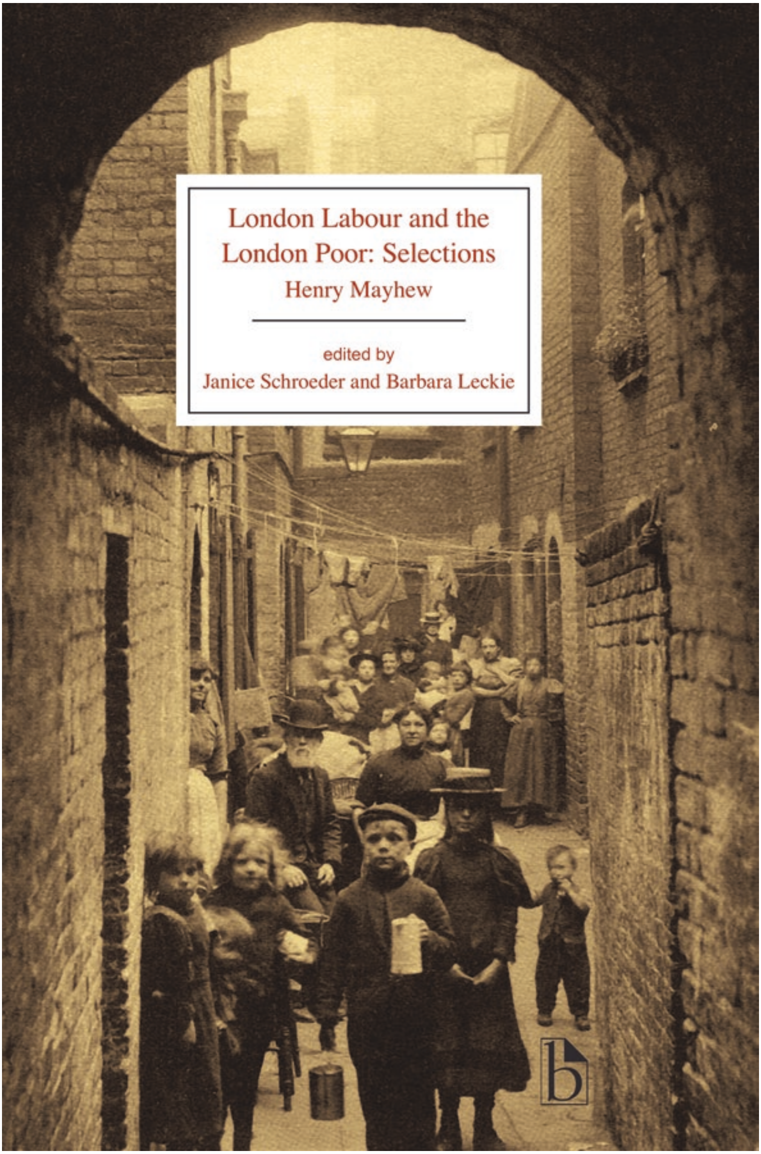
London Labour and the
London Poor: Selections
Henry Mayhew
edited by
Janice Schroeder and Barbara Leckie

Fig. 4.1 Cover of London Labour and the London Poor: Selections by Henry Mayhew. Edited by Janice Schroeder and Barbara Leckie. (Courtesy of Broadview Press)

Over the course of this period, two of us, Jan and Barbara, also taught *London Labour* in a series of graduate seminars, and one of us, Jenna, was a student in the first seminar and the lead research assistant for the teaching edition. Interestingly, Mayhew himself wrote a book outlining his educational principles, *What to Teach and How to Teach It* (1842), that chimes not only with many of the ways in which we structured our course but also with many of the tenets underpinning experiential education. Maintaining that the "real and natural means of education is experience" rather than rote delivery (Mayhew 1842: p. 44), Mayhew encourages pedagogical methods that animate students' "surprise and wonder" (43). *London Labour*, begun in 1849, puts this philosophy into action with its privileging of surprise and wonder as a spur to knowledge; it documents the everyday details of the lives of the London poor as a means to engage readers and solicit their participation in much-needed social and political reform.[2] From rat-catchers to old-wood gatherers, from collectors of cigar-ends to collectors of dog excrement, from street-sellers of boiled puddings to street-sellers of ballads, and from beetle destroyers to exhibitors of telescopes, Mayhew was ever alert to the unusual and unexpected in the world around him. This approach lent itself well to the twenty-first century classroom where our own precarious times and the need for methods appropriate to the interplay of temporal periods—what Dewey calls a "continuous spiral" (Dewey 1997: p. 79) of questions on ever-firmer foundations—came into sharper relief through the lens of Mayhew's *London Labour*. In what follows, we briefly elaborate on the tripartite lens that informed our course (precarity, empathy, and collaboration), offer an overview of the course itself, and conclude with a consideration of further directions for teaching Mayhew's category-defying work.

Precarity, Empathy, Collaboration

Mayhew wrote in a precarious time of industrial, social, and political revolution that had already reconfigured Great Britain and its European neighbours. And yet the 1850s were also a period of unparalleled affluence and stability for the middle classes in England. Not unlike our own precarious times, mid-nineteenth century England was defined by a vast wealth gap, accelerating urbanization, and an influx of economic migrants into cities and towns, making poverty and its accompanying social problems more visible and urgent. Then as now, the rifts between social classes only heightened the divisions within them. Mayhew's readers were eager to hear about the "unknown" populations to which the industrial revolution had given rise. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Mayhew discouraged what he saw as outdated and ad hoc forms of philanthropy for the poor, preferring instead to focus on education and systemic reform. He wanted to educate readers along the lines of the "surprise and wonder" outlined in his pedagogy pamphlet while also seeking—and failing—to articulate general social and political claims derived from his inductive methods.

Mayhew's approach to social reform through animating the lives of the poor also defines the turn to the "politics of feeling"—or historical empathy—in history writing that began in the 1960s with E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) and the experiences of those typically excluded from the historical record (Phillips 2013: p. 187).[3] Historians, including Thompson, not only turned to Mayhew and works like his for insight into marginalized lives but also adapted his methods for their own historical pedagogy.[4] As Geoff Eley notes, Thompson pursued "a politics of empathy, borne by an intense and vehement valuing of the lives and histories of ordinary people. Identifying with the people in such a manner presupposed a readiness for entering their mental worlds, for getting inside past cultures, for suspending one's context-bound assumptions" (cited in Phillips 2013: p. 196). Teaching Mayhew's *London Labour* through the lens of our editing project dovetailed with this turn to the politics of feeling while also broadening it to include not only the street folk about whom Mayhew wrote but Mayhew and his collaborators as well. That is, students gained a better understanding of both Mayhew's subjects and the mid-Victorian publishing field—its similarities with and differences from our own.

Collaboration also defined our editing project and our teaching. It was not lost on us that our own collaborative enterprise mirrored Mayhew's. Despite Mayhew's signature on *London Labour*, it is not a single-authored text, but one built from the combined efforts of Mayhew, his co-investigators, and their interviewees, who are the main subjects of the texts. Our edited Mayhew volume, too, as we elaborate in this chapter, is a team effort and it, in turn, helped us to understand the ways in which collaboration informs every aspect of the publication process. Collaboration distributes authority across participants, whereas authorship corrals that authority under a single name. We found ourselves increasingly interested in the work of collective literary labor—for Mayhew and for ourselves—and in how alternatives to traditional authorship modes might be explored. Collaboration with each other and our students generated conversations in which we discussed and questioned our terms, methods, and ideas. Fittingly, these were also conversations across time in which we felt as if were collaborating with Mayhew, his colleagues, and his interviewees in a conversation that we hope others, in future classrooms, will continue to take up.

London Labour in the University Classroom

Between 2016 and 2019, we introduced students to both Mayhew's landmark survey of London lives and to the practices of scholarly editing. As they analyzed the forms and language Mayhew used to imagine and document urban poverty and street labor, students also helped us to select and excerpt material for the edition from the four volumes that comprise *London Labour*. Much of this work was adapted or, in some cases, incorporated directly into our Broadview edition; all of the work informed our thinking about the project as it evolved, and students are credited for their contributions in the acknowledgments of our book.

Today most readers come to the volumes of *London Labour* on Internet Archive, or Google Books, in library copies of 1960s reprints of the volumes (the Dover reissue), or through abridged classroom editions by Penguin or Oxford. As valuable as all of these resources are, they also conceal the fascinating, messy, maddening publication history of *London Labour*, something we tried to convey to students throughout the course.[5] As a work of "literature," *London Labour* is a disaster of a teaching text: a sprawling, half-built, patched together structure in which the seams, bolts, and staples are visible. Yet we realized that it was precisely the visible "failures" of *London Labour* that make it an ideal text on which to build experiential learning assignments. Once students got over the fear factor of *London Labour*—its scale and its strangeness, its multiplicity of voices, its gangly, even monstrous shape—they were apt to explore or discover the text by sampling sections non-chronologically. That is, reading *London Labour* required a different kind of literary work than reading a Dickens novel one chapter at a time, or immersing oneself in the rich language and prosody of Browning. Because there was no expectation of reading the entire text from cover to cover, students were free to "choose their own adventure" within its grand structure by following its winding routes and hyperlinking across the four volumes. The “failures” of the text—its elisions, repetitions, and its often questionable evidence—provided students with a set of “problems” to “solve” (but not necessarily “resolve”).

The opportunity to collaborate with their instructors and peers on a shared project ignited students’ sense of scholarly agency. Mayhew’s text invited reflection on the resonances between the precarity of the London poor and the precarity of students’ lives and futures. In *London Labour* we recognized the history of our own moment: the gig economy, temping, economic migrancy, rent crisis, refugee crisis, pollution, the enclosure of the commons, child labor, sex work, waste, scavenging, and recycling. Through a range of assignments outlined below, students had multiple occasions to reflect on—and critique—their world through the lens of the past. This impression kindled our empathy for Mayhew’s interlocutors—the “street folk” of mid-Victorian London with whom he collaborated—while also introducing problems of pedagogical and scholarly distance. As “apprentice editors” of the text, students also quickly came to empathize with, or at least recognize, the difficult task Mayhew set for himself: the minute documentation of the everyday struggles of people who were under no obligation to share their experiences with him, but who did so anyway.

We began by sharing our book proposal with students to give them a sense of both our scholarly goals for the edition as well as an active example of one of the key genres of academic publishing. Students also observed the “anatomy” of a scholarly edition such as introductions, chronologies, the note on the text, footnotes, appendices, and so on. We ensured that students had access to the entire corpus of *London Labour* via our university’s library copies of the Dover edition and the online editions, and we spent time perusing the four volumes and discussing the experience of reading the text in print copy versus digitally. The main assignment was a series of three presentations students delivered throughout the term. In successive presentations each student was responsible for choosing an entry from *London Labour*, introducing it to the class and identifying its key themes, excerpting it if it was lengthy or repetitive, then presenting at least three rigorously researched annotations. They then offered an argument as to why the article should or shouldn’t be included in our edition, and led a class discussion arising from their research and their arguments.

Many of these assignments made students nervous, as did the text itself. The research for their annotations required them to locate and work with sources they were not accustomed to using. Verifying and cross-checking information they provided in their annotations was not second nature to them. The statistical Mayhew intimidated them; his numbers were easily ignored since, as English students, they did not see it as their responsibility to interpret or read tabular information. Toggling between online versions, the Dover volumes, and abridged classroom editions was confusing for students, who were accustomed to neat, self-contained texts with a clear beginning and ending. But one of our goals was for students to be able to reflect on the differences that came with reading *London Labour* in both digital and print formats. For example, digital searches allowed them to make connections within the text using keywords, but browsing through the bound volumes led to serendipitous discoveries and often fostered greater complexity in their analysis. Only by browsing the print copies of the Dover edition were they able to gain a sense of the monumental scale of the work. The form of Mayhew's work invited them to think about the form of the edition we were all in the process of developing. Instead of seeing a scholarly edition as a useful, self-contained entity to be purchased for a class, students had to think about editions as a print pedagogical medium that was provisional, even as writing annotations for the edition invited students to learn a new form of academic writing. Students used different technological tools to make sense of and navigate the entries they were annotating; for example, one student used Google Maps to visualize the movements across Britain undertaken by one of Mayhew's interviewees.

As students became accustomed to the nature of the course assignments, they began to ask questions of their methodology—what counted as a fact? What was enough to make a claim? We pointed out that these were also problems Mayhew faced. When they described their research process for their annotations, the term "rabbit hole" was used in nearly every class. For example, a student's annotation of the article "The Snake, Sword, and Knife Swallower" yielded discussions of the physical techniques of performative swallowing, of Wombwell's Traveling Menagerie, and the etymology of the informant's use of the word "squeeged." The research process introduced students to the minutiae of the world of Victorian commodities, language, street culture, and politics. They learned about the production of glass eyes, the street-sellers of bird nests, the Death and Fire hunters, and street "patterers" who sold or recited sensational stories. Some of them loved this form of discovery and exploration; they allowed themselves to get lost in the research and let it balloon out of control, à la Mayhew, while others found it disorienting and Sisyphean.

Again, we pointed out that these were probably the very same feelings Mayhew had about the task he set for himself.

London Labour, in short, encouraged students to think about method—not just Mayhew's, but also their own, in both our course and in the work they did in their other English courses. A capstone assignment, for example, asked students either to adapt Mayhew's techniques to a topic of their choice for a short documentary in a form of their choice, or to design a mini edition of *London Labour*. For the documentary assignment, we were less concerned about subject matter than method, although many of them did select "Mayhewian" subjects, such as precarious workers, market scenes, housing conditions, or homelessness. Some of the work they produced was parody: one student submitted a brilliant sendup of a Mayhew statistical table, employing an extremely dubious methodology—Mayhew himself was famous for them—to estimate the number of cigarette butts produced on our university campus "per annum." Another student, a talented artist, presented hand-drawn images from photographs of some of her co-workers and clients, in the manner of the engravings based on Richard Beard's daguerreotypes in *London Labour*. Many students used the technique of the interview, carefully editing out their questions in order to make it seem as though their subjects spoke, like most of Mayhew's seemed to do, uninterrupted and without prompting. One of them reflected that the experience of interviewing someone revealed more to her about process and methodology than the "data" she gathered, allowing for an enriched understanding of the ethical difficulties of Mayhew's task.

The students who assembled a mini edition of *London Labour* were asked to identify a group of six to eight entries from *London Labour* on a particular topic or theme, and then write an introduction to their edition explaining their principle of selection, as well as annotations for each of the entries in their table of contents. This assignment allowed students to explore *London Labour* as they would an unfamiliar neighborhood, to chart their own path through the volumes and make connections across the text without our guidance. They produced mini editions on everything from animals in *London Labour* to popular entertainment, street markets, children, Ireland, blindness, crime, and working-class reading cultures. One student produced a mini edition on the topic of "Compassion and Reproach" in which she argued that "while the errors and more substantive problems in *London Labour*, and in the work as a whole, are plentiful, in a work that also contains multitudes, these problems must be seen as part of the grain" (Young 2018: p. 5). This student had come to see the problems or the failures of the text not from a position of mastery and withering dismissal (reproach) but as an intrinsic part of the texture of both *London Labour* and her interaction with it (compassion). Somehow, Mayhew's alternating compassion and reproach for the "street folk" he interviewed had become part of her own critical mood about *London Labour* itself.

One figure who especially captured the students' imagination in relation to our orienting terms of precarity, empathy, and collaboration was the blind street musician, Sarah Chandler, whose micro-biography is relayed in Volume 3 of *London Labour*.[6] Sarah developed an unusually intimate friendship with Mayhew, whose introduction of Sarah bordered on the sentimental. He described her as "one of the most deserving and peculiar of the street musicians … her love of truth, and the extreme simplicity of her nature, were almost childlike … she had a deep sense of religion, and her charity for a woman in her station of life was something marvellous" (Mayhew 2020: p. 246). An addendum at the end of the article depicts the circumstances of Sarah's death, when she and her guide were hit by a cab, the guide killed, and Sarah injured. Mayhew felt compassion for Sarah and he invited readers to experience that compassion by idealizing her character. Inspired by Mayhew, students unanimously agreed that it was important to include Sarah's story in the Broadview edition.

Mayhew's representation of Sarah resonated with one of us, Jenna, who, then an M.A. student in the first iteration of the Mayhew course, was inspired to conduct further research on Sarah in the archives beyond *London Labour*. Guided by the sense of "surprise and wonder" that Mayhew himself mused on in *What to Teach*, the research into Sarah yielded curious results. Careful inquiries brought Sarah's and her guide's full names and newspaper coverage of the cab accident into dialogue with Mayhew's representation of Sarah.[7] Further, this research situated Sarah in the media history of *London Labour* and provided clues to Mayhew's methodology and motivations. For example, in performance tours in the 1850s, Mayhew recounted to his audience how he would regularly take tea with Sarah, repurposing their acquaintance with each other in a new format. Mayhew thus used his close friendship with Sarah to bolster his credibility as the chronicler of the poor and to entertain his audience. Jenna's doctoral work was shaped by these early investigations into Mayhew's methods; Sarah and Mayhew taught her, through the practice of discovery, about archival research and sociological inquiry. In the spirit of Stephen Greenblatt's famous desire to speak with the dead, the textual traces of the *London Labour* archive invoked a desire to seek and to hear fragments of a "lost life."[8] And yet, the process of learning through experience serves as a reminder that no historical document can serve as a transparent window onto the past, inviting the three of us and the students in our seminars to ask questions about the ethics of historical and contemporary sociological inquiry.

Teaching *London Labour:* An Unfinished Project

Our goal thus far has been to offer an account of Jan and Barbara's approach to teaching Mayhew's *London Labour* both in relation to our key terms of precarity, empathy, and collaboration, and through the specific example of Jenna's further research on Sarah Chandler. We now turn briefly to two directions that we have not yet discussed but that could be incorporated into the course format we have described above.

While our seminars focused mainly on Mayhew's work (in a later iteration of the course we began introducing some of Mayhew's contemporaries alongside *London Labour*), another approach could be to situate *London Labour*'s privileging of marginalized and everyday voices and social actors in a longer history. His work, for example, resonates with Saidiya Hartman's recent *Wayward Lives*, *Beautiful Experiments*, Studs Terkel's histories, Mitchell Duneier's *Sidewalk*, and the Humans of New York series. In these contexts, students could, as we have done in the course outlined above, animate the methods of these works, and introduce as well as explore alternative avenues. Recent work in Black studies, moreover, puts pressure on historical empathy and method. As Chatterjee et al. note, citing Christina Sharpe, we need "to invent 'new modes' of research and teaching that offer a 'method of encountering' … 'a past that is not past'" (Chatterjee et al. 2020: p. 369). That is, historical empathy cannot be only about bringing to life the past, as Mayhew notes in our epigraph, but also about recognizing the myriad unacknowledged ways in which the past continues to bear on present lives. It is one thing, in other words, to encourage historical empathy and quite another to attend to what remains unsaid and unarticulated and to ask why those omissions persist. Part of the point, as Chatterjee et al. suggest, is to let the "past that is not past" unsettle established methodologies and approaches. The point would not be to add a Black studies lens to Mayhew studies but to illustrate, rather, that it has always been there. To adapt Dewey's epigraph, then, we might encourage an acquaintance with the past in such a way that it is a potent agent in a living present that makes demands on all of us, demands that a word like "appreciation"—despite its flexibility—does not begin to meet. Or, to adapt Mayhew, the dead are already alive in us, living on, but we need to find better ways of acknowledging the full arc of that observation.

A second area that calls out for greater attention is the rich possibilities inherent in the Digital Humanities (DH) and its methodologies. In our own case, we were aware that even as we were producing another book of and about *London Labour*, we did so in a context in which the book increasingly competes with other technological forms. Despite, or arguably due to, its unruly and meandering structure, *London Labour* lends itself remarkably well to the digital form, seeming to anticipate hypertext models of reader navigation. As a vast database of nineteenth-century lives, structured by a thorough (if sometimes confusing) taxonomical system, images, and a kind of "metadata" of its subjects reflected in the statistical tables, *London Labour* anticipates digital forms of information management and presentation that have become familiar to us. Further, as a text whose single-author label conceals a rich history of collaboration, *London Labour* is well-suited to a collaborative editorial approach like the one we took in our course, but in the digital realm. The Broadview edition, moreover, was published in early 2020, a few months before the COVID-19 pandemic forced instructors across the world to, overnight, move their teaching online. But the pedagogical model of scholarly editing we developed could translate remarkably well to an asynchronous or synchronous online teaching environment.[9] This model could foster collaborative learning despite learning conditions which force isolation and distance. It could also allow students to complete the course with a tangible and public-facing artifact in the form of a digital project.

In closing, we turn to precarity, academic labor, and the neoliberal university. Many of the entries in *London Labour* reveal a sense of Mayhew's almost melancholic attempt to capture or "preserve" "vanishing" ways of life—forms of employment made redundant by industrialization and regulation. In his reporting for the *Morning Chronicle* newspaper, which preceded the *London Labour* series, Mayhew focused on the Spitalfields silk weavers thrown out of work by factory mechanization and into casual dock labor. Important as Mayhew's research on precarity has been to labor and social historians, it also provides a point of departure for questions about work and precarity in the present. We began this chapter by noting similarities between the economic inequality in Mayhew's period and in our own. In the mid-nineteenth-century, the industrial revolution, in addition to making many aspects of life easier and faster for the British, also produced an unprecedented number of unemployed or under-employed workers. Life became precarious for large numbers of people in ways that it had not been before. In our own period, with the rise of digital technologies that have also made many dimensions of life easier and faster, we also witness a sharpening divide between the rich and the poor and an increasingly insecure labor class. In this context, students facing often uncertain job markets post-degree can easily make connections between the lives that Mayhew records and their own.

Mayhew's documentation of precarious work also opens a space for thinking about precarity in formerly "secure" workplaces such as post-secondary institutions, where academic labor is increasingly turned into contractual piece work. Two of the authors of this chapter are tenured faculty members, and one is a doctoral student facing a much more uncertain academic labor market than either of them. Jenna's work on the Mayhew project as a research assistant was shaped not only by academic interest but also by economic and practical concerns. The project offered her financial support (which we were fortunate to have access to) and the opportunity for professional development. For Jenna and the graduate students in the seminars, a benefit of working on the Mayhew edition was the cultivation of employability skills they might bring to future academic or non-academic careers in editing, fact-checking, analysis, project management, and technical writing.

That said, one reservation about experiential learning is how easily it can be co-opted by the neoliberal university, translating students into customers, letting employment potential dictate curriculums and "performance" metrics guide policy. But while experiential learning can and has been harnessed to the service of neoliberalism, it does not have to be. As Dewey reminds us, an experience doesn't mean anything in particular; what counts is the way in which that experience is directed. Who is it benefitting and what kind of society is it envisioning? Mayhew's own reflections on teaching also underscore the importance of experience and he, too, recognizes that not all experience counts equally. We can marvel at how the poor were able to so creatively cobble together lives that gained them livelihoods and self-respect. Yet we also recognize that what Mayhew documents is not a celebration of their ingenuity—or not only that—but also a recognition that industrial modernity and the urban infrastructures it produced failed to provide livable lives for a vast portion of the population, hitting, as abrupt social changes so often do, the poor the hardest. For Mayhew, as noted above, one of the main modes of redress was education itself.

Mayhew did not intend to leave so many of his projects, his book on education itself among them, unfinished. But his flagrant unfinishedness only underscores the point that education—and the past—is always an unfinished project. In its unfinishedness, moreover, it poses a challenge to the neoliberal university's promise of product delivery. The "product" is never delivered; it is an ongoing process. One of the benefits, then, of Mayhew's work—work that we keep writing, rewriting, and amplifying in the classroom—and experiential learning is the process of discovery and the sense of surprise and wonder they both ignite. If the neoliberal university at once produces the conditions of precarity that we trace and, at the same time, defines education as a capitalist enterprise in which students are positioned as consumers and professors as service-providers, the curiosity, dynamism, and wonder that Mayhew's work promotes pushes back against these shifts.

NOTES

1. Bertrand Taithe elaborates as follows: "Mayhew's project was polymorphic: it had several lives. Unlike a purely literary text, or a complete text, there is no clear progression, no sense of achievement. The task itself had no beginning and no end" (Taithe 1996: p. 5).
2. In the Preface to Volume 1 of *London Labour*, Mayhew describes his goals for the project as follows: "My earnest hope is that the book may serve to give the rich a more intimate knowledge of the sufferings, and the frequent heroism under those sufferings, of the poor…[and] cause those who are in 'high places,' and those of whom much is expected, to bestir themselves to improve the condition" of the urban poor (Mayhew 1851–1862: p. 49).
3. "Thompson's redemptive mission," Phillips elaborates, "brought with it a strong commitment to the idea of experience as a place where the political consciousness of ordinary people grappled with the material and political conditions governing their lives. Experience, in other words, bridged the gap between material realities and intersubjective feeling—between struc-

ture and consciousness" (Phillips 2013: p. 196). For Phillips, this appeal to experience works as a rebuttal to both conservative and Marxist theorists alike.

4. In addition to *The Making of the English Working Class*, see also Thompson's "Political Education" and *The Unknown Mayhew*. See also Phillips and Steedman for further discussion of historical empathy.
5. See Schroeder 2019 for a discussion of the publishing history of *London Labour*.
6. See Mayhew 1851–1862: pp. 246–50.
7. See Herdman 2021.
8. See Greenblatt 1997: p. 1.
9. For an example of this pedagogical model in practice using digital tools, see Janzen Kooistra 2018.

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CHAPTER 5

Cooking the Victorian Recipe: An Experiential Approach to Cookbooks in Victorian Studies

Helana E. Brigman

Every year, instructors at the Maine School of Science and Mathematics (MSSM) in Limestone, Maine,[1] are invited to develop a two-week course outside of our regular classrooms that will take place at the beginning of the spring semester. "January Term," or "J-Term," offers students an all-day experiential program for two weeks, with courses ranging from topics such as ice sculpture and outdoor living to the lives and experiences of indigenous, northern Maine communities. In the spring of 2019, I taught, "A Domesticated Idea: Cooking the Victorian Recipe," a course designed to introduce students to a genre of women's prose that is seldom studied by Victorian scholars: the cookbook recipe.[2] I was attracted to Victorian women's cookbooks because of their innate experiential properties. From the Latin imperative *recipere*, the word "recipe" signifies both to give and to receive, suggesting a collaborative genre in which agreed upon knowledge is exchanged and reused ("recipe, n.").[3] This definition has long been a part of a larger theory I had developed as a cookbook author and

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English PhD: the generative effects of cookbook recipes. I argue that because recipes are an instructional form of prose that creates something the reader may eat and regard as delicious (especially if made correctly), it is the recipe's very nature to engender readers as creators. Not that a recipe or a cookbook are living things, but the testing and eating from a recipe's instructions *are a living process*. In this process, the recipe is different from other forms of traditionally studied women's writings. After the initial stages of reading, testing, eating, sharing, and improving upon a recipe, recipe writers respond to new contexts and "reasons-to-be": they share again, revise again, and continue this cycle. All recipes exist, essentially, in a complex system of collaboration. By inviting us to read and eat, they also invite us to alter their ingredients and modes.

With this theory in mind, "Cooking the Victorian Recipe" was designed to ask questions about nineteenth-century recipes as a genre of domestic women's prose. I selected two Victorian women writers who are closely linked by their recipe writings: cookbook authors Eliza Acton and Isabella Beeton, and one male writer, famous French chef, Alexis Soyer, who, in 1849, capitalized on the growing popularity of middle-class women's cookbooks with his publication of *The Modern Housewife, or Ménagère*, choosing to write under the guise of an English housewife. One of the most popular cookbooks of the nineteenth century is *Modern Cookery in All Its Branches* by Acton. Published by Thomas Longman in 1845, *Modern Cookery* is generally believed to be the first cookbook intended for middle-class women readers. Acton had been trying to sell Longman a volume of romantic poetry, to which Longman responded he would rather she sell him "a cookbook instead" (Young 1934: p. 125).

The result is a revolutionary text: replete with ingredients lists, specific quantities, and exact cooking times, *Modern Cookery* not only established the basic structure by which many Victorian cookbook authors would write their own recipes, but it also created an opportunity to systematize and validate domestic women's work. When introducing students to Acton's cookbook, I always give them this back-story as a way to anchor their understanding of the context in which *Modern Cookery* was written. This, ultimately, raises questions of women's authorship and publishing in the nineteenth century from my students. Such questions permit me to introduce the remarkably conversational and poetic tone of Acton's cookbook, a work which lacks the bombastic authority one finds in Beeton's *Household Management* of 1861. Moreover, when I show students Acton's recipe for “Mother Eve’s Pudding” and “The Poet’s Receipt for Salad,” two recipes printed in later editions of *Modern Cookery*, stylized in the form of poems, I often present my students with this question: “Did Acton not, perhaps, write a book of poetry instead?”

Structurally, the course took place in two classrooms: a seminar room, where students could reflect on course readings with a larger group, and MSSM’s home economics room, where students could recreate these recipes under instructor guidance. Often, our days were split in half, consisting of a more traditional English seminar in the mornings, followed by hands-on cooking in the afternoon, when we would test recipes in small groups of two to three students. Typically, our readings included recipes from either Acton’s *Modern Cookery*, Beeton’s *Household Management*, or Soyer’s *Modern Housewife* as well as prefaces to each author’s cookbook. On many nights, short, ancillary readings were assigned to help contextualize the publication and consumption of each recipe book by middle-class women readers.

Teaching Victorian women recipe writers has been a rewarding experience for me, inviting me into the lives of women who do not have a clearly marked out place in Victorian studies, but who provide us with a remarkably clear image of Victorian daily lives. I have found that teaching Victorian women’s recipes as a genre of nineteenth-century domestic women’s prose improves students’ close reading skills. Studying recipes alongside their larger material object, the cookbook, encourages a greater understanding of the recipe’s form and function. Moreover, “hands-on” practices with nineteenth-century recipes not only reinforce an appreciation of the recipe’s language, but also foster a greater understanding of women’s lives, bringing to light why many women chose to write and publish recipes. At the end of this chapter, I include a list of discussion questions that can be used for online forums or in-class group discussions. In addition, I have added a daily schedule for teaching “Cooking the Victorian Recipe” as an abridged one-week course, which includes reading assignments, specific cooking projects, and writing tasks. A central project of Cooking the Victorian Recipe was to see if the recipes even worked, and if they did, to what degree the language of the recipe needed to be revised and rewritten. In order to understand this task, students must first learn to read recipes as they might have been read by Victorian women readers.

How to Read the Victorian Recipe

On the first day of the course, I invite students to reflect on the ways they have previously thought of (and read) cookbook recipes. Immediately, my students discuss searching for recipes on the social media platform Pinterest where they can "pin" recipes onto "boards" dedicated to everything from gluten-free cookies to lavishly iced cakes. Another student mentions that her recipes always come from her mother, who sent her to school with her recipe for Snickerdoodle Cookies. And yet even another student pulls out a beautiful, leather bound journal she has just received for Christmas because she wants to learn how to cook. In it, she has already recorded her grandmother's recipe for Potato Salad. I describe to my students that the sharing of cookbook recipes historically created (and creates) a community of readers and writers, just as it did for Victorian women. In the early days of food writing, recipes were passed on privately as family heirlooms in what scholars now refer to as "manuscript recipe books." Historically, mothers shared recipes with their newlywed daughters, sisters, nieces, and friends. I explain that this history of sharing recipes evolved over the course of the nineteenth century, as manuscript recipe books gradually gave way to the middle-class cookbook. This move owes its transition in part to the instant success of Acton's 1845 *Modern Cookery*, which set the standard for Victorian recipe writing and curation. Acton's revolutionary style and novel features—namely, listing a recipe's ingredients, quantities, and cooking time separately from its mode—established the structure by which many recipe writers would later compose their own recipes. Indeed, many writers even improved upon this formula, most notably Isabella Beeton in her infamous *Book of Household Management* (1861).

As part of this introductory activity, I gently place my own copy of Acton's cookbook, a fifth edition of 1846, on the center of our seminar table, opening to a recipe for "Aunt Charlotte's Biscuits" (Acton 1846: p. 531). I explain that many of the recipes in Acton's cookbook were solicited from family and friends, and that if we were to read the book cover to cover, we'd find countless examples in which Acton explicitly credits recipes to herself or others. I love sharing the anecdote of Acton's 1845 letter to Charles Dickens, in which the cookbook author reassuringly praises Dickens on the accuracy of a recipe for suet crust in a serial installment of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, noting Acton's choice to include a copy of her cookbook with her correspondence (Tillotson 1979: p. 143). According to Kathleen Tillotson, Acton sent her cookbook "because of the interest he

[Dickens] had previously shown in subscribing to a volume of her verse" (p. 143). Later, Acton would footnote "*Ruth Pinch's* celebrated pudding … known as beef-steak pudding *à la Dickens*" in subsequent editions of her book (p. 143). The Acton-Dickens correspondence provides students with a concrete example of the tradition of sharing recipes (Dickens 1977: p. 330).

To further illustrate this point, I remark that Catherine Hogarth Dickens, Dickens's wife, later drew directly from Acton in her menu and recipe book, *What Shall We Have for Dinner?* (1852), reprinting many of Acton's recipes in her Appendix. This fact raises few eyebrows until I inform students that Acton's recipes are not credited in Mrs. Dickens's Appendix, but copied with slight revisions to the original author's style and prose. In a course such as "Cooking the Victorian Recipe," one is instantly faced with questions of authorship and copyright in the nineteenth century. Women's recipe writings introduce a way to address these questions, and I assign selections of George Henry Lewes's essay, "The Condition of Authors in England, Germany, and France," on the first night. It is important for students to perceive, as many Victorian writers did, authorship as a legitimate middle-class profession. In terms of women's recipe books specifically, it is equally important for students to recognize that modern ideas of "plagiarism" may or may not be appropriate as we proceed with the course.

Having previously provided my students with a digitized copy of Acton's cookbook on our Canvas course page, they are already familiar with the text itself. What they are not familiar with is the experience of reading Acton's recipes in the way a Victorian woman reader would have: as shared women's knowledge designed not only to be read, but also to be *used*. I ask for a volunteer to close Acton's cookbook, open the first flyleaf, and read out the inscription, "Emily Bates, Forest-Gate, St. Andrew's Day, 1911 [from] J. J. O. B." My students always remark, "this book was actually given to someone to be *used*," identifying the similarities between their own roles as recipe readers and the Victorians. Lorraine Janzen Kooistra has commented on the way books as material objects "can go some way toward cultivating the elusive historical imagination so necessary to understanding that indistinct and untraversed realm known as 'back then'" (Kooistra 2008: p. 43). Helena Michie has similarly observed that "establishing a connection" with primary materials, through archival research, helps some students to become "both a conduit to and a guarantor of historical understanding" (Michie 2011: p. 79). Cookbooks offer a significant opportunity to establish these kinds of connections in the Victorian studies classroom, introducing students to many of the texts Victorian women read in their daily lives and the unique purposes associated with those acts of reading. Cheryl A. Wilson uses a similar approach at the University of Baltimore, where she teaches Victorian literature, recreating Victorian reading circles as well as incorporating nineteenth-century dance. Wilson asks her students to engage in hands-on approaches to literature because, through "embodying the experience of the Victorian reader," they can readily access literary texts using "their own understanding and experiences" (Wilson 2011: pp. 32–33). It is this act of "embodiment" that is so crucial to experiential learning and is certainly not out of reach for those of us who teach Victorian texts.

Having established the ways Victorian women read and shared recipes, I am able to introduce a fundamental element of women's recipe books: the cookbook as a material object. This approach combines the act of reading Victorian recipes with the act of cooking from them (after all, many of my students have signed up for "Cooking the Victorian Recipe" in part because of the express promise we *will* be cooking). After selecting a volunteer, I ask them to find the dirtiest page in Emily Bates's copy of Acton's *Modern Cookery*, informing the class that one of the ways we can determine what Victorian women actually ate is by identifying what Nicola Humble has called the "physical reminder of previous readers" (Humble 2005: p. 3). This reminder can take on a number of forms, whether it's the marginal notes of an engaged reader correcting a recipe's measurements for their own personal taste or the splattered pages of a beloved recipe that has been cooked from again and again. Indeed, my favorite page of Emily Bates's copy of *Modern Cookery* is 527, where a tiny piece of dried pastry flecks Acton's recipe for "Good Soda Cake." As I explain to my students, my edition of *Modern Cookery* is not unique. Many Victorian recipe books carry these physical reminders with them. Indeed, George Meredith explicitly captures this materiality in his 1859 novel, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, describing "a much-used, dog-leaved, steamy, greasy book"—"Mrs. Berry's beloved private copy"—which contained both the wisdom of the book's author, Dr. Kitchiner, and its longtime owner, Mrs. Berry, who is seen flinging the book into a bridal carriage, much to the delight of the newlywed bride, Lucy (Meredith 1888: p. 270).[4] This scene captures so many of the elements of Victorian women's cookbooks I want my students to understand in the course: primarily, the giving and sharing of recipes as a way to build communities among readers (frequently women);

secondly, the material nature of the cookbook, one which absorbs ingredients, steam, and grease; and thirdly, as we will see later, the unique prose-like qualities of the recipe itself that will continue to be built upon by future readers. Humble has observed that

> Second-hand cookbooks are … treasure troves of their owners' lives, with newspaper cuttings and personal amendments to the printed recipes. Readers actively engage with cook books, testing their claims, altering their instructions to their own taste, adding comments, reminders and personal recollections. Cook books become *palimpsests*, the original text overlaid with personal meanings and experiences, the spines broken by use and by the mass of extra matter forced between their pages. Some—the most used—also bulge with the literal remnants of the feasts they have conjured up, their stained pages entombing ancient crumbs and morsels. This physical reminder of previous readers is a remarkable thing, one which separates the cook book from most other forms of literature, except perhaps the erotic novel that falls open automatically at its most purple pages. (*Culinary Pleasures*, p. 3, emphasis mine)

Understanding that women's cookbooks adopt scrapbook-like qualities by their readers, frequently reinscribed with new kinds of meaning, is an essential lesson I cover on the first day of the course. As homework, I assign passages from Humble's *Culinary Pleasures* as well as excerpts from Andrea K. Newlyn's "Redefining 'Rudimentary' Narrative: Nineteenth-Century Manuscript Cookbooks," to explore how cookbooks function as material objects. Newlyn has described the material elements of the cookbook as "diverse compilations, scrapbooks if you will, of women's lives" (Newlyn 2010: p. 43).

At the end of our first class, I ask students to reflect on what they have learned about women's recipes and recipe books. Canvas discussion boards provide a wonderful way to encourage students to facilitate dialogue outside of the classroom. Discussion boards are "very student-centered," Jennifer Phegley notes, often "emerg[ing] from a face-to-face setting" in which the teacher previously guides the direction of the class (Phegley 2011: p. 13). At the end of the first day, I want students to reflect on basic questions about the course: "What is the Victorian recipe?" and "Why is it a distinct genre of domestic women's prose?" These discussion boards were designed to help students to reflect on the origins of the recipe as well as its traditions, to cite specific examples, and to provide their own insights as recipe readers. Most student responses considered "how valuable recipes were to Victorian women," emphasizing the significant role sharing played within this process. One student observed,

> [A]fter Eliza Acton's poetic cookbook, *Modern Cookery, In All its Branches*, cookbooks became popular in households on a daily basis, being used for cooking all types of meals and foods … Furthermore, I learned the history of the recipe, whose Latin definition of "to give and to receive" summarizes its origins: recipes were passed down through generations and improved along the way. With each improvement and recipe created, women gained authorship, a power that was previously not available to women.

Here, the recipe takes on an important role in introducing debates around women's authorship in the nineteenth century, which we will examine as the week goes on, especially when comparing the recipe writings of Acton to those of Isabella Beeton whose 1861 *Household Management* borrowed extensively from *Modern Cookery*.

Beloved cookbooks tell us so much about the women who owned them, and upon looking at Emily Bates's copy of *Modern Cookery*, I ask my students, "what can we learn from the previous owner's physical reminders?" Within minutes, students observe, Emily Bates was obviously a baker. "The Author's Christmas Pudding," pages 382–83 of the fifth edition, was clearly a favorite of hers, as were pages 526–27, "Isle of Wight Donuts" and "Cinnamon, or Lemon Cakes." At this moment, I often have to hold back my excitement, as I tell students these recipes are a great place to start.

Authorial Personas and Cooking the Victorian Recipe

Before testing any recipes, my students and I explore the ways cookbooks, in addition to being useful household manuals and guides, allowed women writers a space to formulate unique authorial personas that drew heavily on women's experiences. On the second day of the course, my goal is to introduce students to the authorship debates that arose in the nineteenth century. This, to me, is a central issue, as many will notice the duplication of dishes and sometimes verbatim instructions within our cookbook selections. I begin our morning seminar by quoting a passage from Janet Theophano's *Eat My Words*, and asking, "What does Theophano mean by *autobiographical writing*?" The passage reads:

> Self-conscious or not, recording everyday acts of cookery is an act of autobiographical writing and self-representation. When a woman writes even just her name on the first page of a book, she is committing an act of autobiographical writing. A simple or elaborate signature is an act that defies anonymity. (Theophano 2002: pp. 121–22)

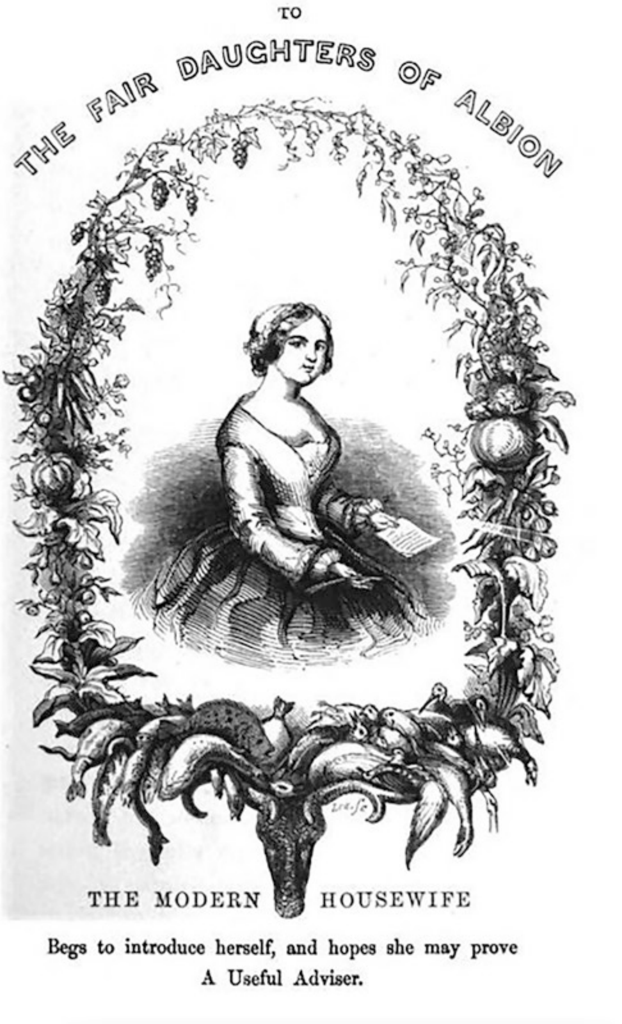
Students are quick to notice the term "anonymity," which both defies and reinforces their understanding of cookbook recipes. Recipes, they feel, don't necessarily belong to a single person, but rather seem to participate in an ongoing system of sharing we discussed in the previous class. Margaret Beetham captures this sentiment well in her article "Meeting Mrs Beeton: The Personal Is Political in the Recipe Book," when she describes "My Auntie May's scone recipe, learned from her Irish forebears, was passed on to me and I shared it with friends who, in turn, shared their mother's recipes which I wrote into a note-book along with occasional cuttings from magazines. Recipes move in and out of common knowledges" (Beetham 2017: p. 199). It is important for students to understand that the cookbook authors we are studying—Acton, Beeton, and Soyer—owed what Beetham calls, "a broader debt … to the common creativity of anonymous cooks," as "few recipes are completely new inventions" (p. 199).

These complex systems of borrowing did not restrict cookbook authors from establishing what Susan J. Leonardi refers to as "[an] identifiable authorial persona … approach[ing] the first-person narrator of fiction or autobiography" (Leonardi 1989: p. 342). For our second class, students were asked to read the prefaces to three cookbooks: Acton's *Modern Cookery* (1845), Beeton's *Household Management* (1861), and Soyer's *Modern Housewife* (1849). Scholars of these cookbooks will recognize, immediately, the distinct style of each work. Breaking students into small groups, I assign them a specific cookbook and ask them to create a list of words describing their author's "persona" and to provide quotes from each preface to support their ideas. For Acton, students chose words such as, "concerned," "original," and "eager to help," citing that her book is "dedicated to the young housekeepers of England," who, according to Acton, were "totally inexperienced" (Acton 1846: p. x). The list for the Beeton group, however, was quite different, including "courageous," "discomfort," "suffering," and "mismanagement," all terms which appear in the first paragraph of her remarkably short preface. Sensitive to the authorship debates we had discussed earlier, students point out that

Beeton speaks not as an author, but as an *editor*, and uses her second and third paragraphs to thank "correspondents of the '*Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*'" as well as a circle of friends, chefs, and acquaintances abroad who purportedly supplied her with recipes for the book (Beeton 2000: pp. 3–4).

The Soyer group, however, always introduces a few complications, beginning first with the inevitable question, "What *is this*?" Readers of *The Modern Housewife* immediately notice Soyer's removal of the traditional author's preface, an important area in which many cookbook authors outlined the motivation for their work and promoted a self-effacing tone. Instead, Soyer begins in medias res, with a fictional letter from the experienced "Useful Adviser," Hortense, better known as "Mrs. B." (see Fig. 5.1), writing to her friend, the woefully inexperienced housewife, Eloise.

I take a few minutes to explain to this group that although they know the cookbook is written by Alexis Soyer, celebrity French Chef and *chef de cuisine* of the London Reform Club, many Victorian women readers would have appreciated this suspension of disbelief: the book opens as an epistolary novel as a way to cultivate the female personas one finds in Acton and Beeton. "I agree, with the greatest pleasure," writes Mrs. B., in her opening letter, "to contribute towards your domesticated idea" for a "culinary journal" that would include recipes for "breakfast, luncheon" and "the nursery dinner" (Soyer 1851: p. xvi). Soyer's decision to write *The Modern Housewife* from the perspective of the fictional "Mrs. B." rather than his own subverts the automatic ethos of the celebrated French chef for the knowledge and skills of the middle-class housewife and domestic manager, acknowledging a growing trend we see during the mid-to-late nineteenth century. The rapid expansion of the Victorian middle-classes generated increased demand for instructional texts for women which predominantly featured household recipes. According to Beetham, "This was perhaps the moment when enough people were literate to make print a possible way to learn practical skills" (Beetham 2017: p. 198). While Beetham is referring to Elizabeth Driver's definitive research in her *Bibliography of Cookery Books Published in Britain 1875–1914*, I would argue that we can see this trend much earlier in Soyer's appropriation of the "modern housewife" as a marketable authorial persona. No doubt, I suggest, Soyer was already familiar with the unprecedented success of Acton's 1845 cookbook and had similar hopes to capitalize on the growing marketplace of middle-class women readers her book recognized.



TO
THE FAIR DAUGHTERS OF ALBION

THE MODERN HOUSEWIFE

Begs to introduce herself, and hopes she may prove
A Useful Adviser.

Fig. 5.1 Frontispiece, *The Modern Housewife, or Ménagère* [Soyer, 1851]. (Author's copy)

Beetham argues that “Isabella Beeton in her own way was part of that move to turn commons to individual profit” (Beetham 2017: p. 199), something we see clearly in the frontispiece to *Household Management* (Fig. 5.2). My students are correct when they observe that Mrs. Beeton saw herself as a compiler (rather than an author) who was responsible for collecting a large body of information into a single volume. Conjuring up images of pre-Industrial, agrarian Britain, the crowded illustration (see Fig. 5.2) embodies the tangible act of cutting and pasting artifacts into a vellum-bound journal in much the same way “printed or handmade” cookbook diaries were historically made by women (Theophano 2002: p. 122). According to Newlyn, “The other constituent pieces of private domestic cookbooks include ornamentation (including mock title-pages, graphics, drawings, dried flowers), magazine clippings (typically articles and poetry on an array of subjects), and interleaves (notes, poems, articles, recipes, accounts and other ephemera, handwritten or printed)” (Newlyn 2010: 38). This act of cutting and pasting draws “together vestiges of woman’s work, intellect, and social interactions” (Theophano 2002: p. 122). Beeton’s ornate frontispiece finds a way to market this tradition to women readers while simultaneously acknowledging that the volume’s editor, Mrs. Isabella Beeton, is not the author of the work, but the compiler of knowledge shared by women.

Cooking the Victorian Recipe

For courses such as Cooking the Victorian Recipe, which emphasize high levels of student autonomy, I have found it is essential to provide students with a cooking demonstration on the first or second day of the class. Such exercises allow me to demonstrate best practices, such as measuring and weighing ingredients first, preheating ovens, greasing pans, keeping work stations clean, and locating all cooking tools before one begins. Professional chefs refer to this practice as *mise en place*, or “everything in its place.” I engage students in a class-wide conversation around what it means to be ready to cook from a new recipe, explaining that *mise en place* is not only a way to set up one’s work station, but also a state of mind: one must be ready to work through each step of a recipe logically from beginning to end. To keep these demonstrations simple, I use Acton’s recipe, “Mush, or Porridge of Maize Meal” (pp. 584 ff.), or as students most commonly have encountered it, *gruel*, as it is famously featured in Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* (Dickens 1839: p. 6). To prepare students for this lesson, I pass out

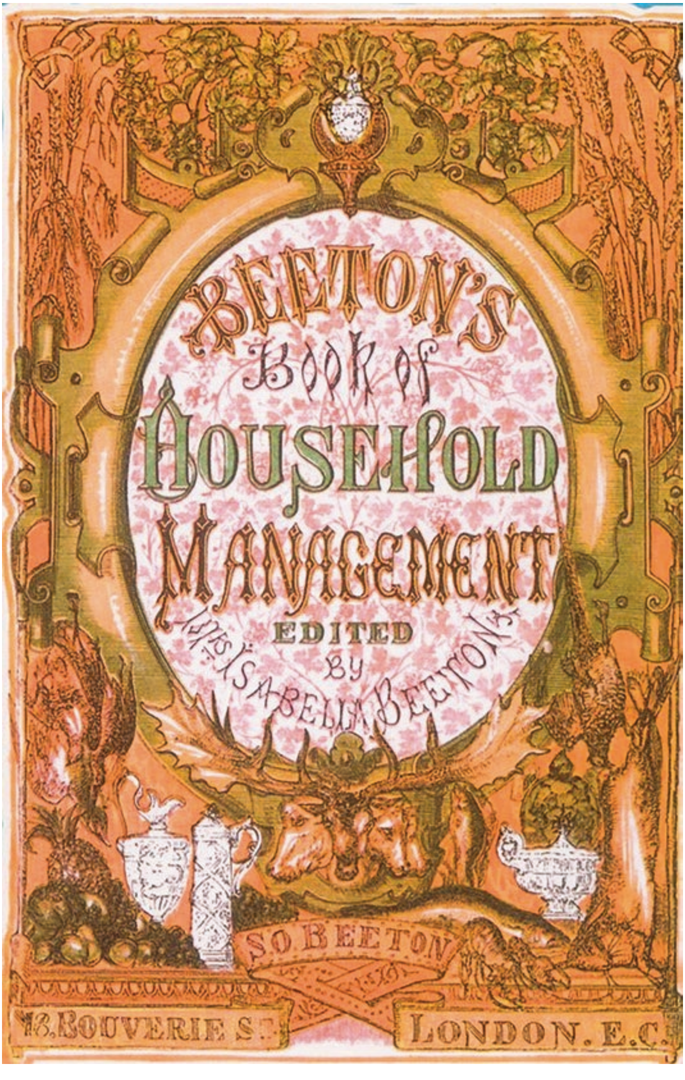

BEETON'S
BOOK OF
HOUSEHOLD
MANAGEMENT
EDITED
BY
MRS ISABELLA BEETON
S.O. BEETON
18, BOUVERIE ST
LONDON. E.C.

Fig. 5.2 Frontispiece, *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management* [S. O. Beeton, 1861]. (Author's copy)

scanned copies of chapter two of the novel and perform a group read-aloud of the iconic scene, “Please, sir, I want some more.” As we read, I ask students to reflect on how Dickens depicts Oliver’s hunger and if they see any connections with the nutrition debates Acton identifies in her “Preface.” Afterwards, I hand out Acton’s recipe for porridge (“gruel”) and use this simple recipe as my cooking demonstration for the class. We always taste the final results together and reflect on what we have learned from the recipe, its ingredients, process, and final dish. The last step in this lesson is to ask students to convert the recipe to volumes from the imperial system of measurement. Next, students test their new recipes with their groups and rewrite the mode, which is later posted to our Canvas discussion board for the day where classmates can then respond to each other’s versions of the same dish, commenting on technique, style, and overall effect.

Having read prefaces to all three authors’ works, students were keenly aware of the different styles of each recipe book and brought this understanding to individual recipe texts. Each day of the course focused on a specific “branch” of nineteenth-century household cookery, beginning with entry-level dishes such as “porridge” and “toast” and growing increasingly more complicated as the course progressed. After our morning seminars, our class would move to MSSM’s home economics room, where students would work in small groups at assigned stations. Day three of our course focused on Victorian recipes for bread. Assigned readings included a short passage on the “dilettante gentlemanly tradition” of male cookbook authors as well as selections on Alexis Soyer, which help to examine “the guise of the female cookbook author.” Group recipe testing included Soyer’s recipes “To Make Muffins,” “Rusks,” “Buns,” and “Brioche Rolls” from *The Modern Housewife*, with each group selecting one recipe from this section. While students’ doughs were proving, each group collaborated to rewrite their selected recipes for modern readers. Final recipes were again posted to the discussion board for that day, which asked students to reflect on perceptions of gender in women’s recipes: “In his *Modern Housewife*, how does Soyer’s version of the ‘women’s recipe’ change or influence how he wrote cookbook recipes?” I remind my students that Mrs. B’s recipes are not women’s recipes in their truest sense, but the idea of what “women’s recipes” might be. The hands-on process of cooking recipes within a small group, calculating measurements, and rewriting nineteenth-century recipes offers students the opportunity to connect Victorian recipes to their own lives. This parallel helps them to explore the larger theme of the course: the giving and sharing of cookbook recipes.

Dough requires time to prove, and we would always start our cooking projects before lunch, break for an hour, and then return to check on the progress of our recipes or move on to the next step. Proving times also allowed us to explore supplemental resources such as the BBC’s *Victorian Bakers* and English Heritage’s wonderful online series *The Victorian Way*, which reproduces recipes from Mrs. Avis Crocombe’s manuscript recipe book, written while she was head cook for Lord and Lady Braybrooke at Audley End. Food historian Annie Grey writes that Mrs. Crocombe’s manuscript recipe book “isn’t a fully formed recipe book,” but is nonetheless “a wonderful thing to work from: a slightly worn hardback, full of brief lists of ingredients and hastily copied out recipes from the course of her career … It is a working cook’s book, never intended for publication, and there are repetitions as well as omissions” (Gray and Hann 2020: p. 10). The published version of Mrs. Crocombe’s cookbook was not available to me in January of 2019, but I plan to share scanned images of Avis’s original recipes and Grey’s modern interpretations in the next version of the course.

Conclusion

The integration of nineteenth-century women’s recipe writings in Victorian studies provides rich experiential opportunities for teachers and students, especially for those faculty and institutions, such as MSSM, which value interdisciplinary work. It is through this integration that we can begin to think about Victorian literature in new ways. Not only as texts but as “recipes” which “give and receive,” a truly collaborative genre which can continue to be exchanged and reused with our students.

APPENDIX

Cooking the Victorian recipe

Dr. Helana E. Brigman

Day 1: Women's recipe writings: Tradition, heritage, & shared women's work

Readings: George Henry Lewes, "The Condition of Authors in England, Germany, and France," pp. 285–95; Nicola Humble, *Culinary Pleasures*, "Introduction," pp. 1–4; Andrea K. Newlyn, "Redefining 'Rudimentary' Narrative: Women's Nineteenth-Century Manuscript Cookbooks," pp. 43–48

Recipes: "Mush, or Porridge of Maize Meal," pp. 584 ff

Discussion post 1

Day 2: Authorial personas and cooking the Victorian recipe

Readings: "Preface," *Modern Cookery in All its Branches* by Eliza Acton, pp. vii-xi; "Preface," *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management* by Isabella Beeton, pp. 3–4; *The Modern Housewife, or Ménagère*, by Alexis Soyer, pp. iii-vi and "Introduction," pp. ix-xvi, "Breakfasts" and "How to Make Toast," pp. 1–3

Recipes: Soyer, "To Make Muffins," "To Make Crumpets," "Rusks" pp. 5–7

Discussion post 2

Day 3: Bread: The staff of life

Readings: Dena Attar, "Receipt Books," *Cookery and Household Books Published in Britain 1800–1914*, pp. 14–15

Recipes: Soyer, "Tops and Bottoms," "Buns," "Brioche Rolls," pp. 5–7

Discussion post 3

Day 4: Victorian puddings

Readings: Daniel Pool, "Pudding," pp. 207–08; "How to Make Christmas Pudding – The Victorian Way"

Recipes: Acton, "Boiled Puddings," pp. 364–88; Focus on: "Common Apple Pudding," pp. 373–74; "Publisher's Pudding," p. 374; "Her Majesty's Pudding," p. 375; "Mother Eve's Pudding" (handout)

Discussion post 4

Day 5: The "Marvellous" Mrs. Beeton

Readings: Nicola Humble, "Introduction," pp. vii-xvii (end at "natural history") "Chapter 1 The Mistress," pp. 7–10; "Vegetables", pp. 239–43 (optional: 244–56)

Recipes: Beeton, "A Few Hints Respecting the Making and Baking of Cakes," pp. 333–36 and cake recipes, pp. 339–44

Discussion post 5

Discussion Questions

Day 1

Today you learned about the **origins** of the Victorian recipe and the recipe as a genre of prose. In a well-written paragraph, discuss what you have learned about women's recipe writings during the Victorian age, including its history and traditions.

Day 2

1. Post your group's recipe of Eliza Acton's "Mush, or Porridge of Maize Meal."
2. Today you learned about Eliza Acton and the first cookbook for middle-class women readers, *Modern Cookery in All Its Branches* (Longman, 1845). Our discussion included an overview of the "hungry forties" nutritional crisis in England and the way writers such as Charles Dickens represents this narrative in *Oliver Twist*. You also made your first recipe: Mush, or Porridge of Maize Meal, from *Modern Cookery*. In a well-written paragraph, discuss what you have learned about nutrition in 1840s Britain, Victorian recipes (so far), and the style/structure of the cookery manual. Use Apt Specific References (ASRs) to support your ideas about today's readings and discussion.

Day 3

1. Post your group's recipe for bread from Soyer's cookbook.
2. Today you learned about the "dilettante gentlemanly tradition" of early Victorian cookbooks, Alexis Soyer's *The Modern Housewife, or Ménagère*, and gender in recipe writing. You also made your choice of one of Soyer's recipes: muffins, crumpets, rusks, "tops and bottoms," buns, and/or brioche rolls. Discuss what you have learned about Alexis Soyer and the way women's recipes were perceived and written. How does Soyer's version of the "women's recipe" change or influence what was already in print?

Day 4

1. Post your group's recipe for Acton's cookbook.
2. Today you learned about Victorian puddings and the surprising wide range of recipes written and made during the Victorian period. We discussed the poet-turned-cookbook-author's "Mother Eve's Pudding," and how Acton uses recipes to explicitly comment on the socio-economic status of her publisher, printer, and herself. What have you learned about Acton's recipes as a unique style of women's prose? Does Acton change/alter/influence the "women's recipe" in what you read for today?

Day 5

1. Post your recipe for Isabella Beeton's cookbook.
2. Today you learned about the blockbuster success of Mrs. Beeton's *Book of Household Management*. We discussed the editor's appropriation of Acton's recipes, the difference between authors who are "creators" versus those who are "curators," and the concept of nineteenth-century culinary "plagiarism." What have you learned about Beeton's recipes as a style of women's writing that is not created but *curated*? Does Beeton change/alter/influence the "women's recipe" in what you read for today?

Notes

1. MSSM is a public, residential magnet high school located in Limestone, Maine. In 2019, MSSM earned the ranking of #2 public high school in the U.S., the second best magnet school in the U.S., and the number one school in the state of Maine by *US News and World Report*. The school continues to hold its position as one of the top ten STEM high schools in the country.
2. Andrew K. Newlyn, "Redefining 'Rudimentary' Narrative: Women's Nineteenth-Century Manuscript Cookbooks," in Floyd and Foster, p. 31.
3. "Luce Giard (1998) thinks of recipes as 'multiplications of borrowing' (178)" (qtd. in Floyd and Forster, p. 6)
4. Meredith references Dr. Kitchiner's 1817 cookbook, *The Cook's Oracle: Containing Receipts for Plain Cookery on the Most Economical Plan for Private Families*, a best-seller in his own time. Dr. Kitchiner was a household name.

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CHAPTER 6

Virginia Woolf, the Historical Sense, and Creative Criticism

Heidi Stalla

> … for the transaction between a writer and the spirit of the age is one of infinite delicacy, and upon a nice arrangement between the two the whole fortune of his works depends. Orlando had so ordered it that she was in an extremely happy position; she need neither fight her age, nor submit to it; she was of it, yet remained herself. Now, therefore, she could write, and write she did. She wrote. She wrote. She wrote. (Woolf, *Orlando*: p. 154)

The thoughts I have included below, using Virginia Woolf as a pedagogical medium, are in response to debates I have been privy to at a few liberal arts institutions about the status of writing at universities: whether, for example, creative writing should exist as part of Literature departments; how academic writing should be taught and at what level; and even in some cases whether writing professors should be tenured. As a modernist scholar and a creative nonfiction writer, I use creative practices in my classroom both for pedagogical reasons and also because I am interested in the potential that creative responses to literary texts can have for serious literary criticism.

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In "The Decay of Essay-Writing," Virginia Woolf tells us that the spirit of her age is one that experiments with literary forms, and finds "fresh and amusing shapes" to be given to "old commodities" (Woolf 2009: p. 3). The essay gives us a sense not only of Woolf's early thinking about writing across genres, but also hints at a lifelong preoccupation with reviving scraps of histories, biographies, news stories, and even mythologies to new and sometimes unrecognizable effect: "So we confine ourselves to no one literary medium; we try to be new by being old; we revive mystery-plays and affect an archaic accent; we deck ourselves in the fine raiment of an embroidered style; we cast off all clothing and disport ourselves nakedly" (Woolf 2009: p. 3). Establishing this sort of playfulness with form and genre, Woolf goes on to point to the personal essay as the most significant "invention" of the literary conventions—around since Montaigne, it is also characteristic of her contemporary moment, noteworthy for its unapologetic expression of personal opinion. All essays, she says, "begin with a capital I—'I think', 'I feel'." If "men and women told us frankly not of the books that we can all read and the pictures which hang for us all to see, but of that single book to which they alone have the key … if they would write of themselves—such writing would have its own permanent value" (Woolf 2009: pp. 4–5).

Isn't this a radical statement if extended to academic writing conventions that call for students and literary scholars to refrain from the personal pronoun in their arguments, and to maintain a sound critical distance in their work? While "that single book" in Woolf's essay refers to the self, I use Woolf's claim in the literature classroom to urge students to think of their own unique connections as critics to a text; and to learn how to write with what Woolf calls "justified" rather than "unclothed egoism" (Woolf 2009: p. 5). For the most part, when taught in universities, the personal essay belongs in creative writing workshops, not in courses that teach students how to write in disciplines or across the curriculum. And yet, isn't it a crucial goal of education, and certainly of the liberal arts, to help readers realize a powerful (and disciplined) sense of self that can cross boundaries to come into sympathetic conversation with thinkers from the past, the present, and even the future? After all, the common denominator in literary forms from autobiography to essay to fiction *is* self; self as the premium commodity of the writers' experience; self as a definitive shape but always shifting and in flux; self as the only possible sightline into interpreting facts in the real world; and finally, the idiosyncratic components of self that are essential to critical and creative responses to the real world—whether through nonfiction or fiction. Woolf in this essay calls for critics to engage with a subject deeply, creatively, and intimately—"to say simply what it means" (Woolf 2009: p. 5). I invite students to take note of their immediate personal responses to the form and content of a complicated literary text, and then to work out how its richness and variation and complexity serves as a window into a related creative world worthy of expression in its own right, a world that is personal and idiosyncratic to a particular reading and responding mind. Clearly, for Woolf, writing happens along a creative continuum; it follows that literary analysis comes from the same generative and personal impulse as fiction writing. Criticism is a poetic act.

Urging critics to write "of that single book to which they alone have the key," to "write of themselves," and to write in such a way that the critical work achieves its own permanence, makes sense from the creator of *Orlando*, whose protagonist, because of her ability to live through history finds herself in the ideal position for a writer who need "neither fight her age, nor submit to it; she was of it, yet remained herself" (Woolf 2014: p. 154). In both cases, Woolf aligns clarity of vision and expression to a writer's sense of self both in and outside of time. We hear this echo in Gertrude Stein's "Composition as Explanation" when she talks of a "continuous present" (Stein 1926: p. 327), and in T. S. Eliot's claim in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that a true poet must write with an "historical sense": "a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal … acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity" (Eliot 1998: p. 28). The poet, Eliot says, is "a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings" (p. 31) that transmute into representations of emotions that are greater than the original experiences. I find myself teaching "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in almost every university course that I teach, in a range that includes, for example, first-year academic writing courses, Forms of Nonfiction: Literary Journalism, and Global Modernisms. I have noticed that increasingly students in the more advanced creative writing and literature classes have a difficult time grappling with the entirety of Eliot's essay, which they read simply as his call for writers to surrender the self. They read, poetry "is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality," yet they fail to linger on what follows: "only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things" (Eliot 1998: p. 33). In other words, like Orlando, the visionary poet (or critic) must be able to embody history (or the text) in its moment of making as well as its continuous present, and must simultaneously be able to see outside of it, to imagine its position in the real world and its power in imagining future possibilities. The word "embodiment" is crucial, hence Woolf's use of Orlando's gender fluid, ageless body to experience and then survey three-hundred and fifty years of British history. She or he is male; she or he is female; she or he experiences lovesickness, joy, grief; she or he writes with an androgynous mind that transcends gender and temporality. Where Eliot closes his essay by claiming to "halt at the frontier of metaphysics or mysticism" (Eliot 1998: p. 33), *Orlando* sallies through the frontiers of both, suggesting that the visionary writer must write with both mind and matter, the mind serving as the medium to navigate Eliot's "historical sense," the matter shoring up personal touchstones with which to understand and participate in the politics of now.

Jeannette Winterson draws on Eliot's ideas about tradition and visionary writing in "The Semiotics of Sex," an essay that I inevitably assign in conversation with "Tradition and the Individual Talent." I use this essay because, like Woolf, Winterson draws direct connections between life experience, personal emotion, and experimentation of form as related components of good reading and good writing: "Art coaxes out of us emotions we normally do not feel…. Seeking neither to please nor to displease, art works to enlarge emotional possibility" (Winterson 1995: p. 108). Students connect more easily with Winterson than Eliot because she foregrounds the kind of intimacy that Woolf invites when suggesting that critics "write of themselves," yet with the caveat that undergirds Eliot's essay that feeling must be controlled, transformed into something impersonal or universal:

> The best work speaks intimately to you even though it has been consciously made to speak intimately to thousands of others. The bad writer believes that sincerity of feeling will be enough, and pins her faith on the power of experience. The true writer knows that feeling must give way to form. It is through the form, not in spite of, or accidental to it, that the most powerful emotions are let loose over the greatest number of people. (Winterson 1995: pp. 105–06)

In this case, Winterson is speaking specifically about life-writing, claiming adamantly that art "must resist autobiography if it hopes to cross boundaries" (Winterson 1995: p. 106). However, thinking in terms of form, even before content, can help students to think about their critical engagement with texts as readers and then their translation of these texts as careful and creative critics. Woolf's novels (because of their perceived difficulty; because they need to be read slowly for multi-layered meanings; because they engage first and foremost with human character and psychology; and because Woolf naturally, as I quoted at the outset, does not confine her work "to a single medium") lend themselves well to discussions with students not only about the content in and of itself, but also about how to combine personal and intuitive responses with careful attention to formal choices. This includes Woolf's formal experiments and their own translations of her form as they practice deepening and authentic responses to literary texts.

II

> There is a square: there is an oblong. The players take the square and place it upon the oblong. They place it very accurately; they make a perfect dwelling-place. Very little is left outside. The structure is now visible; what is inchoate is here stated; we are not so various or so mean; we have made oblongs and stood them upon squares. This is our triumph; this is our consolation. (Woolf, *The Waves*: p. 136)

W. H. Auden, in his 1954 *New Yorker* article, "Virginia Woolf's Consciousness of Reality," singled out Woolf's depiction of a square being placed upon an oblong as the best description of the creative process he could imagine: two shapes come together to make a perfect dwelling place; what has been abstract and various in the unconsciousness of the writer becomes a solid object that can be seen and felt and interpreted. The resulting emotions of triumph and consolation are reasons that Woolf tells us she writes; putting broken pieces together to make a new and complete shape means that those pieces cease to aggravate and to cause pain. Auden wonders as he writes whether Woolf would eventually "exert an influence on the future development of the novel"—not whether her work would be important for literary scholars, as of course it is, but whether future writers would be able to appropriate and develop her method. He suspects that "her style and her vision were so unique that influence would only result in tame imitation" (Auden 1954), essentially relegating her work to the realm of literary criticism or even museum-like status. Auden can't imagine a time or a writer "when and for whom her devotion to her art, her industry, her severity with herself—above all, her passionate love, not only or chiefly for the big moments of life but also for its daily humdrum 'sausage-and-haddock' details—will not remain an example that is at once an inspiration and a judge" (Auden 1954).

It is worthwhile to linger on this. Auden points to Woolf's groundbreaking contributions to literature: the particular genius of her language, which he says cannot be seriously imitated, and her modernist ambition to capture life as it truly is. It is true that Woolf's voice is distinct and original and exists in its own inimitable category. However, voice is different from method and vision: components of her craft that she discusses and develops over time in essays and diaries. A new and different kind of attention to her writing life, one that focuses on method and vision as it is shaped by real-world material might still influence the practice of writers today (not to mention those who study and teach modernism and literary style). With this in mind, as an upper level course in a liberal arts common curriculum, I designed a course called Virginia Woolf and Historiography that sets out both to ask students to query the line between history writing and fiction in Woolf's work, and also to think for themselves about the role the creative process plays in serious literary, social, and historical conversations, both inside and outside the academy. When I teach Woolf's fiction in this course, I suggest that students think of her novels as essays and of Woolf first and foremost as a nonfiction writer interested not in a conventional plot, but rather in the way human nature responds to social and cultural norms at a particular moment in a particular place.

In fact, the project to remain true to the variation and aberration of lived experience is what inspired Woolf's self-description in a 1905 letter as "a journalist who wants to read history" (Woolf 1975: p. 190) rather than as a fiction writer who prioritizes the coherence of a well-designed beginning, middle, and end. In this letter, Woolf tells Violet Dickinson: "I have been reading Miss Robin's book all the evening, till the last pages. It explains how you fall in love with your doctor, if you have a rest cure. She is a clever woman, if she weren't so brutal. By the way, I am going to write history one of these days. I always did love it; if I could find the bit I want" (Woolf 1975: p. 190). This letter often leads to a discussion about historiography and cultural history, which, as Norman Sims uses the words of journalism scholar James Carey to explain, "is not concerned merely with events but with the thought within them"—Woolf's main preoccupation. Sims highlights Carey's example of what has become the modern metaphor of Julius Caesar crossing the Rubicon—to take an irrevocable step—historically significant as much as for "the particular constellation of attitudes, emotions, motive and expectations that were experienced in that act" (Sims 2009: p. 7) as for the act of crossing the river itself. Ultimately, Woolf, who lends her face as Clio, the Muse of History, on the mosaic floor of London's National Gallery, was concerned throughout her writing life with constellations of human character as a performance of the spirit of a particular age—with the pointed agenda that such performance could shed light on the present moment. Looking at any kind of evidence—historical or textual—first in its original context and then for what it can illuminate for a reader and critic personally about a continuous, shifting present, is an essential step toward achieving a work of criticism that is also a work of art, one as Winterson puts it that "is not a lecture delivered to a special interest group" but "a force that unites its audience" (Winterson 1995: p. 106).

In the course, we read Woolf's novels by looking at her meticulous attention to craft as both cultural historian and literary journalist, highlighting the prevalence and manipulation of facts as essential to both writing and reading processes. The novels, like extended essays, always frame a contemporary issue (or issues) in the first pages, develop and complicate these issues in the body of the work, and finally return explicitly to what was framed in the beginning pages. We start with Woolf's autobiographical novel, *To the Lighthouse*, her fictionalized account of "the patriarchal society of the Victorian age [that] was in full swing in our drawing room" (Woolf 1985: p. 153). Some critics have noticed that *To the Lighthouse* draws subtly on deep and varied layers of history and mythology to do two things: to translate her autobiographical experience of the death of her mother into art, and to use the stories of the past to compare, contrast, and bring into relief current social concerns stemming from the advent of modernity. Thus, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, introduced in the first few pages arguing in front of their son James over a promised trip to the lighthouse—a real biographical occurrence—are stand-ins for the general dynamics of a patriarchal system that celebrates women as "angels in the house" without equal professional opportunities or voting rights. These themes drive the essential symbols, patterns, and discussions of the text, which ends—in keeping with "real life"—not with an easy resolution, but with a wider historical sense of the way that life ebbs, flows, and balances. The spinster artist Lily Briscoe has her artistic vision in a painting that both embraces and rejects the matriarch Mrs. Ramsay. James finally makes his trip to the lighthouse ten years later, and has the intuitive revelation that outside of a particular experience, or a particular cultural moment in time, the greater pattern of life cannot exist in simple absolutes: masculine or feminine, life or death, past or present—“For nothing was simply one thing” (Woolf 1981: p. 186). Approaching this text, not just as a novel, but as personal essay and social critique translated into a fictional form, helps students to begin to understand how to piece together the possibilities and power inherent in a rich spectrum of creative and critical acts of writing. In this context, the questions for the writer, for the literary critic, and for the common reader become, *what* is true? *Is* it in fact true? Does it matter? And, *how* does it matter—all questions that are essential principles of academic writing across disciplines. Students write freely and informally in response to these questions, and then before writing an analytical response they are asked to embody the form and patterns of Woolf’s work in a creative exercise that imitates in order to understand. This might mean writing their own versions of a Woolf novel. It might mean translating a novel into a musical composition through consideration of form. It might mean recreating Lily Briscoe’s painting in the context of family dynamics in present-day Singapore.

III

> It is of very great importance to open the mind as widely as possible to see what each writer is trying to do, and in interpreting him only to frame rules which spring directly from our impression of the work itself. (Woolf, “Creative Criticism,” p. 124)

I was sitting at my desk looking through my teaching notes as I was thinking about the different ways to frame this essay, which at its core is about experiential learning. I found a journal entry about a student, Jason Carlo Carranceja, who had been in the first iteration of my Virginia Woolf and Historiography course during his sophomore year. But my notes were about an office hours meeting many months after the course. He had knocked at my door, had opened it without waiting for my response, and had sat down at the little conference table in my office. I recognized right away a confidence in him that had been missing when he was still overwhelmed by being in a foreign country, and by what he had described to me as the culture shock of a liberal arts education.

“What can I do for you, Jason?” I said.

“I want your advice on study abroad,” he replied. “I’ve figured out what I want to do. I want to go into government in the Philippines and I want to focus my diplomatic mission in Latin America—which is so far from us—it is rare for Filipinos to travel there—but there are connections I want to explore there that have to do with the Hispanic elements within Philippine society. So, I want to go to a university there—in Santiago. But the problem is, I've also just heard about Semester at Sea. And I may want to do that because it will give me a chance not only to travel to Latin America but also to do original research into the invisible lives of Filipino seafarers. Most people don't know that almost 13% of all seafarers in the world are from the Philippines. They are one of our largest diaspora and they receive little attention in political discussions." He couldn't get the words out fast enough. We talked awhile about this, I offered some thoughts, and then began politely to end our conversation. But he wouldn't budge. And then to my complete astonishment he had tears in his eyes.

"What's wrong, Jason?" I asked.

He replied, "It was Virginia Woolf's, *The Waves*!"

This was not a response I was expecting.

"I just wanted to tell you it changed everything for me," he said.

We had studied *The Waves* at the end of the course, and Jason had been particularly perplexed by it. As he sat there in my office, I remembered that the scope of the class in general—asking students to read Woolf's body of work, to think about questions of historiography, and to then apply their readings of her texts to their own understanding of the creative process—had seemed almost too much. And I also thought about many other students from the various literature, expository writing, and creative writing classes I have taught, who at times seemed like they might buckle under the stress of what their professors in their writing assignments are asking them to do.

In my experience, students begin without a good deal, if any, literary experience, or direct experience with the distant past. And from here, teachers across disciplines and genres want them to find their way into aesthetic complexity; we want them to understand how close-reading and close-looking works. We want them to figure out how to see works in historical context and across time. We want them to think of their relationships to the texts they read as close and immediate, but also weird. We want them to not only feel close and invested in what they read, but also to de-familiarize their material so that they can see it critically. This is what we want them, at a fundamental level, to be able to do. But we also want them to understand why these skills matter. We want them to have a greater appreciation for complexity and ambiguity and to be comfortable in these spaces. We want them to start with the premise that the world looks unsolvable and then know how to deal with the ambiguity and impossibility. And for our part—and listening to Jason sitting there at the table in my office reminded me of this—as faculty and administrators who are asked to develop innovative curricula, we need to begin again with our pedagogy; we need to find ways of encouraging students to invest themselves directly, practically in their assignments—to embody rather than just encounter subject matter. For me, experiential learning happens when students experiment with form and diverse methods of composition: using writing-to-learn; emphasizing the language of expression as an evolving process that travels across both academic and creative genres; framing essaying to students as a form of this language that takes its cue from cultural mores of conversation and diplomacy—these practices will hopefully help students to find authentic forms of interpretation and expression that are not just performed for the assignment.

This last point is key. We teach students to write and to think critically because we want them to practice these skills across the disciplines as they move through the academy, and ultimately as they move into their chosen professions and fields. However, I also know it can be difficult for *teachers* to think in this context, let alone students who are driven by cultural and familial expectations. Critical thinking—which essentially involves both the interpretation of texts in the world and interpreting the world as a sequence of texts—is a risky act. Moreover, we are asking students to learn and practice acts of criticism in diverse environments, often politically charged, and certainly out of their comfort zones. In the Virginia Woolf and Historiography course, I stopped calling my assignments “essays” and asked instead for “acts of composition.” Jason referred to this when he started talking about his experience grappling with Woolf and *The Waves*. For the final assignment, I asked the students as part of the pre-writing process to translate a section of *The Waves* (a plotless book that examines the nature of identity and plurality) into a different medium that felt compelling or natural to them. This essentially was my way of urging them to think of this text intimately, as something to which they alone had the key to understand and to translate. Once the students had produced these creative pieces, which ranged from video art to painting and music, they were asked to go back and write critical interpretations of the book. This process, according to Jason, had been pivotal in terms of him not only finding a foothold in the class but also helping him to move beyond other blocks that had affected his ability to integrate into an environment and education system that was overwhelmingly foreign to him.

Although Jason knows little about music, he decided to put together a musical composition in which, in his words, he "borrowed musical themes from a range of composers, isolating and adapting the sounds from different instruments to produce a music with a completely different feel and tone from the original sources." As he explained in his companion piece, he wanted to capture the plurality of identity; the revelation he had borrowed from Woolf was that two themes played at the same time resulted in a completely different theme that felt at once singular and universal. And then (as a way of adding his own interpretation) once this new theme was in place, he overlaid the music with his own melody—which is of course an essayistic move. When I asked him as he sat there to free-write about this process, he wrote:

> *The Waves* was a really hard book for me. I will be honest, reading through the book, I can say that I was continually puzzled by it. I could not fully understand what Woolf was trying to capture in that book. And that is the same for me. I felt so lost at that moment in time, with all the memories of Integrated Science and my overloaded semester, that I just really wanted a way to express myself. And I knew that regardless of how I shared my personal dilemma, to my friends, to my DFs, to my professors, only I really know the struggle that is within me. I did not understand the words of *The Waves*, but the thing that I glean from it is this: that Virginia Woolf is perhaps also trying to negotiate with the varying forms and snippets of identities. And that is the same thing that I encapsulated in my project…. As Woolf has been able to express herself through an enigmatic book, so was I through an enigmatic composition. I figured out that composition for me is not an attempt to really capture one aspect of your soul, but rather to put it on display such that it taunts you whenever you look back at it. One of my takeaways from the class is that timeless art and literature are always open to constant re-interpretation. Art continually reshapes itself. And, I think that this is a good thing.

I realized that Jason had come by my office because he felt that grappling with this difficult text had somehow been the beginning of a process of figuring out a place of belonging in the world. Failing to understand, but then finally figuring out how to engage with *The Waves*, not in terms of its content at first, but with its formal properties, and then translating this form into his own words, had allowed him to figure out how to make a composition. From here, he was able more openly, more confidently, and more intuitively, to formulate a sound foundational reading of Woolf's work.

Matthew Goulish, in an essay that likens good criticism to an act of performance, has this to offer:

> How do we understand something? We understand something by approaching it. How do we approach something? We approach it from any direction. We approach it using our eyes, our ears, our noses, our intellects, our imaginations. We approach it with silence. We approach it with childhood. We use pain or embarrassment. We use history. We take a safe route or a dangerous one. We discover our approach and we follow it. (Goulish 2002: p. 46)

Finding confidence in a personal approach to writing and critical thinking skills necessary for engagement with an establishment—whether that establishment constitutes an historical consciousness, an institution or an prescribed text for a course, is a first step toward softening dividing lines between disciplines, genres, and finally cultural boundaries. My pedagogical project has been to figure out approaches to combining and blending writing across genres with the bottom line goal of helping students develop sharp and analytical critical skills that they can apply to other aspects of their academic, professional, and personal lives. Teaching the complexity of the personal essay, teaching the underlying principles of critical writing, and inviting creative responses in literature classes have become inextricably linked processes, as I believe both imagination and empathy are necessary gateways to astute and original analytical works. Woolf describes criticism written by Coleridge as "the most spiritual in the language" because it has "the power of seeming to bring to light what was already there beforehand, instead of imposing anything from the outside" (Woolf 1987b: p. 222). I have found that encouraging personal translations and imitations of form in this light opens up new possibilities for subsequent disciplined and deep engagement with the core values and ideas in a principle text. I realized in that meeting with Jason what I could not have known when evaluating his work in the class. In the moment of reading *The Waves*, Jason was grappling with his own complex questions about identity. When engaging with the text, he wasn't looking for something original. Instead, the creative assignment allowed him to look for something familiar, something personal, something that could give him a new window into his searching state. Ultimately, my goal in the classroom is to encourage students to gain confidence in and fluency about the texts and contexts we are studying, to be able to control voice and inflection in their expression and analysis, and most importantly, to understand and to frame for themselves the ways that they can begin to engage their critical minds.

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PART III

Active Learning Out of Doors

CHAPTER 7

Play, Craft, Design, Feel: Engaging Students and the Public with Victorian Culture

Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi and John Plunkett

One of the opening pronouncements we both make to students at the start of courses on Victorian literature is that their exeprience of reading the texts is an important part of their critical response. What is it like reading a long Charles Dickens or George Eliot novel? What emotions do these books create? What readerly work does sympathy or sensation do? Similarly, we often explore the growth of nineteenth-century print media through hands-on work with periodicals and serial issues, asking students what they can infer from the closely set, multiple columns of typeface used by so many journals, or the many adverts in serial fiction issues that frame and introduce the words of well-known novelists. Our students invariably respond well to such questions, yet experiential learning—learning

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through doing and reflecting upon that process—can open up many different parts of Victorian literature and culture. One reason is that, while experiential learning is an approach much discussed in modern pedagogy, it was a type of knowledge that the period helped to pioneer. As Dinah Birch has argued, we are the inheritors of the Victorians' wrestling with questions over the relation between feeling and knowledge, and what the aims of learning should be (Birch 2008). In our individual teaching and research, and in one joint research project, we have explored the development of experiential learning in Victorian culture, and simultaneously used it as a pathway to engage students and broader publics. This chapter describes the benefits of embedding experiential learning in our work, and reflects on the scope and limits of this approach.

We have found such an approach valuable in providing new ways of teaching and researching nineteenth-century material and visual culture. To do so, we draw on the physical and digital resources we have access to at our respective institutions, Bath Spa University and the University of Exeter, but as importantly, utilize the living heritage of the surrounding cities and region. Making the most of immediate locales—such as, for example, the rich Regency architecture of Bath—helps to exemplify and embody important aspects of the style of the period that students are already familiar with through their everyday life. Special collections held by universities can be another invaluable resource. Plunkett is fortunate in that his work on visual culture is carried out at the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, a combined research center and public museum at the University of Exeter. The Bill Douglas Cinema Museum is an archive of over 85,000 items devoted to the long history of the moving image. The collection encompasses the development of popular visual entertainment from the nineteenth century through to classical Hollywood cinema and beyond. Items range from handbills, film programs, merchandising, posters, jigsaws, sheet music, and a large number of optical toys and related artifacts.

Plunkett uses the collection in his research on nineteenth-century optical toys and shows such as the peepshow, stereoscope, diorama, and panorama. These were instrumental in the burgeoning visual culture of the period, yet have often fallen at the margins of the disciplines of Art History, English Literature, and Victorian Studies, in part because they are awkward to teach in a standard seminar format. Optical devices were often described as "philosophical toys," devices that amused and instructed only through their usage. They can be regarded as an early form of experiential learning in that they provided a hands-on, embodied form of viewing that encouraged users to reflect on their perception of movement, three-dimensional space, time, and color. A number of them were direct by-products of innovative experiments on the physiology of vision in the 1820s and 1830s, challenging enlightenment conceptions of a stable, transparent, external world.

Optical devices and formats are part of the impact of modernity upon visuality and perception. As Isobel Armstrong has insightfully noted, modernity was often expressed through concerns about "the status of the image, the nature of mediation (or bringing about of a changed state), and the problem of knowledge and perceptual certainty." (Armstrong 2008: p. 254) Given that the appeal and working of many nineteenth-century devices is bound up with the viewing experience, this offers an effective pathway into teaching them. Devices and printed ephemera from the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum can be incorporated into classes, allowing students to have a hands-on experience of a kaleidoscope, magic lantern, or stereoscope. Seminars can analyze a handbill advertising a magic lantern lecture, for example, alongside looking at actual projected images from a magic lantern. For students, handling these devices helps to bring the period to life, while projecting a chromatrope special-effects lantern slide can still provoke collective wonderment at its intricacy and beauty. Teaching using the devices is a way of opening up broader discussions about modernity, temporality, animation, and illusion. For example, exploring the zoetrope, one of the persistence-of-vision toys developed in the period, leads to an initial question: where exactly is the moving image? (see Fig. 7.1).

And after thinking about it, the students realize that the moving-image is occurring in their heads, that it is an illusion caused by the limitations of the physiology of the human eye, and this leads us on to a larger discussion of how the contingency of vision is linked to the unstable nature of knowledge and perception in modernity. Moreover, when asked what the short, repetitive animated sequences (which can be comedic or grotesque, such as a dancing couple who have a monkey jumping through hoops below them) remind them of, the answer is invariably GIFs. This opens up another discussion regarding not only the pleasures of repetition, but also the links between nineteenth-century visual culture and our own, and the sophistication of nineteenth-century audiences.

The benefit of having students use zoetropes and other moving-image toys is that their experiences can be used to inform critical reading from scholars such as Jonathan Crary, who has argued that the development of optical toys is part of the disciplining of subjectivity to new industrialized

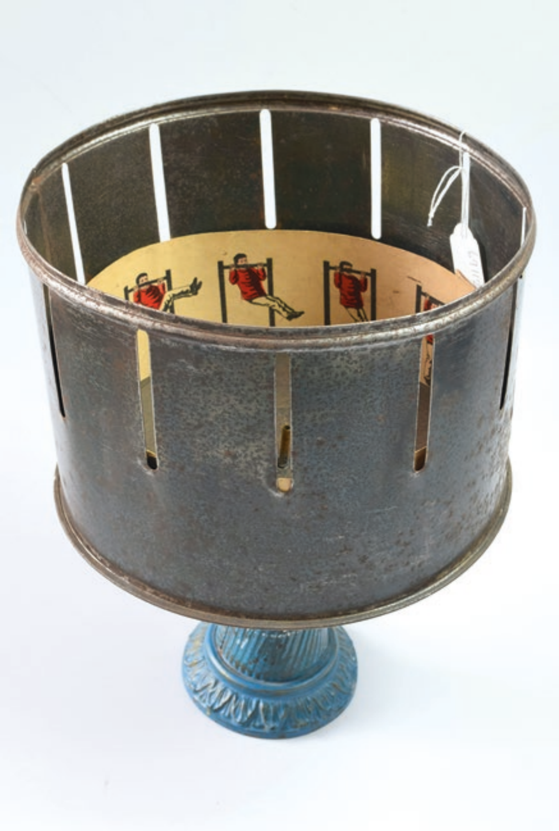

Fig. 7.1 Zoetrope c.1870. (Courtesy of Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, University of Exeter)

speeds and temporalities (Crary 1992). Yet set against Crary's assertions is students' ability to play with the zoetrope by changing the speed of the image, making it go backward and so forth. Rather than a standardized, seamlessly smooth experience of a moving-image, what is offered is a more playful temporality that is jerky, stop-start, and of intermittent speed. Students' experience as users opens up a number of key questions about agency and visuality, suggesting the possibility of a playful and interactive engagement with the new temporalities of modernity, rather than that of the industrialized disciplining of the senses or abstract homogenized time.

Working with critical and historical readings alongside material objects is vital to producing a nuanced set of insights; hands-on experience often needs to be placed in an interpretative frame to provoke critical reflection. For example, Plunkett explores the idea of immersive and 3D media through looking at a variety of stereoscope and stereographs, but viewing the devices is contextualized with extracts from David Brewster's The Stereoscope: Its History, Theory, and Construction (1856), adverts from the London Stereoscopic Company, and Oliver Wendell Holmes's 1859 essay on the stereoscope in *The Atlantic*. Among the insights stemming from these sessions is the fact that the stereoscope requires conscious effort for the effect to be experienced: it does not simply happen as an inevitability. The user is never just a passive receiver of images. While some stereoscopes and stereographs are notable for their 3D effect, others work less well. Students are asked to explain why particular designs of the device might be more effective (some are enclosed, some are open, some box-like, others very portable) and whether there are particular subject matter, compositions, or coloring that produce the most pleasing effect (for example, whether architectural scenes work better than sculpture or topographical ones?). Similarly, a discussion of how long students looked at each image provides a way into analyzing the scope and limits of the allure of 3D; the effect can be striking and pleasing, but—as is sometimes the case with 3D cinema and VR glasses—what is the appeal beyond the novelty? The students' experiences also provide an effective standpoint to reflect on the grand aspirations made by Brewster, Holmes, and the London Stereoscopic Company; their predictions for the educational, utilitarian, and artistic uses of the device in the nineteenth century often provoke a more skeptical response when analyzed in the light of the students' own experiences of using stereoscopes today.

Hands-on experience (albeit with care) of nineteenth-century optical toys is a unique opportunity for learning. The resources of the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, and indeed many others, are digital as well as physical, and able to assist scholars, students, and enthusiasts. Some items in its collection are animated as digital interactives, offering a version of an active and engaged experience, such as scrolling through the *Illustrated London News* panorama of London from 1845. More generally, there are many online versions of optical toys in motion, particularly zoetropes, praxinoscopes, and phenekistoscopes, as well as various moving-image magic lantern slides. Institutions like the New York Public

Library have put online its collection of 40,000 stereograph views in a way that allows you to experience them in 3D using either a basic anaglyph viewer or an animated Wiggle-GIF effect.[1]

Using digital technology to recreate the experience of nineteenth-century optical toys recuperates something of their curiosity and wonder. The use of contemporary technology also opens up a reflexive, yet critical, perspective on the historical continuities between early visual media and our own. The ease with which nineteenth-century optical recreations can be transferred to digital format highlights how contemporary media are part of the long history of visual, optical, and audio technologies (the panorama format is a case in point in terms of its contemporary use for all types of virtual walk-through tours). Both "old" and "new" media are better understood through each other, through what Walter Benjamin would call a constellation, the establishing of a moment whereby "what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation" (Benjamin 1999: p. 462). Just as digital technology can encourage greater access to, and sensitivity toward the past, the remediation of nineteenth-century optical toys, in turn, can produce a standpoint to reflect upon the experience of contemporary media, suggesting that it is not always as novel as it sometimes claims to be.

Hadjiafxendi's interest in experiential learning stems from her research into nineteenth-century print media, handicrafts, and female creativity; in modules on the Victorian material imagination and on literary women, work, and art, she incorporates object analysis into, and alongside, the critical engagement with literary sources, drawing on the numerous recent studies of Victorian material culture (see e.g., Daly 2011 and Freedgood 2006). As part of her teaching, Hadjiafxendi explores domestic handicrafts as a ubiquitous feature of nineteenth-century culture and its impact on female creativity, assisted by a visit to the Holburne Museum in Bath, which holds numerous examples of silhouettes, embroidery, miniatures, and watercolors. However, as Talia Schaffer has pointed out about gendered craft, "we have no grammar for decoding this practise, and therefore we may well feel baffled when we try and figure out why it was so popular" (Schaffer 2011: p. 3). In an attempt to get students to better understand the appeal of handicrafts for both makers and audiences, Hadjiafxendi uses extracts from handicraft manuals together with an invitation for groups of students to produce their own version of one of the handicrafts they have been researching. Examples produced by students include glass painting, boiled sweets, a doll's house, pressed flowers, silhouettes, and scrapbooks, amongst others.

This learning activity sheds light on both the scope of the manuals and the creativity and labor required to produce the handicraft. Several features recur in students' reflections upon the process of making the handicraft. They often comment on the sheer amount of time and skill that such undertaking requires, and that the pleasure is more in the making than in the beauty of the finished piece. There is also the realization that handicraft manuals are often less than fulsome in their advice, often giving only limited and/or imprecise instructions. This paucity sometimes speaks of presumed knowledges, too commonplace to need writing down, yet also demonstrates that the manuals still demand invention, improvisation, and creativity.

Experiential learning can feed into innovative assessment that asks students not only to draw on their embodied and subjective engagement with material culture, but also to consider how they would translate it into the meaningful experiences for audiences outside higher education. Hadjiafxendi encourages students to submit handicraft projects; marks are awarded primarily for research and for reflection on the process of making, rather than for the execution of the finished version. Over the last five years, Hadjiafxendi and Plunkett have assessed students on their respective courses through a similar project, whereby groups of students must take their course learning and demonstrate how it could be translated and applied to a non-university environment, whether a heritage, educational, media, or commercial setting. The project must be creative and outward-facing but also academically rigorous, demonstrating their research and critical understanding. Hadjiafxendi has used it in modules such as “The Victorian Spectacular” and “Nature, Science and the Self,” while Plunkett has used it in courses on Dickens and nineteenth-century visual culture. This activity draws on Kolb’s well-known cycle of experiential learning, whereby students move from concrete experience to reflective observation to abstract conceptualization and then to application. It also channels the idea of experiential learning by encouraging students to reflect on their courses and imagine themselves using their knowledge of Victorian literature and culture in alternative settings.

To be sure, the group project is an exercise that reflects a broader utilitarian drive to embed employability-related skills in the curriculum by encouraging research proficiency, audience engagement, teamwork, and project management. In so doing, it tries to demonstrate to students how a humanities degree, including their own, might translate into ‘real-life’ ventures and how their critical skills are valuable. For this particular exercise it, an author like Dickens remains an iconic figure in terms of the global reach of his writings and his continued appeal to heritage and media industries; equally, the relationship between nineteenth-century art, visual culture, and technology continues to shape our own modernity and media, and the UK heritage sector remains a significant economic and cultural force (the prevalence of Jane Austen in Bath being a case in point). For Plunkett's Dickens course, suggestions for group projects are listed below, although students could come up with any project provided they could demonstrate its social or commercial benefit. For the purpose of their teaching, both Hadjiafxendi and Plunkett adapted this rubric on varied modules on nineteenth-century literature and culture:

Design an exhibition for a museum or gallery
The exhibition might focus upon the broad themes of Dickens's work, but, equally, might well focus upon a particular theme (time, place, the body, realism, politics, and melodrama) or a particular genre or a particular novel or even character.

Design activities to introduce schoolchildren to Dickens
You should aim to get information across to the children about Dickens, but you should also formulate an activity or set of activities with which they can engage creatively. You should consider whether the session you design is aimed at primary or secondary schoolchildren and how it relates to the National Curriculum. You may wish to build an activity around a particular aspect of what the children are required to study at school.

An adapted/updated/remediated version of a Dickens novel
You could design, write, produce, stage an adaptation of a Dickens novel, or remediate it into a different format (graphic novel, text message, television, stage play, etc.). If you take this approach, you will be judged on your research and critical understanding, as well as on how your adaptation is explicitly geared toward a particular market/format/demographic, and how you communicate your understanding of this.

Design and market a new product/design using the works of Dickens
Dickens has inspired a number of heritage and tourist products, from walking tours to apps to the now-defunct Dickens World theme park. You should think about the audiences who would be most interested in the product, and consider any business organization operating today with which you might wish to share your campaign.

Groups consisted of three to four students and work was presented in a digital portfolio using established platforms such as Padlet that allowed for the creative combination of text, image, presentations, audio-visual and archival material.

Over the last eight years, students at Bath Spa and Exeter have come up with a wonderful range of ideas for translating course themes beyond the university environment. Submitted projects include an exhibition, Imagined Reality, which attempted to set out a genealogy of immersive art from nineteenth-century panoramas to contemporary VR glasses; Victorian Spooktacular: Crime and the Supernatural, a walking tour of London inspired by gothic novels of the period with different tours led by literary characters; a toy theater version of Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* as a way of adapting the novel and introducing it to schools; a Horrible Histories documentary on the Victorian stage; a national Dickens Day that all junior schools (pupils aged 7–11) would participate in, complete with lesson plans for teachers and age-appropriate activity tasks for children; an updated version of the late-nineteenth-century toy magic lantern with contemporary fairy stories, which was to be sold by the Victoria and Albert Museum gift shop; a Dickensian Christmas grotto in Harrods aimed at inspiring charitable giving and working with local communities; and an immersive theatrical Dombey Day for schools produced by a putative Dickens Living Literature Company, in which pupils walked through various settings from the novels populated by actors and had to undertake various activities based on themed topics such as the railways, globalization and empire, and Victorian schooling.

Students have proved adept at creating innovative formats for remediating Victorian culture to contemporary audiences. For example, one group proposed a Gothic Revival gamebook app in which the reader was the hero and had to play the role of a nineteenth-century journal author questing after information on gothic architecture:

> We welcome you heartily to the Nineteenth Century! You are a Victorian writer for a quarterly magazine, and you have just received the following letter from your Editor:
>
> We require **you**, sir, to undertake a series of interviews in order to contribute to a seminal piece on the Gothic Architecture of the modern age. All around us are buildings most beautiful in character, inspired by the Medieval ages and yet of our own time. We must bring the architecture of our age to the general public!

> We expect interviews with the greatest artistic thinkers of our age, and a discussion of those who paved the way. We also expect reviews of some of the greatest examples of construction around us. Think of the Museum of Natural History in London, sir, or at Oxford. All this must be completed, of course, by the usual deadline. Special edition or no, we have the public to serve and profits to make!
>
> Expecting your excellent contribution in due course, (RICHARD PRINTMAKER, Editor in Chief of *The Revival*).[2]

The player-reader had to navigate their own interactive path through the questbook, completing interviews with John Ruskin, William Morris, and Augustus Pugin; they also had to decide which gothic buildings to visit as research for the piece.

While all group projects were expected to demonstrate their research endeavors and critical understanding, the best often put forward a 'strategic presentism,' linking Victorian literature and culture with their own experiences and concerns. As David Sweeney Coombs and Danielle Coriale have noted, "Strategic presentism requires that we think of the past as something other than an object of knowledge that is sealed off, separated from the present by the onrush of sequential time" (Coombs and Coriale 2016: p. 87). In response, Elaine Freedgood and Michael Sanders have cautioned against a too easy turn to 'relevance,' arguing that the "relevance that holds sway in the corporatized classroom is a particularly degraded form of instrumental reason, which is anathema to its critical counterpart" (Freedgood and Sanders 2016: pp. 118–119). One way in which this mode of assessment attempts to avoid this is that it ask the students to draw out what is most 'relevant' (or perhaps even revelatory) to their experience of Victorian literature and culture without pre-judging what that might be. Interestingly, some projects fused the entrepreneurial, archival, and political; thus, "It's all Proud and Dandy!" was based on research into queer masculinity and the Dandy in the 1890s, and reimagined a revival of dandyism presented as a fashion show for London Fashion Week, part of the event's promotion of the LGBTQ community. As the student group noted, "It's all Proud and Dandy brings into focus and makes relevant for today's society the dandy figure, commonly associated today with the performance of 'camp'."[3] The digital portfolio combined archival research into the origins of the Dandy using analysis of satires, cartoons, and photographs of Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley. As a centerpiece, this project produced its fashion shoot. where the students depicted themselves modeling the style of the neo-Victorian dandy they hoped to promote (complete with analysis of how it was inspired by 1890s fashion).

For those students undertaking our modules at Bath Spa and Exeter Universities in the midst of the Covid19 pandemic, group submissions reflected the political and economic impact of the pandemic, particularly national debates about increasing food poverty, inadequate welfare provision, and inequality, as well as the role that reconnecting with nature plays in counteracting the effects of social alienation and supporting our mental well being and health. For example, groups linked Dickens to their own Covid experiences while also noting the way Dickensian tropes were being frequently deployed in political debate. Thus, in October 2020, the government-appointed Children's Commissioner in the UK, Anne Longfield, bemoaned: "To have a debate about whether we should make sure that hungry and vulnerable children have enough to eat is something that is strikingly similar to something we'd expect to see in chapters of Oliver Twist—a novel published in the 19th century" ("Free School Meals" 2020). One group proposed an adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* that would take place using Zoom and be set in Covid times: Scrooge supervises Bob Crachitt virtually over Zoom 24/7, and Marley and the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future all appear as unscheduled Zoom calls. Instead of being burdened down by chains and padlocks, Marley is wound round with broadband cables; his time bound to his computer screen is a symbol of his and Scrooge's alienation and lack of human connection. The Ghost of Christmas Past appears in a full uniform of medical Personal Protective Equipment to prevent Covid infection. The social distancing enforced by Covid chimes uncannily with the individualism and class separation Dickens critiqued.

Public Engagement and Victorian Literature

Student assessment is one means of embedding into courses an encouragement to think beyond the academy, but for UK based scholars, the research funding framework has, over the last decade, incentivized the generation of public engagement and impact, defined as a "change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia" ('REF Impact'). Introduced by the UK government as a way of demonstrating the value for money of academic research, public engagement and impact have become embedded in the research landscape through their inclusion in periodic national assessments and the judging of competitive grant awards by research councils, most notably the Research Assessment Exercise of 2014 and Research Excellence Framework of 2021. The amount of research monies flowing into humanities departments stems, in part, from how they have been graded regarding the significance and reach of their impact. The merits of this agenda have provoked much debate regarding the true contribution of research to the public good, and how and whether this should be measured (questions beyond the scope of this essay; see Collini 2012 and Smith et al. 2020). However, it has provided innovative opportunities for individual academics working in the humanities. It has given impetus to building collaborations and undertaking joint projects with external organizations and communities, to co-produce new types of engaged research, and to reflect upon how best to engage and reach new audiences.

Both of us, individually and jointly, have used our interest in Victorian culture and experiential learning to undertake community-based research projects that sought to provide a link between past and present. In Plunkett's research on optical exhibitions, there are many unanswered questions because the nature of the devices means that few, if any, survive. An example of this is the traveling peepshow, which was a staple of popular entertainment during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was omnipresent at fairs, wakes, market days, races, regattas, and shop shows, anywhere where a crowd gathered with a few pennies to spare. However, both popular and scholarly understandings of this format have been skewed by the salacious reputation peepshows acquired in the first decades of the twentieth century, largely due to the advent of the mutoscope and a host of similar machines showing risqué pictures.

Many prints and paintings of the traveling peepshow survive; however, there are almost no surviving examples of the show-boxes because they were invariably toured until they were no longer viable. The accompanying tableaux were similarly recycled and re-used to depict the latest topical event. In *Our Mutual Friend* (1870), Dickens describes a country fair where one of the exhibits was a worn-out peepshow that “had originally started with the Battle of Waterloo, and had since made it every other battle of later date by altering the Duke of Wellington's nose” (Dickens 1997: p. 673). The prints and paintings that survive invariably focus on the colorful figure of the showman-narrator, as in the George Cruikshank engraving used as the frontispiece for Peter Parley's *Sergeant Bell and His Raree Show* (1839; see Fig. 7.2).

Contra understandings of the peepshow as a silent, enclosed, voyeuristic experience, the showman provided a colorful and/or informative description to accompany the changing visual tableaux. He controlled the

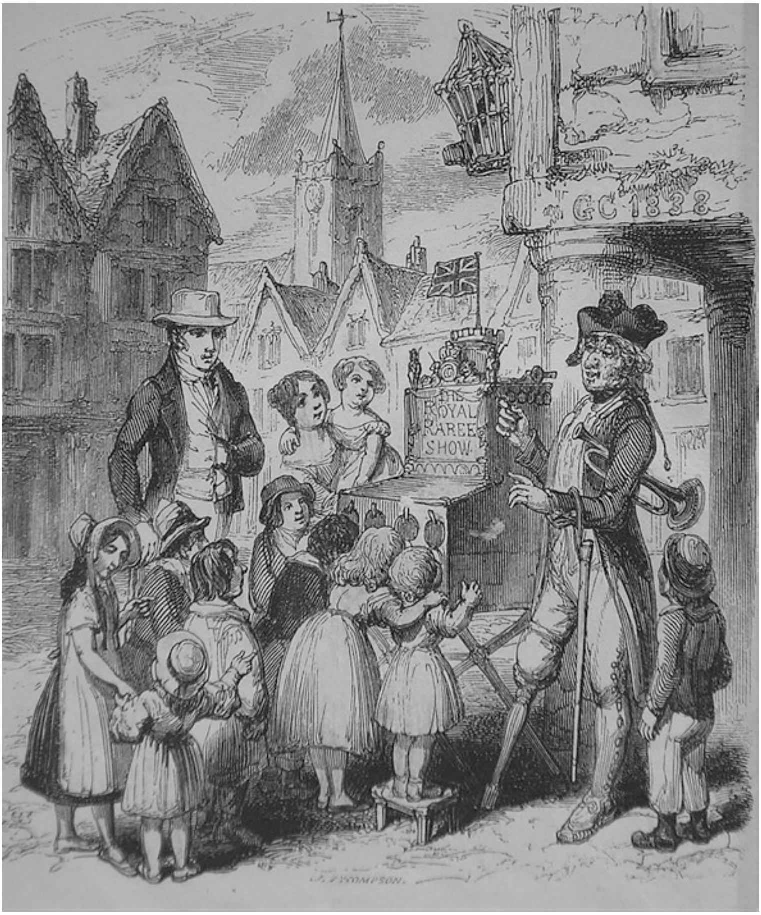

Fig. 7.2 George Cruikshank, frontispiece, Peter Parley, *Sergeant Bell and His Raree Show* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1839). (Courtesy of Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, University of Exeter)

movement of one picture to the next; the scenes moved according to the pace and detail of his oral narrative. The attraction of the peepshow was as much aural as visual. Cruickshank's depiction is also typical in that, while the central focus of the scene is on the showman and the audience's fascination with the act of viewing, the actual subject of the show is never seen.

The archival record provides a tantalizing glimpse of the peepshow's appeal as live performance. It leaves many unanswered questions though. How did the oral narrative and tableaux interact? How exactly did the showman control the pace of the show and movement between tableaux? How could the showman interact with both the audience seeing inside the peepshow box and those waiting their turn? What additional sound or musical effects might enliven the show, given that prints often depict the showman with a musical instrument? What were the practical requirements in putting on the peepshow as an unscheduled pop-up outdoor performance that needed to attract a crowd? An attempt to answer these questions led to a collaborative project between Plunkett and a creative practitioner, Tony Lidington, who has a longstanding interest in the history of popular performance. The aim was to recreate a traveling peepshow, providing performances that allowed contemporary audiences to experience its wonder.

The collaboration used the process of putting together a performance as experiential learning, a hands-on way of researching and reflecting upon the creative and practical aspects of the device. Lidington's design of the show-box utilized many aspects of the nineteenth-century peepshow experience including the colorful dress of the showman and a movable cart (Cruickshank depicts the showman as a disabled military veteran and Lidington adopted a similar persona). The first narrative created was a version of William Hogarth's famous series "The Rake's Progress," updated and retitled "The Banker's Progress."[4] The most difficult question though was how to construct a show that replicated something of the novelty and wonder of the peepshow for contemporary audiences saturated in a media-rich environment. The final version included a composite of Victorian and contemporary entertainment technologies, mixing shot digital footage with puppetry, projection, and automata. The advantage of this approach is that it opened up a range of different effects more likely to appeal to a contemporary audience; it also embedded a degree of methodological self-consciousness, reminding us that any attempts at recovering historical modes of popular performance are inflected by our own positions, immersed in twenty-first-century modes of life. For example, in a fascinating discussion of the touring *Crazy Cinematograph* show, which sought to reproduce an early twentieth-century fairground Bioscope show on the Luxembourg fairground between 2007 and 2010, Claude Bertemes and Nicole Dahlen have argued that the "central challenge for those responsible … has been to develop a genuine audience strategy which can neither restrict itself to historical reconstruction (where, according to Heraclitus, one cannot step twice into the same river), nor believe, in a helpless gesture, that it can rival the communicative deliria of 'mental capitalism' (Georg Franck)" (Bertemes and Dahlen 2011: p. 80). The audience dynamics of this Fairground Bioscope show forced a principled awareness of the difficulties of attempting to reconstruct qualitative dimensions of lived experience from earlier generations. Lidington's peepshow took a similar approach, acknowledging that a contemporary version could never truly recreate the experience of nineteenth-century audiences, and that the form had, throughout its long history, always updated itself using the latest technology.

Making the peepshow and its performance generated many insights. Firstly, it created a renewed appreciation of the virtue of simplicity: the nineteenth-century peepshow was often criticized for its very basic nature. The procession of images usually worked by being pulled up into the top of the box, like miniature theatrical flats, to reveal the next tableau. Given the physical challenges of outdoor performance—never knowing exactly what the weather or venue conditions would be, or indeed when a show might be called for—the simplicity of the working was revealed as a positive necessity rather than something to be looked down upon. Adding contemporary technology and a variety of different effects increased the potential for things to go wrong; the number of daily performances, for example, was constrained by the all too common phenomenon of limited battery life.

Another feature revealed through performance was the impact of having multiple lenses, as seen in prints of nineteenth-century show-boxes. There is a commercial imperative to this aspect in that multiple lenses increase the paying audience. Lidington's peepshow had seven viewing lenses, five at the front and two at the side, but this meant that each viewer has a slightly different perspective on what was happening inside the box, and this needed to be taken into account in the interior design and effects created. Finally, the performance revealed a plethora of creative interactions possible among showman, audience, and events inside the box. Like Cruickshank's veteran of the Napoleonic wars retelling the Battle of Waterloo, Lidington was not only the show's narrator but also the main character shown on the filmed scenes inside the box. At one point, Lidington uses King Lear's famous words on the heath (*King Lear* 3.2.1–3) to express the desolation of his character who, like Lear, has now lost everything:

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow!
You cataracts and hurricanes, spout
Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!

As he utters these words, the audience is sprayed with water, mimicking the events inside the show-box, but also providing great entertainment for those waiting for their turn. Being part of the process of devising the peepshow, which has toured widely, produced many new critical insights into how commercial, creative, and practical considerations shaped its performance style.

Hadjiafxendi's and Plunkett's interests in popular science and handicrafts came together in a collaborative project that combined research with public engagement and which ran from 2014–16; its focus was the popularity of natural history in the period and how it created a participatory culture open to amateurs and enthusiasts, particularly women. Indeed, one way of understanding the appeal of nineteenth-century popular science is that it provided a potent mixture of action and reflection, often linked to the active exploration of local environments, with many local societies providing excursions, papers, and *conversazione* (Finnegan 2009). An early exemplar of this movement was the fascination with marine biology that attracted a number of literary and scientific figures in the 1850s and 1860s. In 1858, George Henry Lewes declared that the lovely sea anemone was "now the ornament of countless drawing rooms, studies, and back parlours, as well as the delight of unnumbered amateurs" (Lewes 1858: p. 114). Lewes's own book, *Sea-side Studies at Ilfracombe, Tenby, the Scilly Isles, and Jersey*, was part of this fashion and was based on a long coastal tour he made with George Eliot. In beginning their excursion at Ilfracombe in North Devon, they were heading to a location that was attracting increasing numbers of natural history enthusiasts, inspired by volumes about the Devon coast such as Philip Henry Gosse's *A Naturalist's Rambles on the Devonshire Coast* (1853), Charles Kingsley's *Glaucus; Or, The Wonders of the Shore* (1855), and George Tugwell's *A Manual of the Sea-Anemones Commonly Found on the English Coast* (1856).

In a collaborative project with Ilfracombe Museum, "Science at the Seaside: Victorian Pleasure Hunts," we explored why figures such as Gosse, Kingsley, Eliot, and Lewes were so enthused with the rockpools and beaches of Devon. Much of the success of 'seaside science' was due to the fact that it promoted an experiential natural history, one concerned with understanding specimens in relationship to their 'living' coastal environment. Gosse criticized the established type of natural history that he would depart from in his seashore volumes:

> Natural History is far too much a science of dead things; a *necrology*. It is mainly conversant with dry skins, furred or feathered, blackened, shrivelled, and hay-stuffed; with objects, some admirably beautiful, some hideously ugly, impaled on pins, and arranged in rows in cork drawers… These distorted things are described; their scales, plates, feathers counted; their forms copied, all shrivelled and stiffened as they are;… their limbs, members, and organs measured, and the results recorded in thousandths of an inch; two names are criven to every one; the whole is enveloped in a mystic cloud of Graeco-Latino-English phraseology (often barbaric enough); and this is Natural History! (Gosse 1851: p. v)

Gosse's approach, which necessarily relied on understanding animal or marine life in the dynamic context of the eco-systems they inhabited, gave the seashore a constantly changing physicality. The reader was his companion, with Gosse evoking the romance of natural history through the kinesthetic of his expeditions:

> I ask you to listen with me to the carol of the lark, and the hum of the wild bee; I ask you to stand with me at the edge of the precipice and mark the glories of the setting sun, to watch with me the mantling tide as it rolls inward, and roars among the hollow caves; I ask you to share with me the delightful emotions which the contemplation of unbounded beauty and beneficence ever calls up in the cultivated mind. (Gosse 1853: p. vi)

Both Gosse and Kingsley were devout Christians, and their scientific explorations were intended to provoke reflection on God's beauty that could be discovered in the small, everyday creatures found on every shoreline if only the reader chose to look.

"Science at the Seaside" had its own public engagement activities in that the collaboration with Ilfracombe Museum meant that we were able to put on a series of events aimed at either museum visitors or local schools. These were intended to be in the spirit of Gosse's and Kingsley's living coast; through hands-on learning, we aimed to raise awareness among tourists and locals of the region's scientific and literary heritage as it developed hand in hand with environmental tourism and trends in household crafts. In 2014–16, we ran family activities, school writing workshops, and rock-pool rambles led by marine biologists as well as activity workshops insipred by nineteenth-century handicrafts. Rockpool rambles in and around Ilfracombe allowed us to explore locations close to those visited by Gosse in the 1850s. Gosse's beautiful and haunting illustrations of marine life were used as prompts for schoolchildren to write their own response to seashore life; more precisely, they were asked to write short stories or poems about objects found on local beaches.

As with the peepshow, though, our project did not naively try to recreate Victorian natural history in that the contemporary seashore faces numerous ecological challenges. The richness and easy availability of the marine life celebrated by Gosse and Kingsley is no more, and the wholesale indiscriminate removal of specimens is obviously no longer good practice. Gosse himself, however, was no stranger to ecological concerns in that he was soon protesting that—in part due to the popularity of his own work—the coastline at fashionable watering places was being stripped of specimens by over-enthusiastic tourists:

> Since the opening of sea-science to the million, such has been the invasion of the shore by crinoline and collecting jars, that you may search all the likely and promising rocks within reach of Torquay, which a few years ago were like gardens with full-blossomed anemones and antheas, and come home with an empty jar and aching heart, all being now swept as clean as the palm of your hand! (Gosse 1865: p. 251)

Promoting hands-on engagement with the seashore was unsustainable to the eco-systems from which the specimens came and is perhaps a reminder that the Victorians' own versions of experiential learning were often limited to the affluent (in contrast to the majority subjected to the austere schoolroom and rote learning that left no space for critical or imaginative reflection). Our schools' workshops updated Victorian seaside science by incorporating concerns about marine pollution, especially plastic waste, and the impact of climate change on coastal communities.

Experiential activities can engage different groups with Victorian literature and culture; they can benefit research, teaching, and public engagement. The examples of the peepshow and "Science at the Seaside" emphasize that these activities are founded on research and critical reading but in no way replace them, and can indeed be an innovative method of doing research. Module evaluation feedback from students often notes their enjoyment of hands-on activities and the assessments that require them to think of "real-world" applications. And perhaps therein lies a tale, a potential link between the success of such learning activities and recent scholarly interest in the history of the emotions, material culture, and bibliotherapy, all of which aspire to a more embodied, holistic, and open set of knowledges at a time when the structures and contexts of university education are often tugging toward a more instrumentalized version of its purpose.

Notes

1. See https://stereo.nypl.org/
2. See https://padlet.com/sd532/mfauensqi3ak
3. See https://padlet.com/libbypotter12/sf9h30h9t7kh
4. A short film on Tony Lidington's The Raree Show is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=st3l6m4mqAM&t=132s

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CHAPTER 8

Learning in Archives: Fevers, Romances, Methodologies

Kevin A. Morrison

Newspaper cuttings, diaries, minutes, birth and death certificates, receipts, photographs, documents, manuscript drafts, and letters are among the items comprising the material record of a culture. As one repository for these traces of the past, university special collections and archives are alluring to researchers drawn to the stories contained within boxes, tied bundles of printed matter, and dusty file folders, or to the rare printed books, pamphlets, tracts, and periodicals. Until relatively recently, university archives and special collections departments were themselves primarily oriented toward supporting the research of institutional faculty rather than functioning as a laboratory for inquiry-based, student-centered learning in the humanities.

This chapter focuses on my use of special collections and archives as sites of instruction to facilitate student engagement with primary sources and object-based learning. In several different courses over many years, I attempted to integrate—with varying levels of success—archival and special collections material as a key component. Despite thematic differences,

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each of these courses shared certain commonalities. They considered the fantasies of complete knowledge that often motivate archival research; reflected on the challenges of rendering the past legible, without recourse to familiar master narratives; investigated the ways in which the organization of archives affects our perceptions of the material we analyze; and examined the pleasurable but problematic nature of taking documents and objects as metonyms for something called “real life” or “the everyday.” But it was only through a process of trial and error, which I recount below, that I was able to design—for my spring 2020 courses as a visiting professor at the University of Connecticut—a sequence of field trips to special collections study rooms and sequential assignments based on the materials there to help students understand the processes by which one undertakes the transition from passively consuming knowledge to actively creating it. In a sense, then, this chapter is about my own learning in archives as well as my students’.

It is also a chapter about learning interrupted (theirs and mine). When the first alert about a novel coronavirus was sent to the UConn campus community in mid-January 2020, most of my students saw the threat as distant and abstract. Because I ordinarily live and work in China, I was concerned about the welfare of my colleagues as well as the logistical challenges that the country’s travel restrictions imposed. While I recognized the possibility of the worldwide spread of the disease, I had not—in planning the archives-based elements of my courses and committing to writing a chapter about the experience—anticipated how quickly COVID-19 would upend plans for the semester.

The Field Trip and Experiential Knowledge

From the outset of my career, I have routinely looked for ways to increase students’ historical empathy by forging connections across the university. I have utilized libraries, archives, and exhibition galleries as sites of instruction and sought co-curricular funding to enable various forms of experiential learning. Most of these on- and off-campus field trips, however, were standalone. They were intended to complement and enhance formal classroom instruction. Thus, for example, in a course on nineteenth-century sartorial cultures at Syracuse University, I organized an excursion from upstate New York to Manhattan so that my students could see and work with the historical costume collection at the Museum of the Fashion Institute of Technology. I arranged for my students in a course on the

Victorian "Woman Question" to attend a theatrical performance of Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*, which explores, in part through an imaginary dinner party at which different women from history attend, the roles of women in society and the meaning of success.

In almost all of my early courses, I also taught at least one class session in a special collections reading room. This gave students an opportunity to learn, among other things, about and discuss first editions of the materials they have read. Although these classes introduced students to the book or periodical—indeed, much fiction of the period was serialized—as an artifact or object, they did not otherwise problematize their notion of reading. Students returned to the familiarity of their Penguin, Oxford, or Broadview editions and their own rhythms of reading and writing about the texts under consideration.

Field trips hold a privileged position in any pedagogical repertoire that includes forms of experience-based learning. The number of instructors who utilize such forms remains small (Wright 2000). An even fewer number employ field trips (Scarce 1997). Those who have taken their classes on such outings acknowledge that, when "conceived with imagination and planned with attention to detail, [they] can be among the most intensive, in-depth, integrative, and rewarding educational experiences for students and instructors alike" (Scarce 1997: p. 226). In addition to reinforcing what students have learned in the classroom (Behrendt and Franklin 2014), field trips can stimulate or augment student interest and intensify their motivation. They can also buttress lecture-based learning, which, however necessary, is inherently limited (Goh 2011).

The utility of lectures has been a topic of considerable debate among educators. Some have expressed concerns about the lecture format engendering a passive learning environment (Butler 1992). In this context, students primarily listen and take notes. Others contend that an instructor's lectures provide a means for students to apprehend disciplinary ways of knowing (Exley and Dennick 2009). It remains to my mind one of the most effective means of creating a shared vocabulary and establishing a foundation of facts and concepts. Generally, I divide each course syllabus into a set of thematic units. The first several class sessions of each unit are primarily lecture based. Although lectures are unidirectional (what I refer to as "downloading"), they enable me to efficiently explain complex material—in part by drawing on many more sources than are available to students (Light and Cox 2001; Matheson 2008)—before transitioning into open-ended plenary discussions, team-based learning, or small-group work, including considerable engagement with research questions. In my experience, students' comprehension of difficult texts improves significantly as a result of lectures, and the quality of our discussions is much higher than when I have run classes solely as a seminar. As Bligh (2000) has noted, lectures are most effective when they are reinforced by other types of activities.

One type of activity that reinforces and gestures beyond lectures is the field trip. Of course, not every outing is experiential simply because it takes place in a non- classroom setting. The instructional activity becomes experiential when it is linked to other components of the course and combined with forms of assessment. As Linda H. Lewis and Carol J. Williams (1994) have succinctly put it,

> In its simplest form, experiential learning means learning from experience or learning by doing. Experiential education first immerses learners in an experience and then encourages reflection about the experience to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking. (p. 5)

In my case, I designed informal written assignments such as reflective pieces or journal entries that required students to forge connections among their experiences, the material they were reading, and the lectures they attended. These assignments often served as the basis for discussion in the class session immediately following the activity.

Methods and Issues in Victorian Studies

In a 2012 graduate-level course at Syracuse University, I began to experiment with assignments based on materials held in university special collections and archives. Except for a course in critical theory—exploring debates over the understanding of subjectivity, textuality, meaning, and historicity—that is a requirement of all entering M.A. and Ph.D. students, the graduate curriculum in the Syracuse English Department is divided between proseminars (designated as ENG 630) and advanced seminars (designated as ENG 730). While the latter focus on "a particular topic, genre, movement, or critical problem," the former (of which my course was one) serve as "a general introduction to a comprehensively defined field or period that places British or American literary, cultural, and cinematic texts in historical and critical perspective, providing master's and doctoral candidates with essential preparation for advanced work in a variety of specialized seminars (ENG 730s)" (Syracuse 2017: p. 11).[1]

As a proseminar, my course provided an introduction to research methods, key concepts, theoretical approaches, debates, and issues in Victorian studies through a survey of the period's literature. The students in "Methods and Issues in Victorian Studies" attended to a set of issues as they arise either within Victorian culture itself, such as the New Woman and liberalism, or in its study (e.g., periodization and interdisciplinarity). Some of the questions regarding Victorian studies that we considered include: Does *Victorian* remain a meaningful category of analysis in light of recent critiques of periodization and emerging transnational and transatlantic approaches to literature? Does *studies* indicate a nexus of common interests shared by different disciplines or an intellectual incoherence in which the distinctiveness of the literary has been lost? What would literary Victorian studies look like if history were not its primary interlocutor? And how are these questions, posed as they have been in recent years by a number of Victorianists, related to pragmatic concerns over the future of the humanities and anxieties about interdisciplinarity? Our engagement with a substantial body of scholarship about the field was anchored by literary case studies, including novels, nonfiction prose, and a generous sampling of poetry.

Although Victorian Britain was our primary concern, the theoretical and practical matters addressed in the course were intended to be useful to students working in other historical periods or on different national literatures. An activity in one unit exploring the pressures in the field to historicize included the requirement that students work with material in the Special Collections Reading Room at Syracuse University's Bird Library. A senior curator, William T. La Moy, and I identified a small number of collections with which students could choose to work: the George Bernard Shaw collection, which includes correspondence, memorabilia, and theater programs relating to the Irish playwright and literary critic; the Alfred Terhune Collection, which comprises correspondence, writings, and notes by the editor of the four-volume edition of the letters of Edward FitzGerald, the noted nineteenth-century poet; the Oscar Wilde Letters, which contains a few outgoing letters by the Irish dramatist; the John Ruskin Collection, which includes a few photographs and a handful of letters by the literary and art critic; the Algernon Swinburne Collection, which includes dozens of incoming and outgoing letters; and the Rudyard Kipling Collection, which encompasses nearly a thousand items (from correspondence and writings to memorabilia) by or about the novelist, poet, and journalist. In addition, we made available several first edition rare books and periodicals—such as William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* and *All the Year Round*—available for students' perusal.

At the time that I taught the course, I was researching a book, *Victorian Liberalism and Material Culture: Synergies of Thought and Place* (2018), which seeks to restore the centrality of embodiment to Victorian political thought by delineating how the commitments of four writers and intellectuals to liberalism were shaped by or manifested through the architectural spaces in which they lived or worked. Reflecting on my own negotiation of the British and American archives on which the book is based, I consider throughout the book how cultural historians and literary critics move from textual evidence to conclusions about interiors that no longer exist or that have been fundamentally altered. A contribution to the ongoing reappraisal of Victorian liberalism, the book also joins recent efforts by scholars of literature and history to think through meta-archival questions of knowledge creation—the different epistemological, ideological, and identificatory expectations one brings to bear on the material one examines—and, therefore, the interpretive acts that often generate incomplete, and at times contradictory, knowledges.

With these issues in mind, I asked students to develop a formal presentation based on one of the collections. I wanted them to engage with both the content of the archive as well as the questions the materials raise about archive-based projects. I expected their presentations to have three parts: a preliminary analysis of the materials; an outline of a future research project (which they did not actually have to do but could pursue as their final project); and a meta-reflection on the research experience (the issues raised in their hands-on negotiation of archival procedures and materials, questions of knowledge creation, access, interpretation, and so on). This unit comprised two class sessions. In the first, we discussed literary, historical and theoretical accounts of the archive that interrogate the fantasies of complete knowledge—variously referred to as "seductions," "romance," "erotics," "fever," "sickness," and "desire"—that archival-based projects inspire.[2] Informed by these works, students made their presentations the following week.

Uniformly interesting, the presentations ranged from an exploration of what we might learn from a single folio leaf (its size, texture, possible uses, and date) to a consideration of the challenges in deciphering handwriting. Students were exceptionally innovative in the ways in which they incorporated meta-archival awareness. One linked the unintelligibility of the handwriting he was analyzing to his own unreadable scribble as he had been attempting to jot down as many notes as he could before the Special Collections Reading Room (SCRC) closed for the day. Another was interested in how the particular collection with which she was working came to be established and preserved in order to think more rigorously about archives as fragmentary, partial, and subjective.

Nevertheless, the presentations reflected the limitations of the assignment. Rather than identifying material on their own, students had to make their choice from pre-selected material. Some had to decide on a topic while working with only a handful of documents (as is the case with the Wilde Letters and the Ruskin Collection). Others had to navigate sizeable collections and manage the feelings of being overwhelmed and frustrated that such excessiveness often engenders (Steedman 2007: pp. 8–10). Once they settled on a topic, students had to prepare their presentations within the constraints of the Special Collections' opening hours (weekdays between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.) and their own course schedules, which often included multiple hours each day devoted to other seminars or teaching assistantships.

However, the student evaluation of teaching (SET) reports were encouraging. One remarked on it being the "first 'meta' course" that this student had taken and expressed a "wish [that] work in Special Collections was required" in every graduate-level seminar. Another found the work useful in developing "critical self-awareness." A third found the work in archives and the questions it raised "a very interesting sort of meta-intellectual experience wherein we could/should reflect on what, why, and how we think about the Victorian period." Because many students in this 630-level seminar were newly enrolled graduate students, in some cases only a few months out from having received their Bachelor of Arts degrees, I began to think about the possibilities of having undergraduates work in and with archives.

Victorian Domesticity

In a subsequent year, I decided to incorporate a unit on archival research in an advanced undergraduate seminar on Victorian domesticity. Through readings and various assignments, students explored domesticity—or the lived experience of private life—as an ideology that imaginatively organized the public sphere of work (which was designated as masculine) from a private sphere of familial relations (presided over by a wife and mother) and its intersections with representational practice, architectural design, and the decorative arts, in other words, the physical, spatial, and material conditions of the home as they were experienced by historical subjects or depicted in literature.

After a unit on domestic ideology, I dedicated several weeks to the theme of homes and homemaking. Students read excerpts from Isabella Beeton's celebrated *Book of Household Management*, portions of Sarah Stickney Ellis's *The Women of England* and *The Wives of England*, and a number of domestic idylls, including Thomas Hood's "Lines on Seeing My Wife and Two Children Sleeping in the Same Chamber," Alaric Watts's "My Own Fireside," and Ebenezer Elliott's "The Happy Lot." Once students were equipped with this foundation, I arranged for several sequential visits to Special Collections, which were to be the basis for their first paper. I asked them to construct an argument that placed an item from Special Collections—other domestic guides, cookbooks, and personal papers—in conversation with the materials they had previously read in the unit.

Although Syracuse University's Special Collections has surprisingly robust nineteenth-century British holdings, especially the letters and printed works of Rudyard Kipling (Pinney 1992), the collection areas heavily skew to American history and culture, particularly upstate New York. Because nineteenth-century domesticity was a transnational phenomenon, the curator, Andrew Saluti, and I decided to include rare books and manuscript collections from the United States as well as Britain. Cognizant of the limitations I had inadvertently imposed on my graduate students in "Methods and Issues in Victorian Studies," we also selected a larger number of materials to examine. Thus, students were able to work with Anne Cobbett's (1851) domestic management guide, considerably less well-known or taught than Beeton's and Ellis's works, alongside Elliott G. Storke's equally unfamiliar *The Family and Householder's Guide* (1859), published for an American readership. The manuscript collections we selected included the papers of one James Pike (1793–1842), a New England schoolteacher who compiled a number of textbooks. In addition to his school and teaching records, correspondence, diaries, and legal records, the papers contain an undated draft of a constitution for a "School for Young Ladies" intended to prepare pupils for the domestic arts. Another collection, the Carhart Family Home Remedy Scrapbook, is a small notebook kept by a Herbert and Angie Carhart, who hailed from

Collamer, New York, in which they recorded cooking recipes, remedies for various animal and human ailments, formulas for cleaning solutions, and clippings about gardening and household tips. The Lucy Ann Lewis Horton Papers contains genealogical material of the Lewis family, residents of Oneida County, New York, as well as their account books, diaries, and photographs. One item of particular interest was a diary kept by Lucy Ann during her marriage to David M. Horton. Lucy Ann provides routine accounts of the weather, a daily sketch of her workload and her husband's business transactions, occasional news items, and summaries of commodity prices.

After an initial class at Special Collections orienting students to the rare books, manuscripts, and archival materials that Andrew Saluti and I selected, we returned for a session on primary source literacy. Because the material was preselected, we focused on strengthening students' capacities for interpretation and evaluation rather than walking them through the processes by which one might identify sources to examine. I asked them to spend thirty minutes—admittedly, a very small amount of time—with one or several items and to develop a potential research question. For some students who had thoughtfully read the assigned chapters from Beeton's *Book of Household Management* or Ellis's *The Wives of England*, the personal papers proved useful in honing a question which they were already mulling about how such advice was put into practice. For others, the research question grew out of their encounter with the archival material, which sent them back to the assigned readings for further deliberation.

On the day of this visit, I also introduced them to theories about the seductive quality of archival work. In her meditation on the thrills and pitfalls of historical research, Arlette Farge provides a cautionary tale about the "blinding symbiosis with the object of study" to which scholars working in archives are often prone: the "imperceptible, yet very real, way in which a historian is only drawn to things that will reinforce the working hypotheses she has settled on" (2013: p. 71). Because some undergraduates understand domestic practices solely in oppressive terms, they were unable to see the nuances of Lucy Ann's enumeration of her daily workload, including the pleasures she often derived from home life and her knowledge of and participation in her husband's business dealings. For many, Ellis's concept of womanly influence—lacking in political and economic power, women wield moral authority—is difficult to grasp. I also shared with them excerpts from Helena Michie and Robyn Warhol's entertaining reflection on the fantasies and impulses that sometimes motivate literary scholars to undertake archival work, searching the historical record for details that make a biographical subject "individual, something like a character" (Michie and Warhol 2015: p. 40). Students could certainly recognize themselves in this account. "Well, this is quirky," explained one, as he read the rationale behind a Carhart family recipe to cure an ailment.

After two sessions in Special Collections, I required students to spend the next scheduled class period working alone or in groups with their materials. Instead of formal instruction, they were to read through their selections more thoroughly, take notes and photographs, and continue developing their research question into a formal proposal. The proposal consisted of two parts: a 500-word abstract outlining the work they would undertake and a select bibliography of primary and secondary sources they would consult.

The assignment required students to articulate with precision and concision a contextualized thesis and to establish its significance and relevance. I was less concerned with the validity of students' arguments, particularly given the short duration in which they had worked in the archive, than with their plausibility, coherence, and relationship to the other materials on domesticity that they had read. I also asked them to give some thought to their own intellectual self-location and expected this to be evidenced in both their abstract and bibliography: Were they proposing a historicist project in which archival material was to be used to contextualize a poem, novel, or domestic manual? Were they undertaking a biographical investigation in which diaries, letters, or other manuscript material would be used to illuminate aspects of lived domestic practices? Were they carrying out a book historical project in which looking at first or subsequent editions of domestic manuals revealed something about their creation, dissemination, or reception? Because pre-writing exercises often make proposals more compelling (Morrison 2021), I assigned these tasks in lieu of reading between classes.

Students were required to present their research proposal orally to the class and in written form to me. My hope was that this assignment would provide students with an opportunity to practice an imaginative and knowledgeable use of collection materials and reference works. By and large, the presentations and proposals were innovative and some quite compelling. Undergraduates were far less comfortable than graduate students in incorporating meta-archival concerns. Yet because there was a fair amount of overlap in terms of materials analyzed, although not in the research questions themselves, discussion was lively and, in one instance, as a student speculated about whether a marriage was happy, somewhat contentious. The disagreement between students enabled me to discuss in broad terms how researchers can construct stories about the past and the methods one might employ in coaxing materials to disclose different kinds of stories.

For their final projects, I gave students the option of transforming their proposals into a formal paper. Many had identified promising lines of inquiry as well as sources that could prove useful in developing their ideas further. This would have required students to return to the archive for a more in-depth consideration of their collection materials. Although many seemed genuinely interested in their topics and excited by the work they undertook in Special Collections, not a single student chose this option. Accustomed to working on their papers late into the night and on weekends, they were unable to set aside time during the Special Collections' restricted hours to undertake such work. As one frustrated student explained to me, while holding out a calendar, dutifully color-coded according to the various classes, labs, and work-study hours to which she was committed each week, "When am I supposed to go? In the ten minutes between classes?"

Women's Literature and London's East End

As the Lynn Wood Neag Distinguished Visiting Professor of British Literature at the University of Connecticut for the spring 2020 semester, I had the opportunity to teach a course on "Women's Literature" as well as a graduate seminar on London's East End. Neither course was, strictly speaking, Victorian. Because the catalogue description of "Women's Literature" is extremely broad ("works written by women from different countries and centuries"), I designed it to have students think about what it meant to be a woman writer in the literary field, for much of human history dominated by men, and to consider issues of gender and sexuality historically, by looking at literary texts as they emerge from discrete social, political, and geographical contexts. In "Radicalism, Gentrification, and Serial Murder: London's East End, Past and Present," graduate students sampled the collection of writings on this iconic area and its residents, including social-realist fiction, creative nonfiction, memoirs, manifestos, exposés, early modernist texts, and Christian evangelical polemics, and examined several cinematic representations.

Reflecting my own research interests and training, many of the readings for both courses stemmed from the nineteenth century. In "Women's Literature," I began with Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, continued through the nineteenth century, which comprised the bulk of the course, and considered the twentieth century in the final weeks. In the graduate seminar, we began by looking at maps of London from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries to consider the growth of the area. We also read early work, such as Pierce Egan's novel *Life in London* (1821), which initiates a process of defining the "East End" as a discrete location set apart from the metropolis. After a number of weeks exploring the outsized role the East End played in the Victorian social imagination, we considered it as the birthplace of radical political and social movements and as the principal site for a variety of diasporic communities. We ended with examination of Margaret Thatcher's economic policies, which has led to portions of the area becoming highly gentrified.

I made the university's Archives and Special Collections central to both courses, although my aims and objectives differed. My previous visits to institutional repositories—of which the foregoing instances are representative—corresponded to singular units within a given course and occurred during a week or two in the semester set aside for the purpose. In designing "Women's Literature," I decided to schedule sessions in different units spread evenly throughout the semester. I focused on three different kinds of activities: how to conceive of research questions using archives; how to employ archival materials in literary-historical contextualization; and how to write textual criticism that draws on original manuscripts or versions of a manuscript. I imagined that these visits, the different methodological approaches they represent, and the types of materials with which students would work, would lay the foundation for final archive-based projects.

As with my visits to the Special Collections Reading Room at Syracuse University's Bird Library, I found it necessary to broaden the scope of our inquiry beyond Britain to include the northeast United States. Indeed, the strengths of UConn's Archives and Special Collections are state and regional literature and history. Unlike Syracuse, there are comparatively few materials relating to Britain. I worked with Patrick Butler, the Education and Outreach Coordinator, to turn the limitations of UConn's archives for this purpose into a strength. We came up with a deliberately eclectic mix of materials focusing on women's writing, including correspondence and diaries, poetry, and short stories. The Charlotte M. Davis

Papers, which span 1794 to 1960 but are heavily concentrated on a twelve-year period between 1850 and 1862, consists of printed works, school compositions, and correspondence by and about educated young women of the middle class. The Josephine A. Dolan Nursing Collection includes the records of the first nursing professor at the University of Connecticut School of Nursing. It yields information about nursing practices during the American Civil War and various nineteenth-century nursing organizations. The Louise Gaffney Flannigan Papers includes a remarkable set of poems and writings, most of which were composed in the 1880s. As the unofficial "poetess" of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen Lodge #201 of New Haven, Connecticut, Louise wrote epitaphs and elegies for the railroad brakemen who died or were severely injured on duty. She also penned verse about commodities ("Solution Soap") and other non-locomotive disasters (such as the sinking of a steamer off the coast of England), and left behind a number of descriptive accounts about her own interstate travels as well as a visit to a Chicago home for brakemen who had lost limbs while working on the railroad.

We divided students into groups. Each group was expected to spend roughly twenty minutes with one collection before reporting back to the class about what they had observed. After a brief discussion, the groups would then move to a different collection they had not yet examined. One group made an observation about the historical differences they espied between the material they were examining and the world in which students live today. A Davis sister had repeatedly tried to cajole another, who lived in a different state, to respond to her letters. The group wondered about the length and reliability of the postal service and the disruptions caused by the Civil War. Yet another group objected to these speculations. They asked, "What if the sister was simply ignoring her sibling"? Could this not, they reasoned, simply be an earlier instance of what we would now call ghosting? As the debate ensued, students, perhaps without fully understanding the larger implications of their disagreement, were essentially wrestling with questions about the purposes of historical research that have animated literary scholars in recent years. Should historical phenomena and events be interpreted and evaluated in terms of contemporary understandings and experiences? Or should they be evaluated against the backdrop of their own historical moment?

The graduate seminar posed something of a challenge. I had intended to have us work with visual imagery of London, but the materials I had identified, it turned out, were not really fit for the purpose. Additionally,

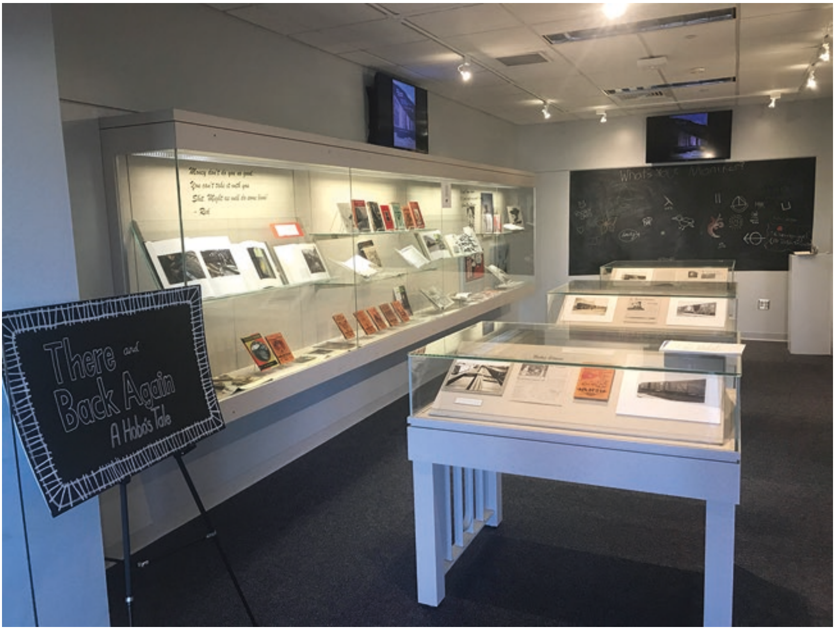
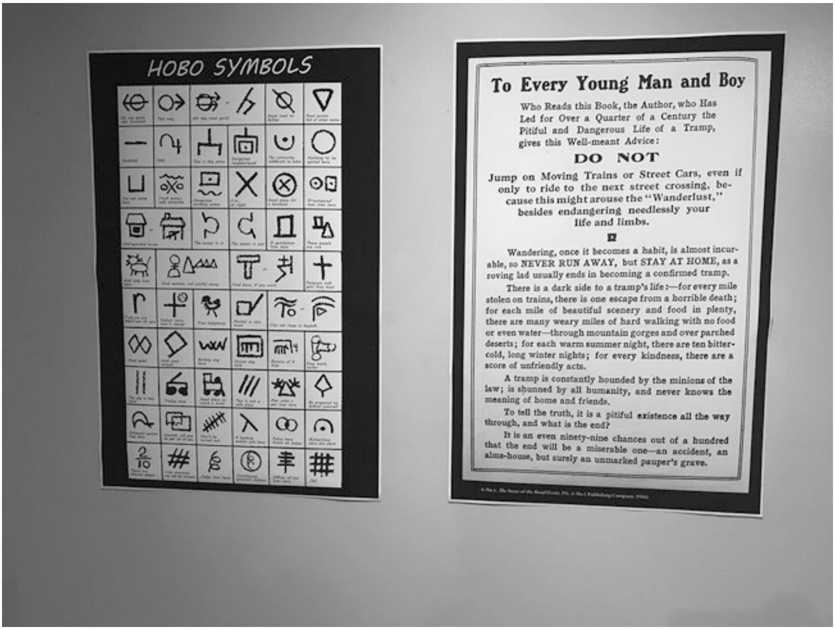


Fig. 8.1 "There and Back Again: A Hobo's Tale." January 9–February 28, 2020. Thomas J. Dodd Research Center Gallery at the University of Connecticut. (Courtesy of Tom Breen)

unlike "Women's Literature," which was designed to return on multiple occasions throughout the semester to Archives and Special Collections in the lead-up to a final project based in the archives, the graduate seminar was to be taught on only one occasion there.

As it happens, the semester in which I was teaching at the University of Connecticut coincided with an exhibition about Hobo culture, train hopping, and boxcar art over the last 150 years (see Fig. 8.1).

The construction of the national and regional railroad systems played an essential part in the development of the United States. It also spawned folklore, including the creation of the hobo, a character emerging from mid-nineteenth-century railroad culture. The exhibit, "There & Back Again: A Hobo's Tale," drew on extensive holdings in the collection related to southern New England's railroad heritage. Through a mixture of art, travelogue, and folklore, the exhibit attempted to capture this



To Every Young Man and Boy

Who Reads this Book, the Author, who Has Led for Over a Quarter of a Century the Pitiful and Dangerous Life of a Tramp, gives this Well-meant Advice:

DO NOT

Jump on Moving Trains or Street Cars, even if only to ride to the next street crossing, because this might arouse the "Wanderlust," besides endangering needlessly your life and limbs.

Wandering, once it becomes a habit, is almost incurable, so NEVER RUN AWAY, but STAY AT HOME, as a roving lad usually ends in becoming a confirmed tramp.

There is a dark side to a tramp's life:—for every mile stolen on trains, there is one escape from a horrible death; for each mile of beautiful scenery and food in plenty, there are many weary miles of hard walking with no food or even water—through mountain gorges and over parched deserts; for each warm summer night, there are ten bitter-cold, long winter nights; for every kindness, there are a score of unfriendly acts.

A tramp is constantly hounded by the minions of the law; is shunned by all humanity, and never knows the meaning of home and friends.

To tell the truth, it is a pitiful existence all the way through, and what is the end?

It is an even ninety-nine chances out of a hundred that the end will be a miserable one—an accident, an alms-house, but surely an unmarked pauper's grave.

Fig. 8.2 "There and Back Again: A Hobo's Tale." January 9–February 28, 2020. Thomas J. Dodd Research Center Gallery at the University of Connecticut. (Courtesy of Tom Breen)

legendary bindle-staffed figure. In addition to copies of the *Hobo Times*, which published photographs, poetry, and news about itinerants on the railway, the exhibit included manuals about how to successfully ride the rails, graffiti and symbology, and various scenic view against the backdrop of music from the Charters Country Blues Archives by noted blues artists Blind Willie McTell, Bukka White, Son House, and Charlie Segar, among others (see Fig. 8.2).

An interactive component of the exhibition allowed visitors to create their own moniker (or hobo graffiti) as it might appear on the side of a train's freight car (see Fig. 8.3).

Because we would be spending several weeks considering the distinctions among vagrants, tramps, and itinerants against the wider backdrop of homelessness and casual employment, the exhibit provided us with an opportunity to expand our lexicon to include the hobo. To take advantage

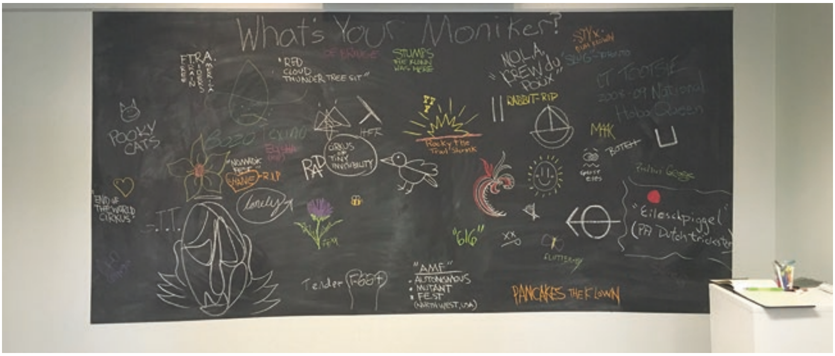

What's Your Moniker?
STYX
"SLUG"
F.T.R.A.
"RED CLOUD THUNDER TREE SIT"
STUMPS THE KLOWN WAS HERE
NOLA "KREW du POUX"
CT TOOTSIE 2008-09 National Hobo Queen
RABBIT-RIP
POOKY CATS
BOZO
HFR
Rocky the Trail Shrink
MHK
BOTEH
CIRKUS OF TINY INVISIBILITY
RAD
"NOMADIC" SHANE-RIP
Lonely
END OF THE WORLD CIRKUS
T.T.
"Eileschpiggel" (PA Dutch trickster)
"616"
XX
FLUTTERBY
FEM
Tender Foot
"AMF" • AUTONOMOUS • MUTANT • FEST (NORTHWEST, USA)
PANCAKES THE KLOWN

Fig. 8.3 "There and Back Again: A Hobo's Tale." January 9–February 28, 2020. Thomas J. Dodd Research Center Gallery at the University of Connecticut. (Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections, the University of Connecticut)

of the exhibit and the specific holdings on which it was based, we considered a transatlantic dimension to the East End: the American author Jack London's multiple-week stay in the area and his subsequently published account, *The People of the Abyss* (1903/2021).

Although Jack London's most famous work is *The Call of the Wild*, with which most of my students were familiar, the American author was particularly fond of *The People of the Abyss*. "No other book of mine took so much of my young heart and tears as that study of the economic degradation of the poor," he reportedly confessed to his spouse late in life (C. London 1921: p. 381). He was commissioned by the American Press Association in the summer of 1902 to report on the aftermath of the second Boer War. Before he could set sail from New York City, from whence he planned to travel to England and onward to South Africa, the twenty-five-year-old journalist learned that his assignment had been revoked. He pitched an idea to George Platt Brett, president of the Macmillan Company, to view the Coronation of Edward VII—who, after the death of his mother, Queen Victoria, in 1901, ascended the throne of the United Kingdom—from the perspective of the city of London's working class. With Brett's backing, London undertook the assignment, which resulted in a series of vignettes accompanied by eighty photographs. They were first serialized in *Wilshire's Magazine* and collectively published by the Macmillan Company as *The People of the Abyss*.

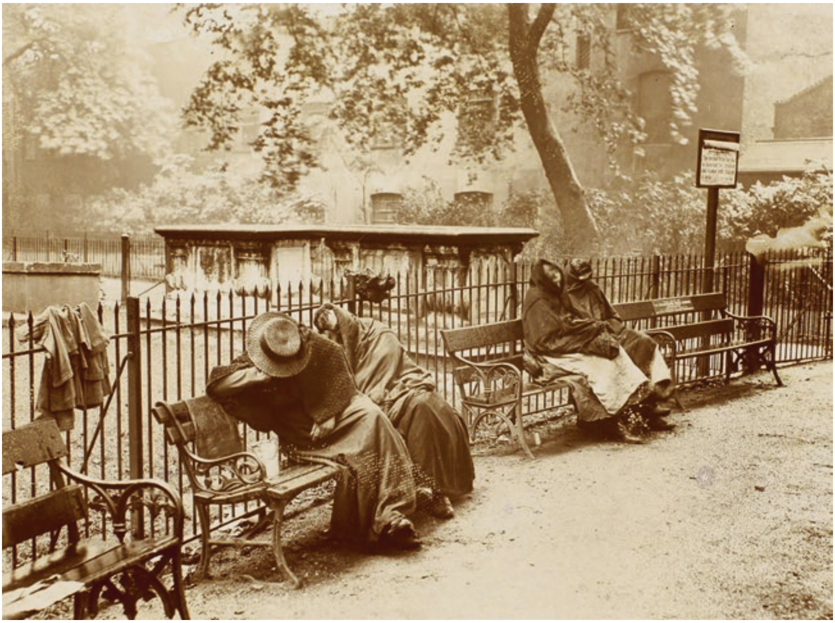


Fig. 8.4 "A Chill, Raw Wind was blowing, and these Creatures Huddled there sleeping or trying to sleep." Photograph by Jack London. (Courtesy of Jack London Photographs and Negatives, Huntington Library)

By the time London undertook to write about the East End, the area was already notorious across the Atlantic. The Whitechapel murders between 1888 and 1891 were a transnational phenomenon (Morrison 2019: p. 46). Recounting his visit to Spitalfields Garden, London remarks on the "welter of rags and filth, of all manner of loathsome skin diseases, open sores, bruises, grossness, indecency, leering monstrosities, and bestial faces" (see Fig. 8.4). "Here were a dozen women, ranging in age from twenty years to seventy," he continues, "[and] a babe, possibly of nine months, lying asleep, flat on the hard bench, with neither pillow nor covering, nor with any one looking after it" (1903: 62).

Because there was ample evidence available to London—including Charles Booth's inquiry into the lives and occupations of the city of London's residents, which he began publishing in 1889—that the East End was not, in fact, the most deprived area of the city, *The People of the*

Abyss can be used to facilitate a discussion about representational and rhetorical choices. At the same time, London's perspective on England's urban problems—for which the East End, in Peter Ackroyd's estimation, served as "a microcosm" for the wider city's "own dark life" (2009: p. 678)—and his frequent translation of ideas and terminology into terms comprehensible to an American made it easier for my graduate students (all but one of whom was born in the United States) to follow his exploration of the netherworld than some contemporaneous British accounts. Juxtaposing *The People of the Abyss* with an exhibition on the culture of the hobo (a figure that, steeped in American lore, is much more familiar than the itinerant and peripatetic tramp) also enabled us to grapple with questions of agency and mobility.

This was not a course in American literature or a thematic exploration of vagrants, tramps, itinerants, and hobos, more generally. We did not, therefore, read Jack London's autobiographical memoir, *The Road* (1907), in which he recounts his experiences hopping freight trains throughout the United States, during a period of severe economic depression, in the 1890s. But in *The People of the Abyss* London invokes his time as a hobo in California in order to contrast vagrancy there with what he witnesses and experiences in England's capital city. This is one of several moments in the text that lend themselves to transatlantic comparison, which a visit to the exhibit and archive made possible.

Although we only spent one class session in the archive, the length of the graduate seminar allowed us to have a more in-depth conversation about the materials in this exhibit than might have been possible in a shorter timeframe. My intention was to encourage a decelerated and immersive encounter with the iconography of the hobo. The art historian Jennifer L. Roberts (2013) has written eloquently about her experience studying a single painting for an exceptionally long time. In so doing, she eventually began to notice details that had eluded her on previous encounters with the work of art. "Just because something is available instantly to vision does not mean that it is available instantly to consciousness," she notes about details that had not been immediately obvious to her (p. 42). By spending a considerable amount of time on a small number of items, we could think about the different ways in which the hobo has been depicted since the post-Civil War era—when he (indeed, the hobo was usually male) appeared as a wandering soldier carrying a hoe—and relate these to the other figures we were studying.

My second and third visits to the Archives and Special Collections with the students enrolled in my "Women's Literature" course were never realized. In accordance with UConn's policies regarding COVID-19, classes moved to an on-line format for the remainder of the semester. Thus, my most recent experiment of learning in archives remains incomplete. Although the UConn Archives and Special Collections was closed to the public, Patrick Butler was willing and able to support my instructional sessions in a digital capacity. However, because the material we had identified as being most appropriate to the course had not been digitized, these would have been general skills-based sessions. Given the uncertainty at the time of whether campus would reopen, thereby allowing my students to return to the Archives and Special Collections to work on final projects, I declined the offer. In fact, the campus remained closed through the summer and the Archives and Special Collections throughout the next academic year.

By designing the syllabus to include a series of visits within a single semester, and asking students to undertake sequential assignments based on archival materials, I had hoped to overcome some of the limitations of earlier experiences and to help students become active creators of knowledge. By the end of the semester, they would have become more adept users of the archive, more comfortable handling, analyzing, and interpreting material, and more accustomed to working in the Archives and Special Collections itself. Given that a student in a previous course had once asked me whether she could complete an assignment "without actually going to the library," I knew that making the space familiar to them through repeated visits was a necessary prerequisite in asking them to undertake an archives-based final project that utilized one of the three approaches I planned to model and facilitate through these exercises.

Yet because the experiment remains incomplete, I cannot be certain that the final projects for this course would have reflected the level of mastery and sophistication for which I had hoped. I did however, sense promise. At the outset of the semester, students seemed enthusiastic about the possibilities of archive-based work and, therefore, at the end of the semester, mourned what could have been. As one student lamented in a teaching evaluation, "Hands-on materiality is invaluable. It's clear that with COVID we lost something important with the course."

Notes

1. In this context, the term *field* refers generally to one of four offered by the department (British literature, American literature, theory, and film and screen studies) and specifically to Modern Language Association hiring rubrics (Victorian, Romanticism, twentieth-century American, and so on).
2. See Bradley 1999: p. 113; Keen 2001: p. 3; Michie 2009: p. 9; Burton 2006: p. 11; Derrida 1998: p. 12; and Steedman 2002: pp. 1–2.

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CHAPTER 9

Mapping Feeling: Geography, Affect, and History on the London Streets Through Study Abroad

Peter Katz and Sarah Tanner

Victorian politics were centered on the streets: how to clean them, how to make them safer, and how to get the right people on them and the wrong people off them. In Summer 2019, six Honors students from Pacific Union College traveled to London for a study abroad to spend three weeks exploring, as the class title proclaimed, "The London Streets." Philosophy and politics comingled with experience: a day might have begun with a history of the cholera epidemic, moved to a discussion on a Dickens short story about a hospital, and concluded with a walk along the Thames to the Royal London Hospital Museum. History, literature, and politics became infused with the living geography of the city. While we

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spent some time at major attractions, we sought to explore a London more unique and intimate than any regular tourist might see.

As we darted from location to location, however, we found that being on the streets is an exercise in intentionality. If we wanted simply to arrive somewhere, we would end up traveling beneath the streets with the two-million other people who use the London Underground every day ("Your Commute" 2020). With 270 stations and countless places of interest to explore at each, the Underground enables one to cover more ground and exist in more places than even an accomplished perambulator like Dickens could have managed. A class period that spans multiple locations spread out across the entire city in a day is only possible because of this technology.

But the Underground distances passengers from the city itself. Emerging from any Underground station is inherently disorienting; the space accordions in the tunnels, and then suddenly expands into sensory overload. More popular tourist destinations, like Camden Town, are even more jarring, with the press of crowds, busy lights, and maze of shops. Like the hundreds of other travelers to this station, when we arrived, we were preoccupied with streets, directions, and objectives. We scanned the surface of the space around us without noticing what occupied it. Peter hurried to find mobile service and wake up Google Maps so we could head to our next site. Sarah looked for landmarks that would point the group toward their destination.

The class moved off in the wrong direction. But Sarah stopped short, absorbed by a man in desperate need. The rest of the class turned and walked off without noticing him. As with most commuters, tourists, and scholars abroad, we were so fixated on end-points that the people in front of us blurred into the background. Objective-focused approaches pull one into mindless movement so the bodies and landscape between blur into background noise. Rather than rooting oneself in that space, one skates across it and fails to notice its vitality—including the other people who occupy it.

Before we can fully comprehend our class's experience with the suffering man—and the real possibility that we may never have noticed him at all—we need to think about how we navigate geography as scholars and teachers. This essay explores how experiential learning uses space to catalyze empathy, or feeling with others. We will include a longer discussion of empathy and its role in the history and literature classroom in the next section. Most importantly for the moment, our definition of empathy depends on *affect*: an embodied, pre-rational identification with the feelings, bodies, and spaces one encounters. Affect “provides the primary motives of human beings,” as a biological system that responds to stimuli and drives us to act (Sedgwick and Frank 1995: p. 36). Happiness makes us seek more of a stimulus; fear makes us flee it. Because it is innate, affect compels interaction beyond theorization or imagination.

Empathy as an embodied and pre-rational response arises spontaneously through lived experience; it cannot be thought through. There is no step-by-step ladder to embodied empathetic engagement. Rather, we stumble into it by accident—the sort of experience that can only happen through immersion. In this chapter, we use our study-abroad tour on Victorian literature and history in London as a case-study where accidental, affect-driven empathy actualized pedagogical intentions.

Guided discussion of historical moments and people matter, but study abroad in historical spaces roots those conversations in material reality (see Morrison 2018: p. 4). Inhabiting a city’s present makes it possible to understand the past not simply via a history of ideas, but also through immediate feeling. The abroad tour must be more than a series of disconnected events and museums; it offers a chance to inhabit the streets where history happened. And to do so, we must think of the intentional travel between sites as an integral component of that study.

To make this argument, we reflect on the structure of the course itself and the ways it productively fell apart. Intentionally designed sympathy-building activities can fail to capture the place itself as the object of study. Student engagement largely depended on immersion in locations, time spent in that space, and the ways we moved through that environment. In other words, the effectiveness of course outings depended not only on the course content, but also on the milieu of the surrounding location and on *how* we traveled to the location.

Actively inhabiting a space engages one’s body with that environment and compels an array of affective responses. Empathy inspired through this biological motivation system *must* compel us to act, for that is the function of affect. The enigma for the study of history, of course, is that we cannot act to alleviate the suffering of a Victorian laborer. But historical empathy motivated by affect connects the Victorian East End to those who still suffer poverty and illness as a result of institutional inequality. When we care about history, it helps us care about the present. Like study abroad, experiential learning uses space to connect students to affect—through the design of the course, but also through the spontaneous opportunities accident affords.

EMPATHY

Perspective-taking and historical empathy belong to fundamentally different domains of knowledge. Perspective-taking describes the process by which we intentionally imagine our way into someone else's situation. This sort of thinking-into can be outlined, detailed, and reproduced. Historical empathy, this section will argue, is bodily, unplanned, and affective. These need not be opposed, but they are essentially dissimilar.

Before we delve into what historical empathy means for this essay, we need to distinguish it from definitions that resonate more with a kind of imaginative sympathy. Jason Endacott and Sarah Brooks, the foremost researchers into historical empathy and pedagogy, assume that students may not have the proper tools to make use of the kind of resonance we think of as empathy. They create a scaffold for students to "understan[d] how people from the past thought, felt, made decisions, acted, and faced consequences within a specific historical and social context" (Endacott and Brooks 2013: p. 41). To do so, they suggest a model that finds historical empathy in the overlap between contextualization, perspective-taking, and "affective connection" (43–44). This method allows students to ease their way into "feeling" what another might have felt 50 or 500 years ago, but it primarily requires guided thought into a scenario. Endacott and Brooks's framework provides unquestionably useful pedagogical techniques; however, their discussion is limited to what we argue is sympathy, and not to the affective elements of empathy.

This is unsurprising, as the affective dimension to historical empathy divides researchers. Stuart Foster's early work in historical empathy sets this tone. Foster's insistence that "[h]istorical study, whenever possible, depends on reasoned objectivity" and that "[e]motional involvement … detracts from the fundamental purpose of history" fundamentally precludes empathy (Foster 1999: p. 19). It replaces the spontaneity of affective connection with studious distance that ignores the inevitable embodiment of historians and their subjects alike. This detachment leads him to claim that historical empathy is "a process that leads to an understanding and an explanation … of the consequences of actions perpetrated in the past" (19). Foster's legacy inspires scholars like Benjamin M. Jacobs to argue that feeling has a limited place in the classroom. He claims, "a danger in engaging in historical empathy is presentism if students' affective connections crowd out their sense of historical contextualization. This would put historical empathy at odds with historical understanding"

(Jacobs 2018: p. 122). These scholars suggest that emotion clouds students' abilities to accurately perceive texts, events, and their historical context. Again, these elements are important, but students must also move beyond mere understanding and appreciation.[1]

Scholars who object to feelings in the study of history assume that affect impedes logic; rather, it augments what we can accomplish in the classroom by placing historical context and compassion in dialogue. As Keith Barton and Linda Levstik put it:

> We cannot interest students in the study of history … if we dismiss their feeling and emotions. Moreover, without care, we could not possibly engage them in humanistic study: Students will not bother making reasoned judgments, expanding their views of humanity, or deliberating over the common good if they don't care about those things. (Barton and Levstik 2004: pp. 228–29)

In other words, empathy is not merely a part of historical study; it is the primary motivator for making use of what we study. Endacott recognizes the importance of affect when he argues, "engaging in empathy implies affective goals that extend beyond the cognitive aspects of how we think historically" (Endacott 2010: p. 6). Of course, historical contextualization is crucial for learning, but "perspective-taking" from the "proper distance" complicates the affective dimensions of empathy. Holding history at an arm's length reinforces an unnecessarily spliced learning process: cognitive engagement supersedes affective connections, and the process of perspective-taking divides these two aspects of historical education.[2] Perspective-taking denotes an intentional process, while affective empathy occurs at a body level outside of cognition.[3]

When scholars talk about perspective-taking, they are operating under a paradigm that asks students to *think* their way into someone else's experience. Thinking one's way into another's circumstance further abstracts feeling from embodiment, and in fact impedes emotional resonance with the past. Curated thought clearly holds an important position in the classroom; however, it reinforces the privileging of purely "intellectual" discussions over affective engagement. So, while instructors "should help students identify the human dilemma within the topic to be studied" (Skolnick et al. 2004: p. 15), that is still a fundamentally thinking-driven process. It abstracts students from the historical context into their own archive of experience, asks them to sort through that data and compare it with history—and then to convert their own responses to their past experiences into hypotheses about how they would respond in a historical situation. In the end, they are not in fact creating an affective connection with history; they are still only thinking about themselves.

There are no "steps" to be taken before empathy; affect bridges the gap between thinking about oneself and thinking about history. It bypasses internal calculus and connects bodies immediately. Accident, by definition, also cannot require steps. It just happens. Empathy works much in the same way. It comes up out of a body unplanned, so one might well say it is an accident. Planned perspective-taking can create sympathy, but accident generates the jolt of surprise that creates empathy. In short, we consider how the broad category of empathy manifests in history—and not to concoct "an illusory, customized version" for which Christopher Blake castigates historical studies (Blake 1998: p. 2). A customized history considers only the body considering it. Space—from dedicated historical sites to the streets between those more traditional locations—places historians and historical bodies in conversation. Study abroad transforms material spaces into a middle-ground between past and present, where empathy sparks organically.

Study abroad draws attention to the illusion of detachment in the classroom. Ostensibly, in a classroom, experiments in historical sympathy ask the more-or-less disembodied students to imagine themselves in an alternate period or space. But the reality of jet-lag, lack of sleep, and the novelty of being in an entirely different country fundamentally draws attention to why bodies matter. When students participate in a class on campus, they are still sleep-deprived and stressed, but study abroad confutes the seamless transfer of information into disembodied minds.

Class sessions on the hour-long train ride to London every day demonstrated the importance of coming to a common foundation for reading and understanding. These classes revealed the way various disciplines condition bodies to interact with classrooms, history, texts. The interdisciplinarity of the group (the course was evenly split between humanities/arts and science students) exposed the wide range of pedagogical strategies used for each discipline. There was a clear split between students who mined the texts for information and those who used the texts to inhabit historical and textual spaces. Those invested in information alone were distracted by rushing landscapes, conversations of strangers, the novelty (for Americans) of being on a train, the excitement of arriving in London. The chaotic environment of travel makes it impossible to ask students to imagine themselves in Stevenson's London beside Mr. Utterson while they are overwhelmed with the bustle of passengers around them.

Empathy makes chaos productive. If empathy is embodied and unplanned, then a spontaneous environment is the perfect place for it to emerge. Without the materiality of space to intervene, education stalls at the level of contextualization or thought experiment: here is a picture; absorb some facts; imagine yourself there. Study abroad is less concerned with "'what history *means*,' the instruments for which [are] available to [students], after all, on the home campus, but with 'how history *feels*'" (Morrison 2018: p. 70). An historical hospital or prison makes empathy possible because students can spontaneously and materially connect to affects that reach back into history: the fear of a patient, the despair of a prisoner. The immediacy of a space and the objects in it circumvent the issue of presentism or the unreachable otherness of the past. We do not need to imagine what a patient might have felt when we can examine patient logs in Bedlam Hospital beside a display of restraints—the objects and space generate their own affects.

Streets: The Royal London Hospital Museum and the Old Operating Theatre

In this section, we will consider the affects generated within two spaces both concerned with medical history: the Royal London Hospital Museum and the Old Operating Theatre at St. Thomas Hospital. While the ostensible function of the two sites overlaps, the space of a traditional museum differs from an experiential venue such as the Operating Theatre—most importantly, in the affects they produce. As intellectual spaces, museums foster discussion that can potentially lead to more informed perspective-taking; sensory immersion in sites like the Old Operating Theatre sidestep theorizing to place one's body squarely in an alternate realm of felt experience.

Spaces dictate how we use them. A museum suggests an academic walk-through: students read the placards, come up with questions, intentionally engage in conversation on a more intellectual level ("Let's talk about the way female bodies were constrained and manipulated medically" rather than just "Those forceps look nasty"). It is, in essence, a classroom outside the classroom, where information transmits from an object to text to students' minds.

The actual experience of being in the Royal London Hospital Museum (RLHM) complicates the expectation that students will simply switch on the academic part of their brains. Our class, for example, left our dorms at 7:45 in the morning, rode the train for an hour, emerged confusedly from the Underground, wandered in the wrong direction for a quarter mile, then turned and walked another mile or so through neighborhoods before stumbling upon the gate. We were even rather uncertain that we had found the museum. The space itself brimmed with artifacts and text in display cases, and had the close, hushed ambiance of a library. Those students who were trained to read and inhabit texts readily switched into that mode; we stood with a history major and deciphered hand-written case records and discussed what data those doctors believed were relevant. Those who were not as well-prepared to read texts and artifacts struggled to engage in meaningful conversation relevant to the course; they perused the cases quickly and then settled in to watch the looping informational video (far more than once). The difference in the students' training consistently emerged in these museum spaces. They could be prepared somewhat with readings and contextualization, but it was difficult for them to shift from travel into classroom mode.

Spaces that create experiences rather than exhibitions do not demand the same kind of affective adjustment to engage with history. Experiential learning cements information in feeling rather than data points. Unlike museums, which are designed to passively convey information to everyone who walks through, the design of the Old Operating Theatre in St. Thomas' Hospital demanded participation. The Operating Theatre places bodies in the physical locations they would have occupied during brutal eighteenth-century operations—including a simulated leg amputation by a docent. Lying on a table with a rusty bone saw overhead facilitates feeling-into an experience. A "patient" lay on a table, a docent conveyed information and "demonstrated" with surgical implements, and everyone else filled the medical student observation gallery. Because everyone held a distinct role in the space, the space compelled engagement.

Experience removes the intermediary cognitive step that distinguishes perspective-taking from historical empathy. The RLHM requires students to extrapolate from an object behind the glass case, to what they know about context, to generate an imagined scenario, and then extrapolate how they might feel. In the Operating Theatre, they may literally sit on the table. Of course, there is a risk that this first-person experience may "invite decontextualized thinking about the past" (Brooks, "Displaying"

2008: p. 136). But anything outside of the actual lived event is decontextualized by virtue of not being the original circumstance; feeling rather than thinking into an experience circumvents that paradox. The physical act of inhabiting a space renders decontextualization less of a concern because students do not need to recreate or erase the initial event; they feel it in ways that bring their bodies into resonance with the past.

Prompted thought-exercises place a stumbling block before this direct affective response. Students filter their feelings through the performance of scholarship (how do I make this sound smart?), through the rules of academic conversation (how do I make this sound relevant?), and the anxiety of being in a small-group discussion where what one says will inevitably be noticed. The ability to extrapolate from forceps, to medical history, to social context, to affective experience is impressive. But it is still a few steps removed from historical empathy—and often difficult to come by in the chaotic movement of study-abroad outings.

Maps I: Underground

For a study-abroad tour, it is easy to create an internal map of London where the city itself is merely an outgrowth of the Underground. The class itself begins to feel like a patchwork compilation of disparate places. The Underground becomes a subterranean being that pulls us beneath, spits us out at a location, and then pulls us down again. It simultaneously fractures and condenses the city, turning 45-minute walks into 10-minute rides. But even the rides feel strangely stationary, as though one descends only to have the city shuffled and folded overhead. The Victoria and Albert Museum is a striking example of this, for one literally enters *from* the Underground straight into the museum. It is completely possible to trek to the museum, explore its exhibits (ranging from Japan to Egypt to England), and return to travel without stepping onto the street level.

Being in the Underground troubles students' capacity to shift into either perspective-taking or historical empathy. It is fundamentally depersonalizing; strangers crammed together, going somewhere else that is not *here*. With no landmarks, and often no sense of how far or fast one travels, it offers little chance to feel through transitioning spaces or come to a resting point. The non-space of the Underground further removes students from a contemporary or historical context. All these factors almost encourage the passenger *not* to think or feel anything—simply to suspend. This makes it all the more difficult to transition suddenly into complex perspective-taking that requires contextualization, imagination, and extrapolation.

Walking through the city unconsciously primes bodies to empathize—to immerse themselves in the space around them. When paved asphalt turns to cobblestone or buildings morph from chain stores to old buildings, the material shifts us into a space where we walk where other, older bodies have walked. Even navigating crowds, talking to fellow students about where we are and where we are going, or silently feeling the change under one's feet localizes us into our bodies—the necessary foundation for empathy.

Streets: Hyde Park and Marshalsea

Historical empathy takes shape when physical movement unites with intentional historical conversation. Charles Dickens walked 20 miles each day. Our class averaged five. Some of those best miles traced the author's steps on the Dickens Walking Tour, from his favorite restaurant to his first publication house. This experience combined historical context with location and movement through it; we breathed in the space, took it into our bodies. Rather than an abstracted intellectual exercise, we combined academics with atmosphere. Just as Dickens emphasized the importance of his "rambles" through the London streets, the movement from one point of interest to the next was not transitory; movement was a point of interest in itself.

To reach Marshalsea Prison, we emerged from the Underground directly below The Shard. At 309 meters, The Shard more than doubles the height of the tallest adjacent building, Guy's Hospital. It exerts a geographic gravity that demands attention. We paused for a moment to talk about the pair of buildings: how The Shard draws physical and mental awareness, how hospitals fill an area with an atmosphere of institutional importance.

Like The Shard's pull, the hospital exudes an affective gravity. Analogous to how "extreme astronomical density bends space-time, the institutional density of a hospital molds the fabric of the populace around it. 'Take me to the hospital' is an affect qualitatively different from calling a healer to your home or addressing an ailment by yourself or within your household. It absorbs bodies in a way particular to the hospital; it treats those bodies in a manner particular to the hospital" (Katz 2022: p. 63). Through its geographic and affective prominence, "the hospital draws all injury-related affects toward itself with its gravity, and shapes the space around it" both physically (parking garages, ambulance paths, blocked-off streets) and affectively (sterile, hushed, uncertainty and scientific certainty rolled up into one) (63). In the space between Guy's Hospital and the ruins of Marshalsea Prison, that affect shifts abruptly.

Marshalsea looms differently than The Shard, but exudes the same force. The Shard exists everywhere in the periphery, but once the walls of Marshalsea appear, they permanently draw attention. The prison permanently reminded working-class passersby—or potentially, the residents around them—that they could find themselves confined there at any time. Geographically, the prison marked an indelible space for those who lived in the tenuous, East End reality of near-debt—an economic and geographic space foreign to a wealthy West Ender. Like a hospital, the prison as an institution shaped the fabric of the city, but because of the classed bias of its function, it was also invisible except for the intangible ways that state discipline infuses all space.

The shift from the twenty-first century space of Guy's Hospital to the nineteenth-century walls of Marshalsea was critical to begin conversations about why the prison has an impact now. Marshalsea is in some ways a non-space. The building itself is merely walls with no ceiling. Its gates lead to an unassuming park where businesspeople eat their lunch. When the gravity of the prison supersedes the gravity of the hospital, *Little Dorrit* transforms from a typical Dickensian tale of sad, virtuous orphans to a physical chronicle of state-imposed trauma that Dickens himself—as a childhood tenant of the prison when his father was imprisoned for debt—sought to work through. While the prison walls might have had an impact on their own if we had just appeared beside them, thinking about space before we entered it primed the class to *feel* it rather than theorize its effect once inside its perimeter.

Perspective-taking would have complicated that shift. The traditional model might be to talk about *Little Dorrit* and its context, and then ask students to imagine themselves as Amy or as a young Dickens and think about how they might have felt. This leads to productive conversations about literature and history, but misses the emotional purpose of the text—and of historical study. If we fail to account for time, culture, and individual difference by merely "perspective-taking," it will "rende[r] the past incomprehensible, largely because it severs the connection between action and purpose" (Barton and Levstik 2004: pp. 206–07). Rather than let the space do the storytelling, perspective-taking reads the space through its representation; our feet hover over the ground without actually touching it. No matter how immersive and sentimentally effective Dickens's novels might be, even as stories absorb readers, it remains fiction. Texts can augment reality if students experience both simultaneously. But as a thinking exercise, the story will always remain abstracted from the gravestones and the grass and the cracked bricks of Marshalsea.

Marshalsea is an ideal case study for thinking about *care* as part of historical empathy. Care is distinct from empathy in that it describes the motive part of the affect system: it inspires action. And it evades the problem of presentism by shifting focus to the affective response to suffering, rather than attempting to imagine oneself in a nineteenth-century prison. One cannot avoid the problem of prisoners' suffering when staring at Marshalsea's walls—and it is intuitive to care about starving children in prison. The necessity to care is a pedagogy in itself, made possible by the experience of space. Experiential learning, like study abroad, makes it easy or even natural to model care as a catalyst for historical empathy (see Brooks, "Historical Empathy" 2011: p. 191). Students do not have to pretend to be Amy Dorrit or Charles Dickens; they can just be themselves, standing in a prison and feeling the gravity it exudes.

It is possible that the conversations at Marshalsea were more productive because Dickens is so ubiquitous that even those students trained to mine for data still understood the feeling of his texts. If that is the case, Dickens's omnipresence was nevertheless augmented in the space of Marshalsea. In some ways, the prison offered a bodily warm-up that prepared students for the more complex historical empathy to come. Ultimately, we cannot credit only Dickens for enabling historical empathy, because perhaps the most engaged, effectively empathetic conversation came in Hyde Park, where we discussed the 1866 riots.

In much the same way as Marshalsea brought Dickens to our emotional fore, walking the path where the rioters lined up to protest, feeling the vastness of the park channel into a single gate transformed abstract political history into actual experience. At a physical, geographical level, standing at the gate where the barricades stood drove home their dual symbolism and sheer impracticality; the park is simply too large, with too many entrances, for the barrier to have much pragmatic effect. Cognitive models of historical empathy might have kept conversation at the level of political discourse; but as Endacott argues, "the affective approach to historical empathy" places students shoulder-to-shoulder with the "underrepresented figures" lining the park avenues (Endacott, "Reconsidering" 2010:

p. 7). While students employed some perspective-taking techniques in discussing contemporary riots, their motive lay less in drawing direct personal connections than focusing on the affects of broader historical moments. The connections built on feelings of desperation and anger shared across historical moments, for example, rather than the mechanical "This is how I would have felt" thought-experiment.

Once we move away from the mechanical model that demands we think our way into feeling, we become receptive to accident. By "accident," we mean deviations from the syllabus, experiences outside and around intentionally designed experiential learning—moments that can creep up and appear en route. Students can shed anxieties around making the right intellectual moves, and so cease to perform academia. The "right moves" become simply being in a space.

Accidents can be positive surprises, and they can also be jarring and sobering. Before an overnight trip to Manchester, we read Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*, and traveled to visit the Museum of Science and Industry and the People's History Museum. Options for housing in our price-range with enough room for the class were scarce, so we were thrilled to find any option that met our criteria. As we walked around our temporary neighborhood, we found ourselves engaged in conversations about post-World War II industrial decline and the ripples of capitalistic empire. The intentional "academic" function of the trip was augmented or even supplanted by inhabiting the city itself. Conversations about intersectionality, industry, and empire are important, but living in it even for a few days actualized the abstract concepts in ways not possible to conversation or planning.

Had the class been designed to create that experience—to immerse students in a working-class neighborhood for its own sake—it would have been mere slumming (see Morrison 2018: chapter 4). While quite Victorian, this would have been embarrassingly problematic. The neighborhood was not an attraction, destination, or object-lesson; it was simply home for a few days.

Maps II: Charles Booth's Map of London Poverty

In 1889, Charles Booth collected sociological data on the citizens of London. He compiled it in his book, *Life and Labor of the People in London*, along with a number of maps. These included a poverty map that separates London into seven economic castes and marks their geographic location. The map revealed that while the East End/West End distinction existed, the city was an economic patchwork where poverty abutted wealth.

At least for a study-abroad tour, the Underground Map is a pragmatic one. It guides a class from point A to point B (see Fig. 9.1).

Booth's poverty map, however, insists that the city is a space that one moves *across* rather than a series of disparate destinations (see Fig. 9.2).

Booth's maps demonstrate the continuity of London's geography and problematize the assumption that the city consists of compartmentalized districts. In places like 1889 St. Thomas and St. Simon, upper-class flats abut tenement buildings and disprove the sense that an upper- or middle-class Londoner would need to travel to the East End to see poverty. However, acknowledging the vast disparities in wealth in one's own neighborhood belies the Victorian sense that social institutions were needed to bring up a certain part of the city. One could very well go slumming down one's own street.

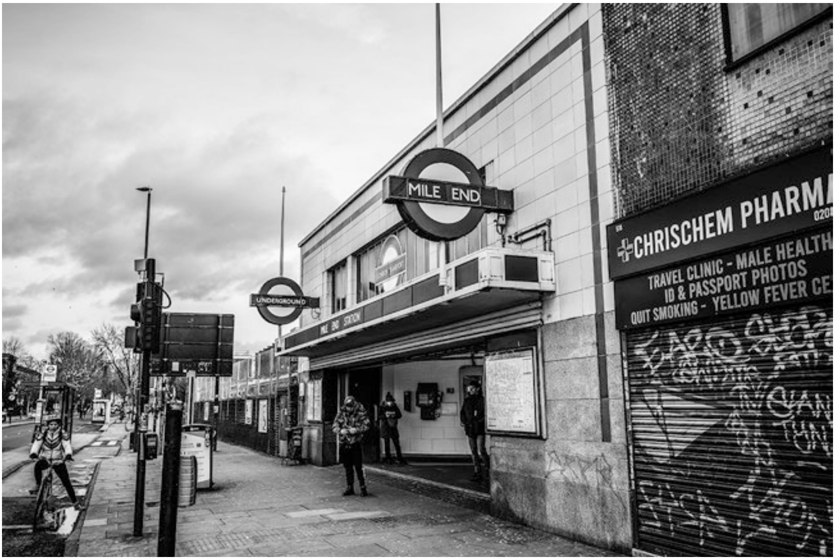

Fig. 9.1 Mile End Station. (Photograph by Shendrew Balendran. © Kevin A. Morrison)

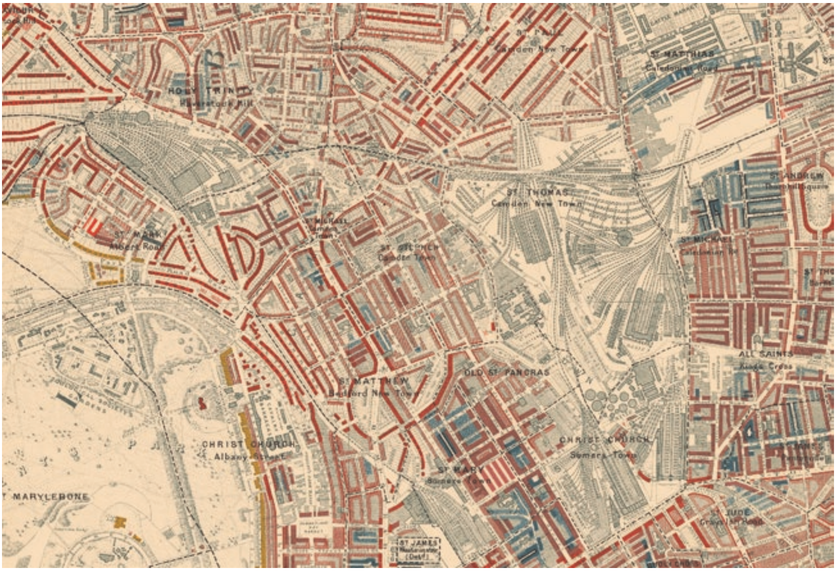
HOLY TRINITY
Haverstock Hill
St. Pancras
Camden New Town
St. Matthias
Caledonian Road
St. Thomas
Camden New Town
St. Andrew
St. Mary
Albert Road
St. Michael
St. Stephen
Camden Town
St. Michael
Caledonian Rd
All Saints
Kings Cross
Old St. Pancras
St. Matthew
Bedford New Town
Christ Church
Albany Street
Christ Church
Somers Town
St. Mary
Somers Town
Marylebone
St. James
St. Jude
Grays Inn Road

Fig. 9.2 Charles Booth, London Poverty Map. Public domain

Steets: Coda

The homeless man in Camden Town confronted us with the reality of Booth's Poverty Map: that a tourist-filled mercantile center can occupy the same place as abject poverty. The segmentation of the Underground parcels out the city into distinct ruptures: emerge into one, submerge, and emerge into another. But the folding and unfolding of space also stitches together ostensibly separate geographies—the wealth of Knightsbridge with the poverty of Newham. The comingling of destitution and affluence, of need and abundance, suggests that the London of today is not so different from the London of the nineteenth century. Approaching the city as a continuous space, both geographically and temporally, allows students to feel the full resonances of historical empathy.

Accident provides the best way to inhabit the space. Contrary to hypervigilant plans designed to force out empathy (see Muetterties and Bronstein 2020), we should intentionally cultivate room for the chance to teach a class. The man at Camden Town was desperately sick: covered in sores, limping, and almost catatonic—and invisible. No one around bothered to notice him even as the flow of humanity literally stepped over his body on the sidewalk. Our initial response was not pedagogical; it was human. We hurried to buy food and water for him at the nearest Pret. And then—we felt helpless. We just hoped, and left.

It was action first, then emotion, then thought: empathy, perspective-taking, and then analysis. Our ensuing conversation turned to how insufficient all the abstraction of Matthew Arnold, Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, and others seemed in the face of real suffering. We wished that we could have done more. We wished that we could find an answer in history or historiography. Historical empathy offers, "a dialectic between the present and past, one in which the complexities of the here-and-now are dealt with by the historian as rigorously and investigatively as is the past. Empathy can be a critical component of such an investigation" (Blake 1998: p. 3). Accident and affect point out that rigor is important, but impotent without care.

Experiential learning cultivates care as the purpose of historical inquiry. Barton and Levstik argue that "the desire to help people in the past, even though such assistance is impossible, … can be a powerful incentive to engage in the other aspects of historical study"—most importantly, that it can foster "willingness to apply what has been learned in history to problems in the present" (Barton and Levstik 2004: pp. 241–42, 237). We want to acknowledge the problematics of using this living, suffering, human person as a pedagogical lesson, and we do not want for a moment either to objectify him as a mere moral touchstone, nor to celebrate our actions as ultimately meaningful. In fact, our inability to sustainably change his (or any other suffering person's) life makes the situation useful. Just as no one can reach back in time and console a young Dickens in Marshalsea, there was no way for a passerby to "fix" the institutional and social failures that led to that man's distress. At best, we walk away with a better affective understanding of the networks that exacerbate poverty and illness and create a culture of indifference. But the accidental experience of this empathy can be positive in itself: it makes history immediate, and connects present and past. And this is best (perhaps only) made possible through experiential learning such as study abroad.

Concern with destinations alone creates a kind of intellectual Underground. The Underground itself removes points of reference from the city above, and replaces the network of spaces—from museums to Prets to buildings one does not even notice—with lines. Instead of connecting with physicality, travel is absorbed into the limbo of getting there:

a non-space before the destination. Rapid movement (both literal and through text and history) complicates the ability to mindfully inhabit space in the present in a way that resonates with the past. Whether walking through Marshalsea or sitting in an old operating theater or standing over the pump where the cholera epidemic began, awareness of the material space reminds us that we are part of an infinite history of bodies bound up in that space, others who have been there and felt what we feel. We don't need to be Dickens, because if we empathize with the ground where we stand, that physical presence will connect us to where other people have stood.

Notes

1. For more on the cognitive elements of "historical empathy," see Doppen 2000, Dulberg 2002, Gehlbach 2004, Lee and Ashby 2001.
2. Endacott and Brooks provide a useful summary of research on historical empathy that acknowledges the intersection of cognition and feeling in historical study: "More recent research (Brooks 2011; Endacott 2010; Kohlmeier 2006; Stoddard 2008) suggests that historical empathy is more fully realized as a dual-domain construct, one in which the historical investigator both examines the thoughts of historical figures and connects with the affective dimensions of their situations" (42).
3. Nancy Dulberg's work reinforces the idea that "personal connection" occurs through bodily resonance: "shared gender or ethnicity, a lived experience" (Dulberg 2002: p. 8).

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CHAPTER 10

Genetics, Eugenics, and the Text of Real-World Experience

Andrew Libby and Jennifer Cullin

Teaching about Victorian culture through experiential education is a unique pedagogical challenge. How, exactly, do you immerse contemporary students in an experience that enhances their understanding of a time period with which many are unfamiliar, so unfamiliar in fact, that when we ask students to raise their hands if they know what century the Victorian period spans, we are met with either blank stares or the rush of typing to indicate a quick Google search. This challenge is especially pronounced in the interdisciplinary science program in which we teach at Indiana University. While our Human Biology students are very familiar with the processes by which DNA replicates or causes of aneuploid conditions, they know very little about historical misunderstandings of genetic inheritance, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth, and the intersection between biology, sociology, and culture that drove such misunderstanding. The study of eugenics—the pseudoscientific theory that defines human worth in terms of genetic fitness—bridges that gap. Eugenics has its roots in the Victorian period, but

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ongoing developments in genetic mapping and reproductive technologies are creating resurgent scientific and moral interest in the topic. To bring the lingering specter of eugenics into clear focus for our students and to help them see the ways in which they may be more Victorian than they know that they are—or perhaps wish that they were—we require each student to complete 20 hours of direct service at a local nonprofit agency that works with people living with physical and cognitive disabilities.

Speaking broadly, service-learning is both a mode of pedagogy and a mode of civic engagement that helps our students to develop social responsibility and active citizenship as part of their academic inquiry. As a result of service-learning, we see our students increase the depth of their academic understanding at the same time as they increase the scope of their empathy for those different from themselves, especially vulnerable populations. This connection between academic knowledge and affective knowledge is, to us, another version of interdisciplinarity and one that speaks directly to our desire for our students to be transformed by their experiences in our class. The result of service-learning in the context of this particular course, titled *Genetics and Genetic Engineering: Utopian and Dystopian Visions*, is that our students see for themselves the people who eugenics would once have targeted as "unfit" and ponder the uncomfortable question of whether new genetic technologies should be considered a modern form of eugenics conveniently re-packaged for the twenty-first century.

We teach our course in the Human Biology (HUBI) Program at Indiana University. The Human Biology Program is unique within the College of Arts and Sciences at Indiana University because of its fully integrated interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning. The sequence of 3 core courses at the center of the HUBI curriculum all attempt to show how the natural sciences, the social sciences and the humanities investigate problems related to human biology differently while also demonstrating the ways in which different disciplinary modes of inquiry can be combined constructively to address complex problems. To make this interdisciplinarity come to life, the HUBI core courses are co-taught by faculty from different disciplines so that the students not only learn about basic human physiological systems and how and why these processes developed over a long evolutionary time scale, but also how contemporary culture, politics and economics influence our biology as well. Like all of the Human Biology core classes, our course demands that students contextualize their scientific knowledge within real-world human dilemmas with an emphasis on knowledge of biological processes, interdisciplinarity, and ethical reasoning, and the history of eugenics gives them a compelling opportunity to do just that.

In the first part of our course, we provide students with a summary of early ideas about how traits were thought to be inherited up and through the nineteenth century and an overview of how these ideas intersected with the historical trajectory of eugenics. The narrative arc of eugenics that we follow begins when Sir Francis Galton coins the term in 1883 in *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Development*. Enthusiasm for eugenics emerges at a historical moment when Britain's imperial power is reaching its height, ruling over 1/5 of the world's population (400 million people) and covering a quarter of the world's lands as part of its empire. But at the same time, that imperialism reached its peak in the Victorian period, both literally and in the public imagination, England also finds itself entangled in conflicts across the globe, from Jamaica to the Crimea to Egypt to India to South Africa. These far-flung foreign wars gave rise to anxiety that British national fitness was flagging and Britain's worldwide dominance was beginning to crumble under its own imperial weight. Meanwhile, back at home, British anxiety was made worse by the emergence of a threatening degenerate criminal class, or at least that's the way it appeared to a rising Victorian middle class, populating the narrow streets and dirty alleyways of the slums of London and other Victorian urban centers. The huge social costs to the industrial revolution—the dehumanization of work and reliance on child labor, the growth of manufacturing cities where poverty, filth and disease flourished, and the teeming slums filled with crime—consumed Victorians with fears that their country was rotting from the inside out. As the century moved forward and as Victorians became more and more pre-occupied with crime and other related vices, the idea of eugenics came to represent a path back toward greatness and a full-throated Pax Britannica.

But eugenics in England was more talk than action. Numerous books, pamphlets, and articles were published by British writers to educate the middle class about eugenics, but in spite of this public attention and advocacy, the only eugenics legislation passed in England was a "Mental Deficiency Act," which allowed for the segregation of mentally disabled and ill individuals in state-run institutions, and this was not passed until 1913. To find where eugenics really takes root in practice and begins to assert itself in public policy and law, attention must be turned to the United States in the early decades of the twentieth century, culminating in the infamous Buck versus Bell Supreme Court decision in 1927 that gave legal sanction to compulsory sterilization laws in the United States.

In the beginning, there were elements of eugenics in the United States that stayed true to Galton's initial conception of so-called positive eugenics,—encouraging breeding among the fit—such as Fitter Family Competitions and Better Baby Contests. But eugenics in America also took a darker turn, into what is referred to as "negative eugenics"—discouraging reproduction among the "unfit." Negative eugenic practices took the form of Nativist anti-immigrant legislation, marriage restriction laws, eugenic segregation laws that required the "feeble-minded"—a catch-all phrase with no medical meaning—to live in state-run institutions during their reproductive years, and compulsory sexual sterilization. This last measure, it was hoped, might even make marriage restrictions and institutionalization irrelevant because sterilization would ensure, using a more efficient means, that so-called unfit children would never be born. Eventually, 33 American states passed statutes under which more than 60,000 people were forcibly sterilized.

The story of eugenics speeds up in the late 1920s and early 1930s as its popularity in America crests and Nazi Germany takes note. The United States had shown Germany the way forward with eugenics legislation in the first two decades of the twentieth century, but when Hitler began his political ascent, the relationship between American and German eugenicists quickly shifted to more of an equal partnership. National Socialism promised a sweeping hereditarian revolution and established dictatorial procedures of which American eugenicists could only dream. Hitler studied American eugenics and in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler quoted American eugenic ideology and openly displayed a thorough knowledge of American eugenic laws. Hitler even once wrote a fan letter to American eugenicist leader Madison Grant, praising his race-based eugenics book, *The Passing of the Great American Race*. And the admiration was mutual. During the Reich's early years, eugenicists across America welcomed Hitler's plans as the logical fulfillment of their own decades of research and effort while American scientific journals, like *Eugenical News*, provided a forum for Nazi propaganda. But unlike in America, institutionalization and compulsory sterilization for the "feeble-minded" and degenerate were only the starting point for Nazis. The Nazi euthanasia program, a euphemistic term for a clandestine murder program that targeted mentally and physically disabled patients, was started in September 1939 and it represented a radicalization of earlier eugenics. Its logic was the same as earlier eugenic practices; however, it endeavored to eliminate from the national gene pool those who allegedly represented a genetic and financial burden to the State. Hitler called his euthanasia campaign T4 after the street address of the coordinating office in Berlin, Tiergartenstrasse 4. The T4 program continued until the end of World War II, killing 200,000 people in 6 separate gassing installations. But more than that, what the T4 program did was to set the stage for the Final Solution. As Edwin Black notes in his book, *War Against the Weak*: "For decades, Hitler's bloody regime, the Holocaust and the 2nd World War would be perceived as merely the outgrowth of the unfathomable madness and blind hatred of one man and his movement. But in fact, Hitler's hatred was not blind; it was sharply focused on an obsessive eugenic vision. The war against the weak had graduated from America's slogans, index cards and surgical blades to Nazi decrees, ghettos and gas chambers," (Black 2012: p. 318).

It is against this bleak historical backdrop that we introduced the service-learning requirement to our students. The service-learning site for the students was Stone Belt, a local nonprofit organization in Bloomington, Indiana that advocates, and provides resources and day-programming, for people with disabilities. Stone Belt uses hands-on, experiential learning for its clients to help promote independence and self-exploration. Of particular interest to us when setting up the service-learning partnership with Stone Belt was their in-house art studio, with its emphasis on providing clients with opportunities to create projects that demonstrate independence, dignity, and community involvement. These are precisely the values that we wanted our students to recognize and appreciate in people with disabilities in order to embody a reversal of the logic of eugenics, a logic that insisted people with disabilities could not be independent, were not dignified, and whose values were contrary to those of the communities in which they lived.

For their service-learning, each of our students was given an orientation with the Stone Belt volunteer coordinator for whom she provided an historical overview of the treatment of people with disabilities, with a special focus on the history of compulsory institutionalization and reproductive sterilization. Once the students had received their orientation, they were each then partnered with one or two Stone Belt clients, who our students called their "buddies," with whom they would meet regularly, for two hours, once a week. The impact of spending time with their buddies, especially as it related to dark historical accounts of mistreatment emphasized in both their on-site orientation and our academic coursework, was evident almost immediately. As one student put it following her early weeks of service, “Hearing about, and seeing pictures of, the absolutely terrible conditions in institutions made me feel sick to my stomach, but I didn’t really process why at the time, other than understanding that it was morally wrong. Once I started spending time with my buddies at Stone Belt, though, I figured out why it bothered me so.” This was precisely the personal connection between the service and the learning for which we had hoped.

Other students were initially more hesitant about embracing their service experience at Stone Belt, however, expressing concern that they would be uncomfortable around people with disabilities and unable to break through the awkwardness they imagined this would occasion. But within a few weeks, there was a clear transformation among these students as well, indicated by their responses to the first service-learning reflection essay we assigned. The essay prompt asked the following:

> Please describe your service experience at Stone Belt so far this semester. Then, explain in what way(s) your experience at Stone Belt has informed your understanding of, and attitude towards, eugenics as it was theorized and practiced in the early part of the 20th century in the United States.

Their responses indicated that the initial awkwardness they had feared had either not materialized or had dissipated almost immediately. For instance, one student was thrilled because her “buddy” liked to compare people at Stone Belt to celebrities and declared her to be the spitting image of Reese Witherspoon. Another student found the time she got to spend with her “buddies,” Claire and Barb,[1] to be the most relaxing time of her week, a time when she gets to simply hang out with them and forget her daily concerns while they make their latch hook craft projects together.

Another student, after meeting her “buddy” Liza for the first time, described her as “a keen observer and a kind friend” who likes to tell little-known details about other Stone Belt clients as well as the particulars of her purchases on her weekly shopping trip. This may all seem like small potatoes, but as our student noted, “As the weeks have gone by, it has become obvious how much Liza loves my visits. Last week she invited me to a quarterly meeting between her and various coordinators and staff . . . I was very touched. She also asked if I could share my address and phone number with her so that we could keep in touch after the semester is over.” But what is just as poignant as Liza’s affection toward our student is what our student revealed about how her experience with Liza at Stone Belt has affected her. Specifically, our student recalled a moment when a "sweet young man" at Stone Belt offered a bracelet he had made to Liza and Liza's affectionate response to the gift in return, and it made her feel a longing for the sort of belonging and community that clients at Stone Belt had developed among themselves. She noted that this longing was especially pronounced when she returned to the isolation of her one-bedroom apartment after leaving her service hours at Stone Belt.

Importantly, this student's newfound appreciation for Stone Belt's inclusivity was the key to her ability to connect the personal and the political, to see her daily experiences at Stone Belt as being in conversation with the historical trajectory of early American eugenics and its aftermath, saying,

> It is infinitely more painful to imagine these individuals whom I have hugged and shook hands with and shared tales of grocery-store expeditions, locked in a filthy, stinking institution void of human dignity, care, art and positive attention . . . my experiences at Stone Belt have doubled my sadness at the ignorance that underlay the eugenics movement of the twentieth century. Encounters with and stories about the family members of the clients at Stone Belt have made it clear that even if I am still working through some of the complexities, ignorances [sic] and self-eccentricities I harbor regarding my judgment of the lives of the genetically disabled, many of the conditions suffered by these individuals are not directly linked to their lineage, and thus the inspiration for negative eugenics policy was ill-founded.

Or this from another student:

> When I think about the treatment of those with disabilities in the early twentieth century, it still makes me feel sick to imagine anybody, let alone individuals like my two buddies, being subjected to inhumane treatment. It makes all of the history we learned about feel more real to me, instead of an abstract concept applied to a group of people I have no connection to, and it makes it all the more frightening and sad.

Beyond the general call for respect and kindness toward people with disabilities that was common to all our students' reflection essay responses, some students also grappled with the question of reproductive rights for people with genetic disabilities with candor and subtlety. One student argued that because no one makes decisions about her capacity to raise and start a family, she does not see why it should be any different for anyone else. But another student felt more ambivalence, describing herself as “torn.” In this case, one of her “buddies” is able to live a healthy, relatively independent life with just some added support and would potentially be able to take care of a dependent, while another one of her “buddies” has disabilities that are far more severe and would not be able to provide for a child. Reluctantly, and with a sense of unease, this student acknowledged that her experience with her “buddies” at Stone Belt had given her an unexpected increase in sympathy for historical figures who had once advocated for eugenic sterilization and who considered it a kindness to those upon whom it was practiced, citing the Indiana Prison physician Harry Sharp as an example, while still recognizing that controlling a person’s body in this way is inherently to treat them “as something more animal, different, domesticated, than a human given freedom of will and self-determination.” In the end, she attempted to reconcile her ambivalence by insisting that reproductive freedom should be determined on a case-by-case basis and that eugenics leaders were wrong in making general policies for entire populations they determined “unfit.” She did not, however, indicate how she, or anyone, would make the determination individually, but she does say that “if all the citizens [in favor] of negative eugenics would have taken twenty minutes out of their days to get to know and socialize with the people they were trying to sterilize, eugenic practices would not have advanced as fully as they did.” In the end, perhaps it is of less importance that the students revive historical debates on compulsory institutionalization and sterilization than it is that they develop their sense of shared humanity for those who once would have been the subject of such alarming eugenics practices. To see evidence of this kind of affective learning in our students’ reflection essays confirms for us the transformative potential of service-learning in ways that lecture slides, pictures, stories, and videos in a classroom setting just cannot match, no matter how poignant and intense.

As the semester progressed and the students continued their weekly service at Stone Belt, our course lectures moved from the history of eugenics as it was formulated in Victorian England and practiced in early-twentieth-century America to a new focus on genetic technologies that have emerged in the early decades of the twenty-first century. These genetic technologies, particularly those aimed at identifying, and informing parents of, genetic abnormalities of an embryo or fetus such as prenatal screening programs and pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), gave rise to a thorny new dilemma for the service-learning students: has eugenics re-emerged in our own, contemporary historical moment through the implementation of these new genetic technologies? The students, initially, seemed resistant to the idea that new genetic technologies were eugenic, making the argument that prenatal screenings and PGD were categorically different from earlier, more aggressive forms of eugenics because they were not coercive, were not state-sponsored, were not discriminatory against the so-called feeble-minded, and were not an attempt to improve the overall fitness of the gene pool. To us, this seems like a very reasonable argument. It was not, however, the end of the story.

Our second reflection question asked the following:

> In lecture, we have discussed the idea of motive and purpose as a standard for ethical judgment. Related to genetic technologies such as prenatal screening programs and pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, what motives and purposes make these technologies acceptable to you and what motives and purposes might make them unacceptable to you? To what extent, if any, has your experience with clients at Stone Belt shaped your ideas about the appropriate use of these technologies?

One student responded by making the question personal, which gave her sense of unease about these technologies a degree of authenticity that was striking. She says:

> If given the opportunity to use PGD and I discovered that my child would have severe disabilities, I do not know if I could personally go through with the pregnancy. It is just very hard to emotionally and ethically come to some definite conclusion regarding this situation, but my time at Stone Belt has definitely added some experience to this matter. I was able to see both sides of my argument. I was able to experience the mentally handicapped individuals that are able to lead happy lives, but I was also witness to those that are not as lucky. It is just weird to imagine a world where these people would not be here.

We especially appreciate the student's phrase, "I was able to see both sides of my argument." What that comment shows us is that this student not only knows what she thinks, but that her experience has given her the broad perspective to know how it is possible to think otherwise. This is the kind of nuanced thinking that service-learning helps to develop and is one of its most compelling academic purposes.

Other students' responses expressed less ambivalence but revealed an increased scope for sympathy for those with cognitive disabilities, which translated generally into an opposition to prenatal screening and PGD. Several argued that if screenings and testing were used to completely remove disabilities from the gene pool, then the technology would be immoral because their "buddies" at Stone Belt are happy individuals with unique personalities, preferences, and hobbies, and the world would be poorer without them. Furthermore, they pointed out that having a disability in an "able" world has made Stone Belt clients more resilient and stronger than those, like themselves and like us, who only have to adapt to a world designed for those living without disabilities. As one student put it:

> What defines 'quality of life' and who says that someone will have a less fulfilling life just because they do not fit into society's mold of productivity? That is what Stone Belt really taught me, that there are different ways of defining what a happy, fulfilling life is. The residents at Stone Belt do such a large variety of things, from taking classes, to making medical equipment, to making beautiful works of art, and they all do what makes them happy and what makes them feel personally fulfilled, regardless of what the larger societal norm says, one needs to live a 'fulfilling' life.

Another student used words like "unnecessary" and "heartbreaking" to describe the thought of prenatal screening and PGD having been used on her Stone Belt "buddies." Indeed, the way she describes it, her "buddies" are serving her, as much as, if not more than, she is serving them. She says, "I have had the distinct pleasure of working with clients that make me laugh, brighten my day, and challenge the way I view life. I am grateful for this experience."

These reflections make it clear to us that working at Stone Belt has taught our students a lot about what people with disabilities can achieve and how much of a joy it can be to enter into relationships with them. To reconcile this awareness with an appreciation for new genetic technologies designed to reduce the number of individuals with genetic disabilities was a complex intellectual task for our students and there was no overall consensus on when and why the use of these techniques is appropriate. But what all the students could agree on is that prenatal screenings and PGD are distinct from earlier forms of eugenics, especially so as long as the decisions to use them are determined by individuals on a case-by-case basis and are motivated by compassion. The clear take-away from the ideas and attitudes reflected in these comments is that our students recognize that eugenics was not, and is not, what we might think of as "pure science" or "basic research" but rather science implicated in, and in the service of, political and social policy. In a class on the shameful history of eugenics and the shadow of its legacy in contemporary genetic science, this is a conclusion that is, to us, worth celebrating. Our students' ability to thoughtfully grapple with such ethical dilemmas by reflecting on their time at Stone Belt is a strong affirmation of the value of service-learning in teaching about Victorian culture in this context.

Note

1. All the names of Stone Belt clients in this article are pseudonyms and have been changed to protect the clients' privacy.

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PART IV

The Application and Transformation of Knowledge

CHAPTER 11

The New Experiential Learning

Laura Green

I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
Forever and forever when I move.
—Alfred, Lord Tennyson , "Ulysses" (1842)

When I joined the Northeastern University English department in 2001, I had, unawares, entered an institutional landscape undergoing major transformations that would lead to Northeastern's—and my—significant engagement in what I am calling "the new experiential learning." Northeastern has been known for a century for its leadership in co-operative education, or co-op. As a program in which matriculated students alternate periods of paid employment, during which they are not enrolled in classes, with traditional campus semesters, co-op is one of the oldest, and also one of the most classroom-independent, forms of experiential learning. Co-op began in 1906 in the engineering school of the

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University of Cincinnati as a partnership with area industry, born of both increasing demands for industrial labor and the increasing expansion of higher education beyond a small number of elite institutions.[1]

Northeastern, founded in 1898 as the Evening Institute of the Boston Young Men's Christian Association, and focused on technical training, became the second institution of higher education to adopt what was then called "the Cincinnati Plan." As Richard Freeland, the university's sixth president (1996–2006), writes: "The idea of 'co-op' spread rapidly, especially among urban institutions whose proximity to centers of employment facilitated this pedagogy. Co-op became particularly popular in engineering and also was quite common in business; by the 1920s 137 institutions, Northeastern among them, offered this experience in one or both of these fields" (Freeland 2019: p. 18). Northeastern co-op settled into a consistent form that distinguishes co-op from the internship model often associated with elite institutions and learners: "Co-ops are different from internships in that internships are often a summer or semester commitment, can be either part-time or full-time, can be paid or unpaid, and typically do not interfere with the regular flow of the academic year. Co-ops, on the other hand, alternate with semesters, quarters, or trimesters; are typically paid and full-time; and most often are 6-month commitments" (Ambrose and Wankel 2020: p. 194).[2] Co-op involves a commitment to training students for the workplace and historically has been relatively independent from curricular frameworks. It has historically not been associated with elite institutions.

Well into the twentieth century, as Northeastern's growing student body remained largely local, from modest financial backgrounds, and intent on entering the workforce as soon as possible, co-op earnings remained an important source of financial support as well as employment preparation. The normative undergraduate time to degree was five years, which allowed students to complete three co-ops (and introduced me to the puzzling student status known as "middler year"). By the 1990s, however, co-op wages could no longer keep up with inflation and the rising costs of university education; the institution itself, which depended on tuition, was facing rising costs and declining enrollments; and not enough students were being retained to graduation.[3] As part of a strategy to reorient as a "smaller but better," more traditional research university, Freeland initiated a transformation of co-op from a program of job into one pillar of what he called a "practice-oriented education" which was "based on the integration of three elements: co-operative education, professional studies, and the arts and sciences" (Freeland 2019: p. 96). "Practice orientation" was intended to retain Northeastern's association with co-op as a market differentiator while allying it to markers of academic quality.

In my first years at Northeastern, which coincided with this initiative, my colleagues and I in English saw little connection between our curriculum and "practice-oriented" or "experiential" education. From our perspective, co-op remained a mild inconvenience, taking students out of classes for six months at a time, around which we worked to purvey knowledge and create intellectual community. But as time passed, I saw how much students valued Northeastern-specific experiences, such as co-op and the faculty-led, course-based summer study abroad program we call "Dialogue of Civilization," as well as more conventional experiential opportunities such as service learning. Although "practice-oriented education" never gained traction as a term, Freeland's initiative prefigured increasingly widespread institutional efforts, beginning in the first decade of the twenty-first century, to integrate non-, co-, and extra-curricular experiences, such as professional training (co-ops and internships), service learning, and study abroad, under the umbrella of "experiential learning." In an often-cited essay published in 2009 in *Liberal Education*, the journal of the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), Janet Eyler argued that "as advances in cognitive science have begun to blur the line between academic and practical learning, awareness of the relevance of experiential education to achieving goals of the liberal arts has increased." She defined experiential learning as a practice "which takes students into the community [and] helps students both to bridge classroom study and life in the world and to transform inert knowledge into knowledge-in-use" (Eyler 2009: p. 24). This article is one milestone on the way to mainstreaming experiential learning as a feature of higher education.

The "advances in cognitive science" to which Eyler refers are the emergence, beginning in the 1990s, of the interdisciplinary field of the "learning sciences" (or "learning science"), which studies the experiences and practices of learners and teachers. The learning sciences offer an observationally supported model of learning sometimes known as "constructionism," which is student-centered and stresses the importance of the learner's active engagement, authentic practice, and reflection on learning. Constructionism is defined partly in opposition to an older model of "instructionism," which treats knowledge as primarily a body of facts to be disseminated by the instructor (rather than constructed by the learner) and is associated with traditional pedagogical tools such as lecturing, memorization, and testing. As Keith Sawyer explains, "Instructionism prepared students for the industrialized economy of the early twentieth century. But the world today is much more technologically complex and economically competitive, and instructionism is increasingly failing to educate our students to participate in this new kind of society… [which is] a knowledge economy" (Sawyer 2005: pp. 1–2). Sawyer emphasizes the empirical nature of learning sciences research into constructionism, with researchers following teachers and classes over long periods and subjecting the data collected to both quantitative and qualitative analysis (Sawyer 2005: p. 14). But the premises that underlie constructionism owe as much to twentieth-century progressivist theory as to contemporary social science methodology, going back at least as far as the educational philosopher John Dewey (1859–1952), whose *Experience and Education* appeared in 1938, and beyond Dewey to the pragmatist psychology of William James (1842–1910). The emphasis on learner experience in education has, in fact, a long and politically progressive genealogy of which "experiential learning" is the latest manifestation.

Susan Ambrose and Laura Wankel (former Northeastern colleagues) propose a comprehensive definition of experiential learning as

> the practice of mindful reflection on the integration of theory and practice through authentic settings (e.g., professional work experience, research, community involvement, co-curricular activities, and industry challenges) with real-world opportunities, responsibilities and consequences that enhance the students' abilities to transfer knowledge and skills to new contexts and prepare them for a lifetime of learning and growth. (Ambrose and Wankel 2020: pp. 160, 161)

Ambrose and Wankel emphasize three learner behaviors that have become important keywords for experiential learning and contemporary learning theory generally: *transfer*, *integration*, and *reflection*. Transfer and integration are enabled, but not conveyed or caused, by instructors, and they take place *neither* in the classroom *nor* exclusively in extra-curricular social spaces. It is in the bidirectional and recursive motion among locations (classroom, office, community) that absorption of knowledge and practice of skills occurs, is reinforced, and enables learners to progress to new levels of knowledge and growth.[4]

Despite its respectable history, the evidence of the learning sciences, and attempts by scholars such as Ambrose and Wankel to convey a nuanced and flexible understanding of the affordances of experiential learning, it remains slow to gain full endorsement among administrators and faculty at many institutions.[5] This is perhaps particularly true for the humanities and humanistic social sciences. Several features combine to place experiential learning at odds with a traditional understanding, within the liberal arts, of the dissemination of knowledge and the fostering of intellectual development as non-instrumental and relatively autonomous from market forces. These features include the confusingly disparate practices that fall under the rubric of experiential learning; its association in some forms, such as co-op, with non-elite institutions and technical fields; its equally overt association with instrumental, teleological, and market-focused rhetoric; and many faculty members' lack of acquaintance with the newer, more expansive understandings of experiential learning that shift the focus of experiential learning from *where* the learner is located (that is, from a list of extra-curricular opportunities) to *what behaviors* an opportunity supports (transfer, integration, and reflection).

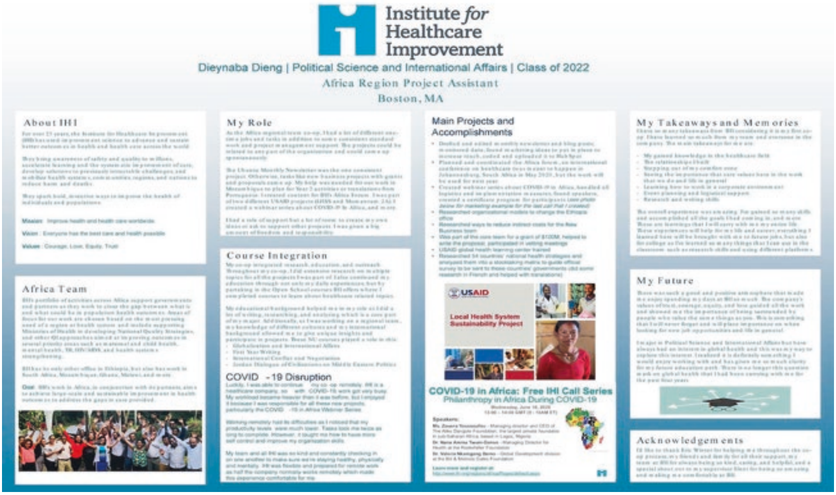
Further, attempts to convey what makes experiential learning powerful often characterize distinctions among learning spaces with an alienating, and implicitly hierarchical, dichotomy between "the classroom" and "the real world" (as occurs in the definition by Ambrose and Wankel above, even as they emphasize that "learning happens everywhere"). As Chris Gallagher writes, in such dichotomous rhetorical constructions, "Certain kinds of experience are endowed with an inherent status—real/unreal, direct/indirect, authentic/inauthentic—that does not hold up to scrutiny and, more important, undermines students' ability to integrate learning across contexts" (Gallagher 2019: p. 75). They also may undermine educators' trust and enthusiasm, since we regard our classrooms as microcosms of knowledge transmission, creation, and practice, not as "inert" or divorced from social value. For example, John Kijinsky, a former Arts and Sciences dean at SUNY Fredonia and at Idaho State University, argues that "the most valuable thing we can teach students is the ability to think through, with patient focus, demanding intellectual challenges. Solving a difficult linear algebra problem, working to understand an intricate passage from Descartes, figuring out how, exactly, the findings of evolutionary morphology explain the current human stride—all these are examples of the sort of learning that we should be proud to provide our students. And not one of them features 'real-life engagement'" (Kijinsky 2018:

n.p.). Paul Bylsma also expresses a common concern of liberal arts faculty when he argues that career-focused educational opportunities, such as co-op, feed a pernicious "neoliberal turn" in higher education: "Students…see education as a ticket for admission into a society that values entrepreneurism, employability, and quantifiable skills and competencies as the ultimate tools for survival and success" and thus lose the "ability to envision success as an interdependent, rooted, and connected ideal of social, environmental, and personal flourishing" (Bylsma 2015: n.p.). These objections target both the transactional nature and the ideological implications of experiential learning opportunities such as co-op.

It is certainly true that the opportunity to encounter "demanding intellectual challenges" is a defining feature of higher education—as experiential learning advocates would agree. They might also assert that when (say) a Northeastern student has the opportunity to *apply and transfer* knowledge and skills gained through meeting those challenges—perhaps using knowledge of linear algebra in practicing catastrophe modeling at an insurance company in New York, or debating Cartesian dualism at the Northeast Regional Collegiate Ethics Bowl—their ability to negotiate intellectual challenges is enriched and advanced.

In the poster presentations that CSSH students construct when they have completed their co-ops, they are encouraged to make precisely such connections between prior classroom learning and new experiences gained on co-op. For example, the poster of Dieynaba Dieng, a political science and international affairs major who co-oped in 2020 as an Africa Region Project Assistant at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, lists, among others, these roles and accomplishments: "Drafted and edited monthly newsletter and blog posts; monitored data;… planned and coordinated the Africa forum…created webinar series about COVID-19 in Africa…Researched 54 countries' national health strategies and analyzed them into a stocktaking matrix to guide official survey to be sent to those countries' governments (did some research in French and helped with translations)" (Dieng 2020: Fig. 11.1). For these activities, Dieng drew on coursework in "writing, research and analyzing, which is a core part of my major," including First Year Writing, International Conflict and Negotiation, and courses on Middle Eastern politics taken on a Dialogue of Civilizations program (faculty-led summer study abroad) in Jordan (Dieng 2020: Fig. 11.1).

For Isabel Kilgariff, an English and Linguistics major doing an editorial co-op with National Geographic Learning, an Introduction to Rhetoric



Institute *for* Healthcare Improvement

Dieynaba Dieng | Political Science and International Affairs | Class of 2022

Africa Region Project Assistant

Boston, MA

About IHI

My Role

Main Projects and Accomplishments

My Takeaways and Memories

Course Integration

COVID -19 Disruption

Africa Team

My Future

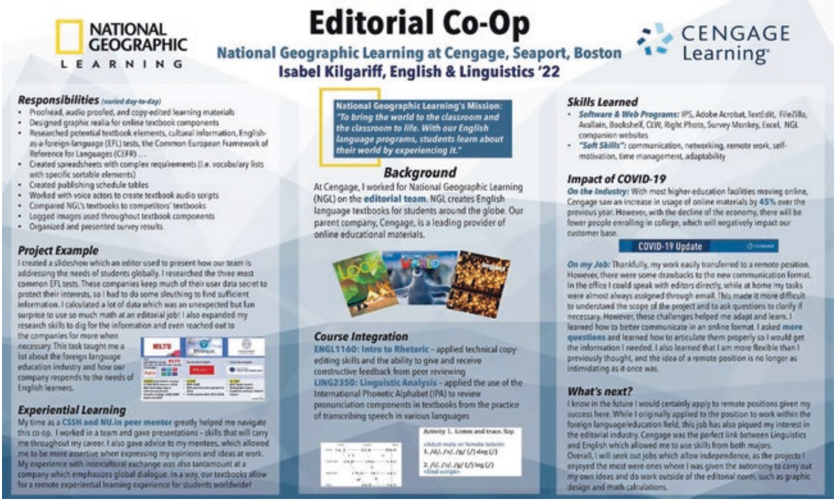
Acknowledgements

USAID
Local Health System Sustainability Project
COVID-19 in Africa: Free IHI Call Series
Philanthropy in Africa During COVID-19

Fig. 11.1 Poster courtesy of Dieynaba Dieng

class provided "technical copy editing skills and the ability to give and receive constructive feedback [learned] from peer reviewing," while she drew on her Linguistic Analysis course to use "the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to review pronunciation components in textbooks" (Kilgariff 2020: Fig. 11.2).

It is also true that students and their families connect higher education strongly with opportunities for enhanced employment status and financial success. In a 2019 survey administered by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, 84% of students entering bachelor's-granting institutions identified "to get a better job," and 73% "to be able to make more money," as "very important" reasons for going to college (Stolzenberg et al. 2020: p. 42). This may be discouraging for those of us in disciplines (such as English literature) where value is constructed as intrinsic rather than instrumental and for those of us (like Bylsma) who see the value of education, and the definition of human flourishing, as primarily social rather than economic. Nevertheless, the concern of students and parents with their current and future finances is highly rational. Though the returns on investment for a college education vary for different populations, the income gap between college degree holders and non-college-degree holders remains wide and, in a social structure without a robust


NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC LEARNING
CENGAGE Learning
COVID-19 Update

Editorial Co-Op

National Geographic Learning at Cengage, Seaport, Boston
Isabel Kilgariff, English & Linguistics '22

Responsibilities *(varied day-to-day)*

- Proofread, audio proofed, and copy-edited learning materials
- Designed graphic realia for online textbook components
- Researched potential textbook elements, cultural information, English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) tests, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) …
- Created spreadsheets with complex requirements (i.e. vocabulary lists with specific sortable elements)
- Created publishing schedule tables
- Worked with voice actors to create textbook audio scripts
- Compared NGL's textbooks to competitors' textbooks
- Logged images used throughout textbook components
- Organized and presented survey results

Project Example

I created a slideshow which an editor used to present how our team is addressing the needs of students globally. I researched the three most common EFL tests. These companies keep much of their user data secret to protect their interests, so I had to do some sleuthing to find sufficient information. I calculated a lot of data which was an unexpected but fun surprise to use so much math at an editorial job! I also expanded my research skills to dig for the information and even reached out to the companies for more when necessary. This task taught me a lot about the foreign language education industry and how our company responds to the needs of English learners.

Experiential Learning

My time as a **CSSH and NU.in peer mentor** greatly helped me navigate this co-op. I worked in a team and gave presentations – skills that will carry me throughout my career. I also gave advice to my mentees, which allowed me to be more assertive when expressing my opinions and ideas at work. My experience with intercultural exchange was also tantamount at a company which emphasizes global dialogue. In a way, our textbooks allow for a remote experiential learning experience for students worldwide!

National Geographic Learning's Mission:
"To bring the world to the classroom and the classroom to life. With our English language programs, students learn about their world by experiencing it."

Background

At Cengage, I worked for National Geographic Learning (NGL) on the **editorial team**. NGL creates English language textbooks for students around the globe. Our parent company, Cengage, is a leading provider of online educational materials.

Course Integration

ENGL1160: Intro to Rhetoric – applied technical copy-editing skills and the ability to give and receive constructive feedback from peer reviewing

LING2350: Linguistic Analysis – applied the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to review pronunciation components in textbooks from the practice of transcribing speech in various languages

Activity 1. Listen and trace. Say.

Skills Learned

- ***Software & Web Programs:*** IPS, Adobe Acrobat, TextEdit, FileZilla, Avallain, Bookshelf, CLW, Right Photo, Survey Monkey, Excel, NGL companion websites
- ***"Soft Skills"***: communication, networking, remote work, self-motivation, time management, adaptability

Impact of COVID-19

On the Industry: With most higher-education facilities moving online, Cengage saw an increase in usage of online materials by **45%** over the previous year. However, with the decline of the economy, there will be fewer people enrolling in college, which will negatively impact our customer base.

On my Job: Thankfully, my work easily transferred to a remote position. However, there were some drawbacks to the new communication format. In the office I could speak with editors directly, while at home my tasks were almost always assigned through email. This made it more difficult to understand the scope of the project and to ask questions to clarify if necessary. However, these challenges helped me adapt and learn. I learned how to better communicate in an online format. I asked **more questions** and learned how to articulate them properly so I would get the information I needed. I also learned that I am more flexible than I previously thought, and the idea of a remote position is no longer as intimidating as it once was.

What's next?

I know in the future I would certainly apply to remote positions given my success here. While I originally applied to the position to work within the foreign language/education field, this job has also piqued my interest in the editorial industry. Cengage was the perfect link between Linguistics and English which allowed me to use skills from both majors.
Overall, I will seek out jobs which allow independence, as the projects I enjoyed the most were ones where I was given the autonomy to carry out my own ideas and do work outside of the editorial norm, such as graphic design and math calculations.

Fig. 11.2 Poster courtesy of Isabel Kilgariff

social safety net, in which unemployment or low-wage employment pose risks to health and well-being, significant. According to a study from the Pew Research Center, "Millennial college graduates ages 25 to 32 who are working full time earn more annually—about $17,500 more—than employed young adults holding only a high school diploma.… College-educated Millennials also are more likely to be employed full time than their less-educated counterparts (89% vs. 82%) and significantly less likely to be unemployed (3.8% vs. 12.2%)" (Pew Research Center 2014: n.p.). College remains both an important investment in future financial well-being and simultaneously one that is funded through a lien on that very future in the form of student loans: post-secondary students in the United States owe an astonishing $1.6 trillion dollars (Kerr 2020). Colleges and universities cannot afford, ethically or prudentially, to downplay the significance of students' investment in higher education or the importance of its contribution to their future financial stability as well as other forms of flourishing.

Institutions of higher education thus must, and do, attempt to navigate and create compromise among the different values, intrinsic and extrinsic, intellectual and material, that attach to their programs. For example, the AAC&U every few years commissions surveys of employers' view of college graduates' preparedness for the workforce. The titles of recent reports frame a symbiotic relationship between employers and providers of liberal education; the most recent (2021) is "How College Contributes to Workforce Success." Lynn Pasquerella, the president of the AAC&U, introduces the findings with an emphasis on convergence between the two sectors:

> Since 2007, the findings have identified common ground between educators and employers with respect to expectations for college-level learning. In fact, a consistent headline-level finding across all our employer research has been that employers and educators are largely in agreement when it comes to the value of a contemporary liberal education—provided it is described using language that is common and accessible to both stakeholder groups. (AAC&U 2021: p. iii)

Callouts on the AAC&U website and in the report, such as "Experiences set students apart" (AAC&U website n.d.) and "Completion of active and applied learning experiences gives job applicants a clear advantage" (AAC&U 2021: p. 9), highlight areas where employer preference overlaps with AAC&U-favored teaching practices. At the same time, the data reveal a certain amount of doubt among employers. For example, "Only six in ten [employers] say that recent graduates possess the knowledge and skills needed for success in entry-level positions at their companies or organizations" (AAC&U 2021: p. iv). While Pasquerella's foreword to the 2018 report "look[s] forward to working together with institutions and employers to achieve our shared objectives around advancing liberal education, quality, and equity in service to democracy" (AAC&U 2018: n.p.), the 2021 report concedes that "civic-oriented outcomes have consistently been ranked lowest by employers" (AAC&U 2021: p. 5). Employer estimation of the ethical value attached to liberal education, as well as of its success, is considerably less elevated than that of education professionals.

Such gaps do not mean, however, that collaboration is not a worthwhile endeavor, or even that it will inevitably be dominated by the interests of business and industry over the values of higher education. Many of the top "learning priorities" indicated by the surveys' business respondents, including such usual suspects as effective communication, critical thinking/analytical reasoning, ethical judgment, and decision-making, are equally prioritized by educators, and are surely helpful to the functioning of democracy as well. Building a learning situation around different motivating goals is one of Ambrose et al.'s key recommendations for enhancing learning in a context in which students may not immediately understand the intrinsic value of the material or task:

> Sources of value operate in combination. Indeed, the distinction between the traditional concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is rarely as dichotomous as theory posits. For example, by working hard in a course, a biology student may derive value from multiple sources, including solving challenging problems (attainment value), engaging her fascination with biological processes (intrinsic value), and advancing her chances of getting into a good medical school (instrumental value). Consequently, it is important not to think of these sources of value as necessarily conflicting but as potentially reinforcing. (Ambrose et al. 2010: p. 76)

Finding a way to combine values can be as motivating for entire sectors—e.g., business and education—as for students in individual courses.

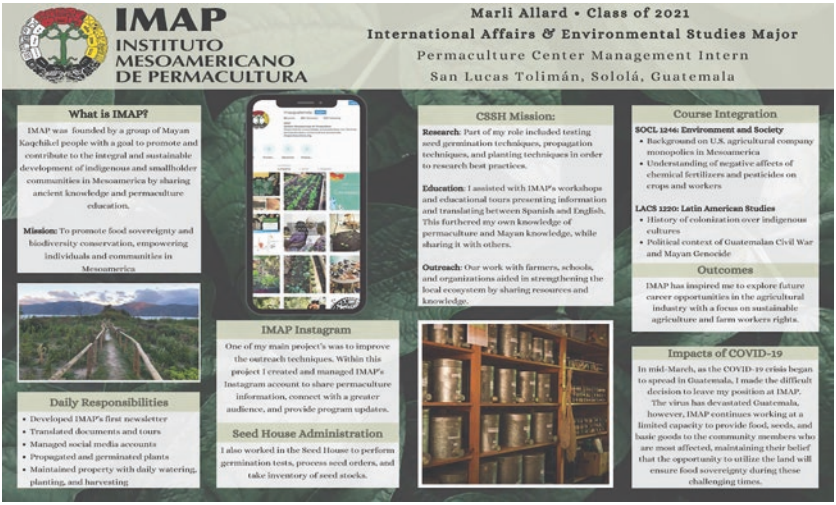
Similarly, it does not follow that because students are concerned about employability and skills, they do not value either other forms of human flourishing or the intrinsic value of intellectual endeavor. At the same time that 84% of students responding to a National Survey of Student Engagement identified "to get a better job" as a very important reason to go to college, the next largest group—75%—identified "to gain a general education and appreciation of ideas" (Stolzenberg et al. 2020: p. 42). And while 84% of students surveyed identified "being very well off financially" as an "essential" or "very important" objective, the next largest selection—80%—identified "helping others who are in difficulty" (Stolzenberg et al. 2020: p. 46). Certainly, that formulation does not indicate specifically *political*, or even democratic, aspirations. It is perfectly possible to be a monarchist, or an anarchist, or have no visible political leanings at all, and wish to help others. Indeed, only 45% of students identified "keeping up with political affairs" as a priority, and the number went down to 21% for "influencing the political structure." But expressed desire to gain "an appreciation of ideas" and to "help other who are in difficulty" indicates a recognition of intellectual and civic values on which we, as educators, can build in our classrooms and beyond.

As an example of active intellectual exploration, I think of Laura Packard '20, an English major (with minors in French, Writing, and Digital Methods in the Humanities) who worked with Dr. Erika Boeckeler, who discovered an uncatalogued medieval manuscript in our library's special collections. Mentored across her time at Northeastern by Dr. Boeckeler, it was Packard who helped to date the mysterious find, now called the "Dragon Prayer Book," by "discover[ing] a reference in the book to Saint Catherine of Siena, who had been sainted in 1461." Packard found, as she led a group of student researchers, that "her exploration of the book had led her down a variety of academic paths, including studies of bioarchaeology, medieval language and music, and project management" (Thomsen and Zhang 2019). (Packard is now a technical writer at a maritime technology company in Boston.) For examples of students bringing their classroom learning to bear on civic life, I think of the collaborative work of the Department of Philosophy and Religion's Social Choice and Democracy Group, led by Dr. Rory Smead, who demonstrated the advantages of paired choice voting by collecting votes on the "cuteness" of more than 60,000 pairs of dogs from almost 1000 voters.[6] Supported intellectually by faculty mentorship and collaboration and materially by research funds from the College of Social Science and Humanities, students involved in these and similar projects are motivated to acquire disciplinary knowledge (such as in medieval music and social choice theory), gain and practice new skills (such as project management, ballot design, and developing privacy policies for information), and generate new knowledge.

In addition to such widespread immersive research practices, institutions can do more to mobilize their resources to offer students direct engagement with social structures and cultural producers, allowing them to practice, revise, and reframe the concepts and examples that they encounter in our classes. This is as true for students in humanities fields as in the social sciences. Lisa Doherty, Northeastern's co-op coordinator for students in English and Political Science, cites the pleasure of another English major in reflecting on how she brought her prior knowledge to bear in a co-op as a junior technical writer: "It was nice to take those same things that professors hammered into my head—be concise! think about word choice! use simple plain English!—in a public document.…I was very proud when I got to deferentially point out that there should be an em dash in place of an en dash" (Doherty 2021: interview). Another English major, working for Prisoners' Legal Service (PLS) of Massachusetts, "gathered, organized, and summarized a massive amount of information…created surveys to send to clients, [and] summarized depositions, medical records, and staff brutality cases," along with "researching prisoner complaints and drafting direct advocacy [letters] on their behalf." One International Affairs and Environmental Studies major went on a global co-op in 2020 at the Instituto Mesoamerican de Permacultura (IMAP), which was "founded by a group of Myan Kaqchickel people to promote and contribute to the integral and sustainable development of indigenous and smallholder communities in Mesoamerica" (Allard 2020). Her responsibilities while there included not only developing a newsletter and translating documents, but also watering, planting, and harvesting the group's agricultural property. Such experiences surely offer students the opportunity not only to apply classroom-acquired skills and knowledge developed in the classroom but also to develop important professional, civic, and ethical understandings.

As Dewey argued over 70 years ago, however, not all experience is educational (Dewey 1997: chapter 2); and as contemporary educational theorists such as Ambrose et al. emphasize, one of the most important elements for turning *experience* into *learning* is the opportunity for reflection. Authentic occasions for reflection, however, are not always easy to construct. Of group reflections in which students returned from co-op participate, Doherty observes: "Our students don't like it—mine don't, anyway. I go into those sessions and it feels like I'm pulling teeth. It's at the beginning of the [next] semester, and they're just so busy." Events like the poster expo, however, are more engaging and successful; they provide students with an opportunity to construct a narrative, give it a tangible form, and share it with peers and mentors. "I love that our [CSSH] students really are open to lots of different experiences," says Doherty. "They are so skilled in being able to communicate verbally and in writing. Social sciences and humanities students are the best story-tellers, right? How do you help them tell stories about themselves, and about who they are?" For the poster expo, "We really prompt them in terms of criteria—we were really thoughtful about the criteria we wanted them to cover" (Doherty 2021: interview). Though the design and emphasis of the posters is up to the students, each describes not only the nature of the organization and the student's responsibilities, but also how co-op activities drew on coursework, and helped the student to think about, or to rethink, next steps in coursework and professional ambition. The poster expo creates an authentic context for reflection and integration.

The poster format is also flexible, and in 2020 the exercise prompted students who had been on co-op in the spring semester to reflect on the impact of the pandemic. Students witnessed effects beyond their own circles, and had to make challenging decisions. "In mid-March, as the COVID-19 crisis began to spread in Guatemala, I made the difficult



IMAP
INSTITUTO
MESOAMERICANO
DE PERMACULTURA

Marli Allard • Class of 2021
International Affairs & Environmental Studies Major
Permaculture Center Management Intern
San Lucas Tolimán, Sololá, Guatemala

What is IMAP?

IMAP was founded by a group of Mayan Kaqchikel people with a goal to promote and contribute to the integral and sustainable development of indigenous and smallholder communities in Mesoamerica by sharing ancient knowledge and permaculture education.

Mission: To promote food sovereignty and biodiversity conservation, empowering individuals and communities in Mesoamerica

Daily Responsibilities

- Developed IMAP's first newsletter
- Translated documents and tours
- Managed social media accounts
- Propagated and germinated plants
- Maintained property with daily watering, planting, and harvesting

IMAP Instagram

One of my main project's was to improve the outreach techniques. Within this project I created and managed IMAP's Instagram account to share permaculture information, connect with a greater audience, and provide program updates.

Seed House Administration

I also worked in the Seed House to perform germination tests, process seed orders, and take inventory of seed stocks.

CSSH Mission:

Research: Part of my role included testing seed germination techniques, propagation techniques, and planting techniques in order to research best practices.

Education: I assisted with IMAP's workshops and educational tours presenting information and translating between Spanish and English. This furthered my own knowledge of permaculture and Mayan knowledge, while sharing it with others.

Outreach: Our work with farmers, schools, and organizations aided in strengthening the local ecosystem by sharing resources and knowledge.

Course Integration

SOCL 1246: Environment and Society

- Background on U.S. agricultural company monopolies in Mesoamerica
- Understanding of negative affects of chemical fertilizers and pesticides on crops and workers

LACS 1220: Latin American Studies

- History of colonization over indigenous cultures
- Political context of Guatemalan Civil War and Mayan Genocide

Outcomes

IMAP has inspired me to explore future career opportunities in the agricultural industry with a focus on sustainable agriculture and farm workers rights.

Impacts of COVID-19

In mid-March, as the COVID-19 crisis began to spread in Guatemala, I made the difficult decision to leave my position at IMAP. The virus has devastated Guatemala, however, IMAP continues working at a limited capacity to provide food, seeds, and basic goods to the community members who are most affected, maintaining their belief that the opportunity to utilize the land will ensure food sovereignty during these challenging times.

Fig. 11.3 Poster courtesy of Marli Allard

decision to leave my position at IMAP," writes Allard. "The virus has devastated Guatemala; however, IMAP continues working at a limited capacity to provide food, seeds, and basic goods to the community members who are most affected, maintaining their belief that the opportunity to utilize the land will ensure food sovereignty during these challenging times" (see Fig. 11.3).

But in a class on Latin American culture in the summer semester, as part of the CSSH "Pandemic Teaching Initiative," Allard was able to draw and reflect on this experience to share with students in the class a final project, in the form of a 20-minute recorded PowerPoint presentation, on the government response to, and human impact of, the coronavirus in Guatemala.[7] Many other students were able to continue working remotely, and the posters that address that transition suggest their ability to learn from, and adapt to, unexpected and serious challenges. "My workload became heavier than it was before," writes Dieng (an observation that will ring true for many), "but I enjoyed it because I was responsible for all these new projects, particularly the COVD-19 in Africa webinar series.… Tasks took me twice as long to complete. However, it taught me how to have more self-control and to improve my organization skills. My team and all IHI was so kind and constantly checking on one another to make sure we're staying healthy, physically and mentally" (Dieng 2020: Fig. 11.2). These are cognitive and affective lessons whose salience is unlikely to diminish.

Co-op opportunities are designed to be authentic experiences of employment accessible to all students, which means that most of them are paid. But some of the non-profit and governmental opportunities that CSSH students value cannot afford to pay or (in the case of some governmental opportunities) they are prevented by law from doing so. CSSH maintains funds to offer students some support in unpaid co-ops. Such funds are important to ensure that student access to co-op opportunities does not reproduce socioeconomic inequities that constrain the education of less wealthy students. Corliss Brown Thompson and Sean Gallagher argue that co-op and other employer partnerships can be forces for equity, offering "an under-used model that can help achieve greater educational and economic opportunity for students and workers of color" though benefits such as developing belief in self-efficacy, identifying and practicing so-called soft skills (such as active listening and critical thinking), and gaining access to social and cultural capital and professional networks. They suggest that "Expanding access to experiential learning will…require a much larger pool of employers and industries engaged with the education system and offering and managing job and project opportunities for students" (Thompson and Gallagher 2020: pp. 3–4).

As one way of diversifying opportunities and employers, Ambrose and Wankel describe Northeastern's XN (Experience Network) projects, which connect learners virtually with employers to complete specific, short-term tasks: "Because not all learners have the time, authorization to work due to their immigration status (i.e., international students), or ability to physically engage with co-ops (given their life circumstances), another form of experiential learning that adapts to learners' needs are micro-internships.… These experiences are not paid but rather count toward course requirements" (Ambrose and Wankel 2020: p. 196). XN was originally designed to support online master's and professional degree seekers within coursework, but the university is now experimenting with making XN projects available to undergraduates, either as part of project-based courses, or as stand-alone one-credit experiences.

All of these efforts require significant, consistent, and well considered institutional investment in resources to support students and faculty alike. They require a robust and specialized administrative staff. At Northeastern, in CSSH alone, we have ten co-op coordinators who work with employers to develop new opportunities and maintain existing relationships, prepare our students (in required one-credit courses) for success in their positions, and scaffold their post-employment reflection and seven academic advisors who help keep students' eyes on the four-year horizon amid the many opportunities they can elect; there are about 80 such coordinators across the university. Creative forms of recognition—research stipends, 0-credit courses, short-form credit-bearing courses, badging—must be in place to support student involvement with research and community projects. Centrally, a variety of university offices support not only co-op but also service learning, study abroad, preparation and guidance for applying for post-college fellowships such as Fulbright, Marshall, and Pickering fellowships (all of which have been held by CSSH students), and librarians who partner with faculty on everything from introducing research to first-year undergraduates to helping them complete sophisticated digital projects. Compensation models must be developed for faculty, at whatever rank and in whatever position, who take on additional responsibilities in teaching, developing curriculum, mentoring students, and piloting new initiatives. Indeed, non-classroom teaching experiences can be a meaningful source of income, as well as professional development, particularly for full-time and part-time faculty not on the tenure track.

In fact, one of the underappreciated strengths of an institutional focus on experiential learning is the collaborative and diverse communities of learning and practice it necessitates and thus creates. In Tennyson's "Ulysses," from which my epigraph is taken, it is partly the loss of engagement in a collaborative enterprise—"one equal temper of heroic hearts"—that Ulysses, returned to Ithaca, mourns. Ulysses is hardly the exemplary subject of experiential learning. Although he has "much…seen and known; cities of men / And manners, climates, councils, governments," he has no patience for applying this knowledge to "mete and dole / Unequal laws unto a savage race." He has been forced, for the purposes of this dramatic monologue, into Tennyson's preferred poetic stance—that of nostalgic reflection—but he longs to be back in action: "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." Our students are neither epic heroes nor myth-haunted poets, but striving and seeking characterize what learners do as well. At best, our students' educational odysseys should enable them to integrate experience and reflection and feel, like Ulysses, that they are "a part of all that [they] have met" (Tennyson 2007: ll. 68, 13–24, 3–4, 70).

Notes

1. See Niehaus 2005 on co-op's beginnings at the University of Cincinnati. The nineteenth century was an era of expansion for United States higher education. The first women's college, Mount Holyoke, and the first historically black institution, now known as Cheney University, both opened in 1837. The Morrill Act of 1862 granted land to states to provide "Colleges for the Benefit of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts," which ultimately funded 70 institutions—largely on land and with wealth expropriated from Native Americans. Because many of the Morrill Act colleges as well as other institutions did not admit African Americans, the period after the civil war saw the founding of a number of private HBCUs. The second Morrill Act of 1890 required states to provide institutions open to African Americans.
2. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, "Although the term 'cooperative education' is used at many institutions, no generally accepted definition for this type of experiential education or for higher education students exists." A 2019 study by the University of Nebraska Lincoln, however, identifies some commonalities: Most institutions distinguish co-ops from internships on the basis of duration (co-ops are longer) and remuneration (co-ops are paid), and most expect a degree of curricular integration and award credit, "even if only in a 0-credit capacity to show student activity." See Wallace, 1 February 2020, n.p.
3. Richard Freeland summarizes the challenges that Northeastern faced: "Declining numbers of high school graduates after the mid-1970s combined with growing competition within the local market, including from the rapidly expanding Boston campus of UMass, made it difficult for Northeastern to maintain the scale on which its financial stability depended. Between 1980 and 1989, the size of the freshman class declined gradually but steadily as did overall undergraduate enrollments.... For a tuition-dependent institution like Northeastern, this pattern of rising costs and declining enrollments was not sustainable.... Northeastern's historic operating model of high volume, low prices, minimal selectivity, and local orientation was no longer viable" (Freeland 2019: pp. 43, 44).
4. Here contemporary learning science revives the influential formulation of experiential learning by David Kolb as "an ongoing recursive operation…of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting" in which "each trip through the cycle returns [the learner] to the experience with new insight gained by reflection, thought, and action" (Kolb and Kolb 2012: p. 1212).
5. David Moore observes that "colleges do offer students and faculty opportunities to engage in experiential learning, and nod to these possibilities in their mission statements and recruitment materials, but they typically marginalize these options in terms of scope, funding, organizational location,

and, most important, integration into the core educational practices of the institution" (Moore 2013: p. 11).

6. See https://socialchoice.nuphilosophy.com/dogproject/philosophy
7. See https://cssh.northeastern.edu/pandemic-teaching-initiative/responses-to-covid-19-in-latin-america/

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.

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