SHARING TEACHING EXPERIENCES II

TELLC Workshop:
Teaching English Language, Literature and Culture, Volume 2

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SARA MARTÍN ALEGRE. PREFACE: FURTHER PLEASURES IN DISCUSSING TEACHING

The papers now in the hands of the reader were written for the second TELLC (Teaching English Language, Literature and Culture) workshop, celebrated on 25 November 2015. I was myself once again the organizer. It is still the case, as I wrote in my Preface to the first TELLC volume (http://ddd.uab.cat/record/132688) that the pedagogical training which universities—like my own, the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona—offer to teachers is too generic for the specific needs of our students in the BA 'English Studies'. Hence, I invited my colleagues from the 'Department de Filologia Anglesa i de Germanística' at UAB to get together in order to share our experiences of actual teaching, believing that we all feel 'talk-starved' about what we do in and outside the classroom with our students.

The first workshop back in 2014 was far more successful than I expected and this time, for the second workshop, I extended my invitation to our colleagues at the nearby Universitat de Barcelona; happily, two of them (Bill Phillips and Rosanna Rion) also contributed presentations. We enjoyed a very lively time together discussing actual teaching practice and diverse possibilities for its improvement. Everyone who attended was satisfied; all commented on how necessary the workshop was. I felt encouraged to try again next year, modestly hoping that TELLC 3 will be even better.

Unlike last year, when only half the papers presented were published in the first TELLC volume, this year the eight papers presented for TELLC 2 are here, finally available to interested readers. I am myself a Literature teacher and I can only say that I am certainly glad to be able to publish so many interesting papers by my colleagues in the field. Regrettably, there is only one paper on teaching language but this is a circumstance which soon will change, hopefully for TELLC 3.

One word of warning: the papers here published are not intended to be the same type of scholarly article published in the many excellent journals devoted to teaching language and Literature, among which I must name the *Bellaterra Journal of*

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Teaching & Learning Language & Literature (http://revistes.uab.cat/jtl3/index), edited by UAB colleague Melinda Dooly. I believe that many teachers do want to discuss their teaching but feel that, since pedagogy is not their research field, they need to make an extra effort to master the specific bibliography and academic jargon required by specialized publications. This effort may be too intensive, given our time constraints, which means that very few teachers end up publishing academic work about their own teaching practice. My aim in organizing TELLC and publishing the corresponding booklets is far more modest: it consists of allowing teachers to communicate as if in conversation for, after all, this is what workshops are for. This does not mean, I believe and sincerely hope, that the papers here reproduced are in any way less relevant (or useful) than other kinds of scholarly work. They are at least as relevant, if not more.

The papers, published in basic alphabetical order by author's surname, reflect a variety of teaching experiences, as it is to be expected. Joan Curbet's "Teaching the Grail: Medieval Myth-Seekers in the Classroom" and Carme Font's "Lessons in Love: Reading Petrarchan Poetry in the Classroom" describe successful experiences aimed at enhancing the students' understanding of the Literature of the past by using exercises implemented with the purpose of making that apparently remote past part of the students' present. Rosanna Rion's "Materials for Two Translations Skill: Understanding Historical and Cultural References and Using Imagination" also addresses the need to make students aware of contextual nuances, in this case when learning to translate from English.

Three of the articles deal with assessment: Bill Phillips's "Formative Assessment of First Year English Literature Students" and Elisabet Pladevall Ballester's "Using Peer and Self-Assessment in a Fourth-Year Subject: Increasing Responsible Learning" examine what happens when the habitual rules for assessment are altered by enhancing students' participation (with positive results). David Owen's "Of Sticks and Carrots in the Literature Class: 'Yes' to Reading Tests; 'No' to Exams" makes a bold proposal to test students on their reading before teaching starts, thus addressing the vexing question of how we, Literature teachers, can make sure that students read the set texts in Literature courses.

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The article by Esther Pujolràs "Poetic Lessons: Poetry In/From the Classroom" and my own piece "Generating Online Publications with Undergraduate Students: Two Experiences" deal with the generation of quality online publications, available from the digital repository of UAB, using students' texts.

Enjoy!!

UAB Campus, April 2016

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JOAN CURBET. TEACHING THE GRAIL: MEDIEVAL MYTH-SEEKERS IN THE CLASSROOM

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A major challenge for students of Medieval English Literature is the reading of texts with a non-linear concept of time. Even when these texts are translated into modern standard English, students are confronted with an obscure language and social context. Our experience in teaching the curricular texts in 'Orígens de la Literatura Anglesa', beginning with Arthurian Romances up to Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, has been enriched with several textual and visual exercises. Students in class work in groups and identify a chronological narrative of several references to the Grail that are to be found in *Perceval*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *La Morte d'Arthur*. They have to describe the physical and spiritual properties of the object, as described by the text, as well as its effects on the characters. Even though sometimes groups choose the same Grails to comment upon, their description of the object and location in time differ, since Medieval description is meant to be evocative. With this simple exercise, students understand the patterns of romance texts. We are planning a peer review assessment of this activity for next year.

Keywords: Medieval Literature, romance, Grail iconography, classroom exercises

Lecturers in Medieval Literature (I will be referring specifically, throughout the present article, to lecturers working at an undergraduate level) face today an interesting and challenging crossroads. To a certain extent, medieval culture has never been more accessible to our students than it is now (it is merely a click away from them in their tablets or laptops), and yet, at the same time, it has never been more in danger of becoming a purely ornamental feature, a misty scenery in a videogame or an indefinite background for TV series and movies. Immediate accessibility is certainly not synonymous with solid knowledge. On the other hand, it is quite useless to complain of a general crisis of the Humanities, as we all have been doing since the beginning of this century. At this point, and within the present implementation of the university degrees, it is up to us medievalists to find the most useful ways of helping our students to come as close as possible to a reasonable knowledge of our field, within the constraints that are imposed on us all. To be as precise and rigorous as we can, within

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very narrow limits: that, in a nutshell, is our challenge. And, as I will try to suggest, it is one that can be resolved satisfactorily.

In my experience, there are two dominant temptations that beset a lecturer undertaking the teaching of Medieval Literature at an undergraduate level. The first of them is for him or her to take for granted a received theological image of medieval culture, one in which the religious factor is granted complete hegemony over all other aspects of civilization. This assumption may easily give to the subject matter a tinge of supernatural otherness (as compared to present-day culture) that unifies it, and allows one to simply re-package old commonplace assumptions that were already outdated in 1964 when C.S. Lewis published his (otherwise still indispensable) *The Discarded Image*.[1] But a teacher who is also a researcher will be perfectly aware that this image of medieval culture does not really work anymore. It is perfectly safe to state that religious symbology certainly impregnated Western culture from, say, the 12th to the 15th centuries, but is equally true that this symbology coexisted with several cultures and practices of materiality, and that it was constantly refashioned by that materiality. The religious and the material interacted with each other on an everyday basis, as in all other moments of history. The Literature of the period, then, has to be understood and taught from this perspective, allowing for a multiplicity of meanings that is less one-sided, and far less predictable, than might once have been assumed.

The second temptation (perhaps the reverse image of the first) is to assume that medieval culture can somehow be more approachable if it is mediated through the cultural artefacts of today; that it will become more palatable, or even more easily understood, if it is explained with the help of movies, TV series, and so forth.[2] It is undeniably true that a great part of our undergraduate students are hampered by factors over which they have no control and which, at least initially, will determine their initial reception of Medieval Literature. They usually have little or no knowledge of Latin or of old French, they live in a secularized context in which religious symbology

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[1] This is a classic and lucid introduction to Medieval Studies by a major author, and yet, while remaining perfectly valid in most of its assertions and its approaches to specific texts, its general perspective has become outdated.

[2] This perspective has been steadily questioned, at least, since the publication of John Van Engen, *The Past and the Future of Medieval Studies* (1995); see also the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Arthurian Legend* (2009) by Ad Putter and Elizabeth Archibald.

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matters little and, for the most part, they have not been taught to make interdisciplinary connections across different cultural fields: between, for instance, Literature and the visual arts, or between History and music. But, even allowing for such circumstances, present-day undergraduates must never be under-estimated, and it would be a major strategic mistake to do so: when put to the test, they are quite capable of making analysis and deductions on the basis of the primary materials that they have to work with, even if the reach of these deductions is limited. Their curiosity and interest in the subject may indeed become greater if they are given the chance to relate the texts they read to actual objects of the medieval past: in that way, a network of interesting connections may emerge in the classroom, without requiring any reference to present-day cultural artefacts. (It goes without saying that such class-work is only possible if the students have previously read and assimilated not only the primary texts, but a basic set-list of concomitant critical material).

Let me illustrate this last point with a couple of specific examples, centred on the same basic image. In the syllabus of the only obligatory course in English medieval literature that is presently offered within the degree of 'Estudis Anglesos' at the UAB, three (relatively brief) texts of Arthurian Literature are included: an English translation of the first part of Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceval, or the story of the Grail* (late 12th century), the complete text of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (late 14th century) and, optatively, a brief section from Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (15th century). These are only three fragments, three specific moments in a vast narrative development that lasts for four centuries; but the first and the last of these moments can be interconnected thematically through the central subject of the Holy Grail. The Grail has a relatively minor role in our undergraduate course; it is only logical that it should be so, because of the presence of major texts of the period which are not centred in it, and especially because of the strong pull exerted by the *Canterbury Tales* at a later stage. This is unavoidable at an undergraduate level; what I will try to suggest via this specific topic is that it is possible to use the literary syllabus that we already have, combining it with some strategic virtual resources, in order to help the students to get an idea of the multiplicity of meanings in a text, and of the material basis for such a multiplicity, in the late Middle Ages.

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Since the Holy Grail was first introduced to European fiction in Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceval*, and since the students read and comment on that first appearance of the object, a first exercise in class is proposed, to be carried out immediately after the analysis of the central episodes in the romance. The students are given four images of actual grails or chalices dating from the 12th and 13th centuries, which are projected on the classroom screen, and they are asked which of the four is a valid referent (or offers a better real-life model) for the Grail that is described in the romance.

(Figure 1)

They have to choose only *one* of the images as being the closest to the one in the text, and to justify their choice by writing down the reasons for it. The four objects that are presented to them are the luxurious 12th-century chalice kept in León, and popularly known as the Doña Urraca Grail (fig. 1); a 12th-century platter to be used for the consecration, which is kept in the abbey of Silos (fig. 2) ; an 11th or 12th-century chalice of Byzantine influence, presently kept in the British Museum (fig. 3); and finally an 11th-century chalice and platter from the cathedral of Lugo (fig. 4). All the written comments made by the students when justifying their choice are transcribed by the teacher and then, in the following session, are shared with the rest of the class.

(Figure 2)

This exercise was actually carried out in class during the last academic year (2015-2016) in a couple of sessions of the course 'Orígens de la Literatura Anglesa', starting on a day in which 32 students were present. The numerical results were interesting in themselves: 52 per cent of the class

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members chose the Doña Urraca chalice as the most likely candidate as a model for the Grail; 28 per cent chose the British Museum chalice; 16 per cent chose the Burgos chalice and only 4 per cent chose the Silos platter.

(Figure 3)   **(Figure 4)**

The most interesting result of the exercise by far, however, lay in some of the individual comments made by specific students, which opened the way to a more detailed discussion, in directions that were very helpful for the later development of the course. I will now transcribe some of these comments. C., for instance, who had come across the subject occasionally before the course, stated that "these various Christian grails are not the only possibilities as models for the text, because there is also an influence of the Celtic tradition on the romance. (…) Other options of a clearer Celtic descent might also have been included". Another member of the group, J., called our collective attention towards the Silos platter, because of its particular shape ("in my opinion, the second image, the Silos dish, can also be the Grail, since the Grail can be a plate or a cup"), which led to a convenient reframing of the discussion within the institutional context of the 12th-century reformation of the Church. In a similar direction, A. was able to establish links between the presence or absence of ornaments in the objects and the general aims of the romance ("the Lugo chalice and platter seem to be more coherent with the values of austerity that are promoted in the romance, taken as a whole"). And a lucid commentary by yet another student, G., taking into

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account the differences between the four images, focused on the role of subjectivity in the text and its possible effects for the general interpretation of the romance: "Magic may be involved in the representation of the chalice in the romance, and on how it is seen (light, colour, stones…), so perhaps not even the characters are able to see the real chalice at all".

All of these commentaries, and many others that occurred during the discussion, had the added value of remaining within the interpretive context that had been set by the text and the images, and by the dialogue between both: the whole discussion, therefore, developed exclusively around medieval cultural materials. The role of the lecturer, at that point, was not so much to communicate specific contents (that had already been done in the detailed commentary of the text) but to prevent conceptual mistakes from happening, and to provide the adequate historical and cultural context. It was not necessary, therefore, to make any use of connections between the text and 12th-century or 21st-century references; such references might have been brought in if necessary, but the discussion did not require them in any way. What mattered in all of this was not reaching any consensus or general agreement, which specialized scholars certainly have not reached, but rather placing a symbolic object in material history. Through this exercise, the Grail was presented to the students as having a central allegorical function, but also (and just as importantly) a strong basis in actual ritual practice.

Of course, there are other ways in which this interconnection of the symbolic with the material can be explored at a basic undergraduate level, also with the help of the Grail; here I have only room to give one further example of these possibilities. As the course proceeds onwards, and after a detailed discussion of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the students will have become familiar with a few essential characters of the Arthurian sagas. Some of these will have appeared in the romances, and some others will have been described and explained in class (Gawain, Lancelot and the central trio of seekers: Galahad, Bors and Perceval); their basic characteristics will also have been presented with the help of secondary critical material, made available to

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the class members through the virtual campus.[3] And once the situational repertoire of the Grail myth has become familiar to the whole group, a second exercise involving its links with material culture can be proposed.

The development of the Grail sagas, like that of all the Arthurian sagas, is linked in the 13th and 14th centuries to the development of manuscript culture. This is not a secondary aspect but a major element in the evolving complexity of the romances: it is in great part because of the changes in the commissioning and manufacturing of books that the growing sophistication and intricacy of the Arthurian myths can be explained. Since, halfway through the course, the students have become acquainted with the basic recurring plotlines concerning the Grail, they can reasonably be expected to interpret some selected manuscript illuminations, and to identify some of the key elements presented in them. A few internet resources can be very useful here, and can be readily integrated into the exercise. The students are asked to leaf through the manuscript of the prose *Quête du Saint Graal* (available online on the website of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France), looking for two very specific episodes: the feeding of the lame king Mordrain and the vision of the Holy Grail by its three knight seekers. These episodes appear in pages 24 and 58 of the above mentioned manuscript (http://expositions.bnf.fr/arthur/livres/queste/index.htm).

Admittedly, this exercise is simpler and more immediately feasible than the previous one; but its ramifications can be wider, and its implications can determine how the rest of the course is taught. For the part of the students, the only thing that can be done here is to identify the characters, but the teacher must stand ready to give a larger span to the discussion. The design of the manuscript page and the representation of space in the illuminations allow for an excellent opportunity to discuss the relationship between text and image in the late Middle Ages, as well as the changes in the use of perspective that would soon occur in the visual arts. These manuscripts also point to the conditions of patronage and power relations that determined the evolution of the Arthurian myth, and which go a long way towards

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[3] A judicious selection of bibliography on the role of the different Grail heroes should include extracts from Elspeth Kennedy's *Lancelot and the Grail* (1986), Richard Barber's *The Holy Grail: the History of a Legend* (2003), and, in a Spanish-speaking context, Victoria Cirlot's *Grial: Poética y mito* (2014).

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explaining the appropriation and rewriting of the Grail by the Church during the 14th and 15th centuries. But above all, the use of these images allow our students to situate our set texts within the history of the book, and to enter into direct contact with key aspects of transmission and reception. No adequate understanding of Medieval Literature can be reached without having some sense of the material conditions in which it was created and distributed, of its patrons and its intended audience.

I hope not to have given the impression that undergraduate students would need additional courses on palaeography or on the institutional culture of the Middle Ages in order to increase their understanding of medieval texts. Indeed, my intention has been the opposite: to show that it is possible to enrich this understanding without presupposing any previous knowledge of the sort on their part, and by integrating other medieval materials into their reading and interpretation of the set texts. In time, the students who so choose will eventually become candidates for pursuing postgraduate studies on these matters, and it is there that palaeography and detailed historical studies will become not only necessary, but indispensable. At a purely undergraduate level, and if these exercises and strategies work, the Grail itself will be understood not so much as either a symbolic or material object, but as a doorway into a multiple and fascinating textual repertoire. It will appear as one of the points of departure through which the students can get a good first impression (to use an Austenian phrase) of the various complexities and enticements of Medieval Literature.

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CARME FONT. LESSONS IN LOVE: READING PETRARCHAN POETRY IN THE CLASSROOM

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Students of Renaissance Literature are faced with a recurrent theme ever since they abandon Geoffrey Chaucer and delve into Elizabethan poetry: Petrarchan tropes of love. It is relatively easy to teach the main tenets of this major change in sensibility, but it is less so to make sense of the nuances and rhetorical adaptations found in Elizabethan poets, including Shakespeare.

  The following approach to teaching Petrarchan love includes an exercise in textual comparison between extracts of Petrarch's *Il Canzionere* with selected fragments by Edmund Spenser, Thomas Wyatt, Philip and Mary Sidney. Students work in groups of three and they are given two sheets of paper. Sheet A features unattributed excerpts of Petrarchan poetry in English from Petrarch (translated) and diverse Elizabethan poets—both men and women. Sheet B contains those same fragments but in Italian translation, where appropriate. Students are asked to match the English with the Italian segments and justify the Petrarchan elements in them. Thus, students learn to recognize the tropes of Petrarchism, identify its provenance and its wealth of textual variations.

Keywords: Love, Poetry, Petrarchism, Renaissance, Elizabethan poetry.

It is often the case that lecturers in Early Modern literature complain about students' lack of basic skills for reading poetry. Even though they may tackle the study of Philip Sydney, John Donne and John Milton late in their undergraduate curriculum, after they have had their fair share of Romantics and 20th-century verse, students are suddenly thrown into a literary and material culture which is neither ancient nor quite modern. One of the main difficulties in getting the knack of poetry written between 1550 and 1700 is understanding its literary context. The historian of culture Peter Burke defined the "Renaissance problem" as being "for us in the twenty-first century, and almost as much as the Middle Ages, an alien or at least a half-alien culture" (2013: 3). While teachers typically devote one or two sessions to describing the main tenets of European Renaissance thought and what it meant in terms of pairs of opposites (man and God, science and art, rationality and mysticism, private and public, man and

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woman) students are bemused at the apparent contradiction in what we teach about Renaissance's theory and their textual encounters in a classroom environment. Does it make any sense at all to speak of anthropocentrism when many of the poems have a strong religious base? If Humanism was an intellectual and cultural movement that flourished in the Renaissance as a reaction to the abuses of state power, how come that its poetry and prose are entangled in the politics of court patronage? Students are also at a loss with the large amounts of classical references—from Ovid to Lucretius and Horace—that they have to muster to make any head and tail of Shakespeare's sonnets, for instance, while they despair at the strong theological base of George Herbert or Erasmus. Without proper teaching guidance, tackling Renaissance poetry for the first time might be a daunting experience indeed.

Despite the adagio that university students do not care for any poetic beings of the past, my teaching practice informs me that a growing number of undergrad souls are willing to put their smartphones down and recant their Millennial heretical beliefs about the futility of tradition. They may feel curious about alchemy, be sensitive to the visual impact of poetic design, or have a personal interest in Republican politics and the limits of individual free will. Then it is the right time to talk about love.

Petrarch, our Friend

Foundational moments, whether real or imaginary, feature prominently in the historiography of Literature. Since most readers nowadays identify poetry with intimacy, feelings, and the relationship between the sexes, we wish to ascertain the first time that humans decided to pour their hearts out on papyrus. Who crafted the first love poem? Sappho, from Lesbos in the 630 B.C. they say, and it sounds erotic enough. But firsts are quickly superseded by seconds and thirds, and by the time you reach the Medieval tradition of courtly love romances and the Italian *quattrocento*, you realize that the history of Literature is a massive palimpsest—to borrow Kristeva's notion of intertextuality—in which new traditions are created on the layers of previous ones. This was the case with Petrarch, the 'father of Humanism', the alpha and omega of love poetry, since his eclectic synthesis of Medieval philosophy and medicine

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inaugurated a fashion for falling in love that would have such a profound influence on Western civilization.

The notion that falling in love could have been invented or 'refashioned', to use a New Historicist term, is intriguing to most students. In my role as early modernist and lecturer in the English Department at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, I have to be true to a proper genesis and contextualization of ideas while instilling the habit of both individual and guided reading. Our curriculum of 'Literatura del Renaixement i la Il·lustració' starts with an overview of Elizabethan poets that paves the way for our focus on Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and one play (typically, *Romeo and Juliet* or *The Merchant of Venice*), metaphysical poetry, Milton's *Paradise Lost,* and highlights of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels.* All of these neatly packed to be served and consumed in four months.

It is a challenge to teach the English Petrarchan tradition of Thomas Wyatt, Philip Sydney and Edmund Spenser without a proper understanding of the *Dolce Stil Novo* and Petrarch's elaboration of Platonic love. Still, there is no time and no working knowledge of the Italian language to do a comparatist study. It is my experience as well that approaching the three famous English courtier poets in succession lowers attention spans. A magic concoction of sorts is needed to keep the spirits high. Since most students enrolled on this subject have read medieval romances in 'Orígens de la Literatura Anglesa' the previous semester, I opt for patterns of continuity and change by devising a class group exercise entitled *Petrarchan Adaptations: Which one is the Most Petrarchan?*

The forty-odd students who attend class are given a handout with ten excerpts from poetry of Petrarchan influence. The chosen samples are by Thomas Wyatt, "I Find no Peace"; Thomas Wyatt's translation of "Rime 140"; Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*; Edmund Spenser's *The Visions of Petrarch*; Mary Herbert's "Psalm 52"; Petrarch's "Rima 140" in Italian; Petrarch's *Triomfo dell'Eternità* in English translation; Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti* "Sonnet 35"; and Mary Wroth's *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*. The excerpts are loosely distributed on the page lay-out without following a chronological or authorial order. After an introduction to the biographical and literary profiles of Wyatt, Spenser, and the Sidney circle, which

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includes Mary Herbert and Mary Wroth, we devote a close-reading session on the description and recognition of Petrarchan tropes and the main characteristics of the sonnet sequence: Petrarch's sonnet sequence in *Il Canzionere* and his lyric songs to a woman she actually did not know, Laura; the significance of gaze as the sensorial organ for registering the *imago* of the beloved, the cult of the beloved, the psychological intensity of desire as a painful experience, touch and remoteness, the hyperbolic platonic construction of being in love with love, oxymoronic tropes of fire, crying, macrocosmic images and contortions of the flesh. The class discussion is geared so that students understand the particular appropriations of Petrarchan thinking in Wyatt, with his gloomy view of love as being tainted by the corruptions of the spirit and of women as manipulative powerful females. We also address the links between poetry, sexuality and Elizabethan court politics in Sidney's circle, with particular attention to women's contribution to the sonnet sequence, and Spenser's intimate associations with love and writing and his appeal to emotional independence. Discussion also revolves around the place women occupied in Petrarchism, which was predominantly a male discourse. By way of an answer, one might focus on the degree of autonomy a male poet allows the woman in his verse. She—and the personal pronoun is barely appropriate since 'she' is 'his' creation—is entirely a product of the discourse that she supposedly shares. She is asserted to control her lover's destiny, and yet she is allowed to operate only within a structure of control and domination.

The purposes of the exercise would be the following: a) recognize the different levels of intensity and commitment to the original Petrarchan ideal, both in content and form. b) recognize and interpret the tropes of how the Petrarchan lover describes his or her affections and afflictions; c) compare the texts and look carefully at borrowings and adaptations, especially in translations; d) understand the critical approaches to studying Elizabethan poetry: New Historicism, Feminism, and Historiography.

It would be wrong to assume that students are ill-equipped or unmotivated to delve into these excerpts and shape the information they have learned into critical thinking. Their opinions might not be particularly sophisticated, but while some

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individuals in a group might feel overwhelmed at first, most manage to offer their insight and, if necessary, write down their thoughts and ideas.

Students are meant to grade their choices from most to least Petrarchan and to justify them. In several cases, individuals came up with the decision that Petrarch's Rima 140 written in Italian was *less* Petrarchan than its translation by Wyatt:

> The long love that in my thought doth harbour,
> And in mine heart doth keep his residence,
> Into my face presseth with bold pretense
> And therein campeth, spreading his banner.
>
> She that me learneth to love and suffer
> And will that my trust and lust's negligence
> Be reined by reason, shame, and reverence
> With his hardiness taketh displeasure.
> (Wyatt, "Rime 140")

> Amor, che nel penser mio vive e regna
> e 'l suo seggio maggior nel mio cor tene,
> talor armato ne la fronte vene;
> ivi si loca et ivi pon sua insegna.
>
> Quella ch'amare e sofferir ne 'nsegna,
> e vol che'l gran desio, l'accesa spene,
> ragion, vergogna, e reverenza affrene,
> di nostro ardir fra se stessa si sdegna.
> (Petrarch, "Rima 140")

Two students, who were not conversant in Italian but could understand the general meaning due to the linguistic proximity of the Spanish, Catalan and the Italian languages, argued that Petrarch's poetry sounded "more serious and authentic". They quoted the second quatrain of the *ottava* in which, especially in the last two lines, the poetic voice places the emphasis on the negligence of reason and the rule of desire in an explicit manner. However, other students decided that the first Italian stanza by Petrarch (lines 1-4) was the 'real Petrarch' because the poet laureate recreated the psychological drama in a vivid manner.

Edmund Spenser's version was graded high in the scale of Petrarchism for its abundant use of tropes of gazing and female devotion. However, students realized as well that this Petrarchism was in appearance only, since the content betrayed the

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fundamental purpose of exalting the lady by hinting at the harmful effects of an obsessive love.

> Be vext with Sights, that do her Peace molest.
> And ye fair Lady, in whose bounteous Brest
> All heavenly Grace and Vertue shrined is,
> When ye these Rimes do read, and view the rest,
> Loath this base World, and think of Heaven's Bliss:
> And though ye be the fairer of God's Creatures,
> Yet think, that Death shall spoil your goodly Features.
> (Spenser, *Visions of Petrarch*)

Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* was largely considered as non-Petrarchan since neither the tropes nor the purpose of exalting the lady through a Platonic observation created devotional love. On the contrary, the poet refuses to think as a Petrarchan lover, and the effect is to mark a healthy distance from Italian poetic practice.

> Yet those lips so sweetly swelling
> Do invite a stealing kiss;
> Now will I but venture this;
> Who will read, must first learn spelling.
> Oh Sweet kiss — but ah, she is waking,
> Louring beauty chastens me
> Now I will away hence flee;
> Fool, more fool, for no more taking.
> (Philip Sidney *Astrophil and Stella*, 7)

While it is true that lips and other body parts succumb to the effects of love, which stir the individual, these are not enough to create in the lover the sense that he is being consumed by the force of love that he himself has generated.

And what about women? The issue on whether women had a Renaissance at all triggers a short but lively class discussion on this famous statement by Joan Kelly, who argued that the advances in learning and education for women were put to the service of men (1984: 19). However, many students are not in agreement with this statement, and consider that Wroth's *Urania* and Mary Herbert's own sonnet sequence are intelligent exercises in versification that attest to the fact that privileged women who received an education were well-equipped for the task of translating, composing and interpreting, since they normally gave a much more personalized insight into the experience of love:

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> My trust on his true love
> Truly attending
> Shall never thence remove,
> Never see ending.
> (Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, VI)

Sidney's definition of true love as infinite and unchangeable ("shall never thence remove") reminds us not of Petrarch directly but of Shakespeare's *Sonnet* 116, so when students read the Bard's verses "Or bends with the remover to remove:/ O no; it is an ever-fixed mark" we have a chance to discuss the constant borrowings that took place within networks of Elizabethan courtiers, which both Sidney and Shakespeare shared.

At this point, when discussions about which poet crafted a most highly personalized notion of love (Petrarchan in intensity but far less so in its tropes), *Amoretti* by Edmund Spenser took the lead:

> Yet are mine eyes so filled with the store
> Of that faire sight, that nothing else they brooke,
> But lothe the things which they did like before,
> And can no more endure on them to looke.
> All this worlds glory seemeth vayne to me,
> And all their showes but shadowes, saving she.
> (*Amoretti* by Edmund Spenser, "Sonnet 35")

Students become aware that Spenser is pointing at the almost repulsive falseness of Petrarchan forms and tropes. Still, he cannot get rid of the sweeping force of Petrarchan love and locks himself and his enshrined lady in a world of his own—a lead that comes in handy to anticipate metaphysical constructions of love in John Donne. We often finish the exercise with a brief round-up discussion on a famous statement by Walter Pater: "Lyrical poetry, precisely because in it we are least able to detach the matter from the form, without a deduction of something that matter itself, is, at least artistically, the highest and most complete form of poetry" (1998: 87). Many students would agree that good lyrical poetry cannot be dissociated from its form, but they would likewise acknowledge, after the *Petrarchan Adaptations* exercise, that the form of the adapted poem cannot be replaced by its original Ur-form, if the latter were to be recovered and implanted on the former.

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Poetic Tradition in Progress

With a simple exercise of intertextual recognition and interpretation, students have shown whether they are capable of identifying the fundamental elements of Petrarchan poetry in a wide range of 16th and 17th-century contemporary poets. Similarities stand out as well as departures from the model, and this is a major trait in Renaissance poetry that can only be ascertained when reading poems collectively. Katharine Wilson rightly stated that "much of what was considered the best of Renaissance letters was derivative in some sense" (1987: 30). Hence imitation was creation, and to be imitated was the greatest of privileges. In order to illustrate this latter point, students are kindly invited to write their own Petrarchan quatrain and justify their choice of Petrarchism: is it intensely emotional or formulaic? Is it Epicurean or Neo-Platonist? More important than struggling with three or four more pages of Spenser and Sidney's sequences is the realization that Petrarchism was a tradition with its own dynamics of conversion that coalesced into the talent of the particular poet (either male or female) who dared to fuse with it. Burckhardt acknowledged that "it is the most serious difficulty of the history of civilization that a great intellectual process must be broken into single, and often into what seems arbitrary categories, in order to be in any way intelligible" (1990: 23). As such, students may realize with a simple exercise in intertextual observation that literary traditions may die out, but do not quite completely disappear.

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SARA MARTÍN ALEGRE. GENERATING ONLINE PUBLICATIONS WITH UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS: TWO EXPERIENCES

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This paper deals with the experience of producing work publishable online with graduate students, using the repository of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, the Dipòsit Digital de Documentació or DDD. In 2013-14 I taught the fourth year elective 'Estudis Culturals (en Anglès): The *Harry Potter* Case'. This resulted in two volumes: the first, *Addictive and Wonderful: The Experience of Reading the Harry Potter Series*, gathers together 56 essays on the students' experience of reading the series as children. The second, *Charming and Bewitching: Considering the Harry Potter Series* offers 33 of the 40 papers written for the course; both volumes are book-length. I describe here how I dealt with the combined task of being teacher and editor in one. In 2014-15, I repeated the experience for the elective course 'Estudis de Gènere (en Anglès)', albeit less successfully. I published the volume *Gender and Feminism: The Students' View*, which offers a collection of informal essays by students but decided finally not to publish a second volume with their papers. The lesson that I learned was that students want very much to express their experiences and opinions but that the quality of the papers they produce depends on a high commitment to their topic rarely found at an undergraduate level.

Keywords: Online publication, academic repository, undergraduate papers, *Harry Potter*

An academic repository is an institutional tool which serves two purposes: a) gathering together in digital format the documentation relative to a university's production, and b) making this documentation available to the general public, and not just the specialists, following Open Access policies. The DDD, or Dipòsit Digital de Documentació of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (http://ddd.uab.cat), was activated in 2012, following a directive by the Consell de Govern of April that year (http://serveis.uab.cat/ddd/content/reglament). Article 2 of its normative refers to our institutional, scientific and teaching production, though it does not specify particular types of documents (it does in the case of BA, MA and PhD dissertations).

At the time the DDD went online academic self-publication had already become quite a big bee in my bonnet. My blog post of 11 February 2012 cheerfully announced

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that 'Self-publication is here to stay'; I closed the piece by speculating about what would happen if I did the experiment of uploading an article for self-publication on my web (I didn't have one yet). A second post of 15 November 2013 describes my glee at having finally managed to open my own website and thus finally have a space for online self-publication. At some point in late 2013 or early 2014, though, I visited the Humanities Library for a meeting with the staff in charge of the DDD and they convinced me that digital repositories have many advantages over websites as regards online publication. In the last two years, then, I have uploaded about 50 documents available online from the DDD, including some of my books, articles and book chapters (both already published and unpublished), conference presentations and translations of my academic work. These documents include the 3 most closely connected with teaching that I want to present today.

In the academic year 2013-14 I had the wonderful chance of teaching a monographic subject on the *Harry Potter* series. I used our fourth year elective 'Cultural Studies (in English)' as the umbrella label for the course, which thus got a subtitle 'Cultural Studies (in English): The *Harry Potter* Case'. I tend to write if possible an article in connection to the electives I teach and in this case I intended to write a piece on the students' experience of reading J.K. Rowling's series as children. For this, I asked them to produce a brief personal essay of about 1,000 words based on very basic instructions: recall when you came in touch with *Harry Potter*, who gave you the first book or took you to the cinema to see one of the adaptations, how the reading of the series progressed, what it meant for you. Since I wanted to reach the convenient figure of 50 essays I also invited other students to participate: from the UAB, undergrads who had missed the chance to register in my course and MA Literature students who were also Potterheads (Potter fans); other undergrads from the UOC and Oviedo who had expressed an interest in my course and even colleagues who offered guest lectures. I added my own essay and the result was a list of 56 pieces, enough for the purposes of my article. This, by the way, is available from the DDD in its English version and has been published in Spanish in a monographic issue of the journal *Espéculo*.

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When I read the essays I was utterly pleased to discover that my students, or I should say collaborators, had written very candid pieces, often moving portraits of their childhood, including in some cases very unhappy experiences. I realised that no academic work I could write would ever have the impact of these essays; they were also a beautiful invitation for other students to consider their own experience of reading *Harry Potter*. The essays also proved the main hypothesis I set out to defend, namely that Rowling's series was instrumental in turning a whole generation, the one born in the early 1990s, into avid readers—unlike what is usually believed by the academics who claim that the series rather spoiled the taste of young readers.

Eventually, it dawned on me that the DDD offered the perfect solution to the problem of how to acquire an audience for the students' essays. I did consider briefly publishing the essays in book format, yet knowing about J.K. Rowling's fierce control over any kind of publication that attempts to bank on the popularity of her series, I soon dismissed the idea. I did not see, either, who would buy a book in English by students from a Spanish university. The advantage of DDD online publication is that although it would generate no benefits, it would generate no costs either, no waste of time in finding an interested publisher and no hassle from Rowling's solicitors…

The final volume amounted to 72,000 words, quite a substantial amount well within the range of a proper book. I called it *Addictive and Wonderful: The Experience of Reading the Harry Potter Series*, following student Marta Canals' happy description of how it felt to read the heptalogy. The number of hours I put into editing the volume was, I believe, adequate to the end target though I had to make an effort at mastering aspects of Word which I had so far ignored, like how to produce nice covers. In this case, I came across a wonderful illustration in Deviant Art by Jody Harvey-Brown, and the author gave me her kind permission to reproduce it, as happened with the not less wonderful illustration by Genzoman, also a Potterhead, which I chose for the second volume.

The statistics of the DDD show that by 1 April 2016, *Addictive and Wonderful* has generated 1017 downloads from persons located in 25 countries. This is in my view extremely satisfactory and compensation enough for all my hard work. I did not expect, however, the second volume *Charming and Bewitching: Considering the Harry*

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Potter Series to go past the 1,000 download barrier, broken already with 1,657 downloads from a similar number of countries and on the same date. Unlike the accessible, exciting *Addictive and Wonderful*, the volume *Charming and Bewitching* is, rather, a sober academic effort. Seeing how unique the experience of teaching *Harry Potter* was becoming, I invited mid-semester my students to publish their course papers gathered together in a volume. To ease my task as teacher/editor, I drew a list of the topics I wanted to see covered and students chose whatever interested them with, on the whole, amazing accidental cohesion.

I soon foresaw that some of the papers would be unlikely to reach a minimum standard for publication and, so, some key topics would finally be left uncovered. This is exactly what happened in the case of one of my favourite topics: why the portrait of James Potter, Harry's father, is so negative in the series. The gentleman who wrote it did not put the required energy into it, and I had to discard it. The second main problem was that whereas the writing in *Addictive and Wonderful* was less formal, very fresh and, thus, soon ready for online publication, the papers for *Charming and Bewitching* required intensive editing. The final volume is 88,000 words long and includes 33 of the 40 essays submitted. I had to correct the papers anyway in the process of marking them but the truth is that some went through extensive revision. My task as teacher/editor was certainly demanding but I believe that the hard work I did was valuable for my students, who got a taste of academic life quite close to reality. They can now be proud that our joint volume has reached many more readers than most proper academic volumes published today.

Having learned, then, how to produce materials with students, I proceeded next the following academic year, 2014-15, to continue the experiment with the elective 'Gender Studies (in English)'—with mixed results. Unlike the improvised methods I had used to develop the volumes on *Harry Potter*, this time I started with clearer ideas about how to produce again two volumes (one personal, the other academic). Or so I thought.

For the first volume, *Gender and Feminism: The Students' View* I invited students to submit a short essay, again about 1,000 words, on their view of these issues. A bit accidentally, my suggestion that they spoke to men and women of older generations

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among family and friends in order to learn how much the views on gender have changed in recent years turned into an informal instruction about what to include in the essay. Thus, some offer precious insights into the contemporary family life of the generation born in the 1990s to working mothers and fathers. I was once again surprised at the candid tone the students decided to use and in one case, that of a sexually explicit essay, I asked the author whether she understood that this would go online under her name. She was fine with this, and so was I since this was a particularly great essay.

The volume is a relatively modest 39,000 words long and gathers together 33 essays—regrettably only 6 by men, including 1 by a transgender man. I say regrettably because I would have loved to have a better balanced view of gender among our students. The anecdote is that one of the male students happened to be very well known for his extremely conservative views (or radically patriarchal, perhaps) and, at one point, I hesitated to publish his essay, finding it sexist. I realised then that I was being censorious and so I let it be.

I had carefully planned a second volume gathering the students' papers together and reflecting my division of the course into segments for feminism, Masculinity Studies, gay and lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, intergender and any other sexual identity we could think of. Alas, this was not to be. The list of proposed papers looked gorgeous but the actual papers were quite below the standard of their *Harry Potter* counterparts. Seeing that I could only publish safely about 10 or 12 out of 33, I abandoned the volume, much to my chagrin and disappointment. I had already produced a very nice cover…

The lesson I learned was twofold. One is that students want very much to express their experiences and opinions. I must stress that the essays in *Addictive and Wonderful* and *Gender and Feminism* did not count for assessment, as I could not possibly award marks to such personal texts. None of the students in either class complained about this and all wrote their essays to all intents and appearances with commitment and enthusiasm. In contrast, this is what failed in the 'Gender Studies' papers. The *Harry Potter* course tapped an amazing reservoir of academic energies that some students, I'm sure, did not even know they possessed. This was a topic they

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loved and cared for, and they were so surprised to find themselves writing a paper on the house-elves or the dark magic behind the Horcruxes that they somehow used a different kind of energy from the one habitually employed in writing papers. The students in my 'Gender Studies' course were interested in their chosen subjects but not fascinated and, so, they performed as students usually do, producing some very good papers and some very bad ones.

Since then I have tried other experiments in my quest to leave some trace of my teaching behind. In February of 2015 I taught a four-session seminar within the MA in Theatre Studies, specifically for a course on Scenic Arts and Other Arts. I taught a four-session seminar on 'Shakespeare on the Screen' and I invited my ten students to produce with me a bibliography of academic work in Spanish on Shakespeare and to open a list of films based on plays (excluding Shakespeare) on IMDB. The idea is to revise both the bibliography and the list in successive years. The bibliography can be downloaded from my website, not the DDD, as I do not upload onto the DDD what needs to be revised periodically. For the IMDB list my target was 25 films but we ended with more than 50. And I learned plenty from students' suggestions.

This academic year 2015-16 I am again trying something new. I am currently teaching an elective course on science fiction, formally called 'English Prose: Considering the Genre of Science Fiction". I have selected 50 SF short stories of high quality and interest, 25 by men and 25 by women of all periods from the 1930s to the present. Considering the number of students registered, only 15, each student will have to fill in an 'index card' for three stories and then present one in class. Then I'll gather together the 'cards' for the 50 stories and thus I'll be able to publish online an innovative guide to reading good SF short fiction in English.

What do I expect to gain my all the time-consuming, laborious work I have described here? One aim or target is opening up a space to share with students beyond assessment, a space which allows them to be heard. The second aim is to turn the exercises done for assessment into something which connects with real academic life beyond the classroom. In the case of the *Harry Potter* papers students often told me they realised that one thing was writing for the teacher and quite a different thing thinking of reaching a much wider audience online—this made them feel self-

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conscious but also, as I have noted, more committed. Also, as I noticed, proud. My third aim is something I have already mentioned: leaving a trace of what I teach, particularly in the case of the elective courses. Like many other teachers I find myself developing new elective courses quite regularly, courses which leave nothing permanent beyond the syllabus.

As a student told me, and very rightly so, online publication is no guarantee of permanence at all and, surely, many digital documents are just gathering digital dust. Fair enough. With the TFGs or BA dissertations, however, we're learning to give basic academic work some projection through the DDD—sometimes with quite surprising results: Melissa Caro's TFG on Sherlock Holmes, which I tutored in 2013, has generated more than 2,400 downloads (1 April 2016), a certainly impressive figure. The exercises produced in the other undergrad subjects, however, are seen just as that, as mere exercises. Yet, I have discovered that this need not be so. The path I am just beginning to walk on looks very enticing and I invite you to join me.

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David Owen. Of Sticks and Carrots in the Literature Class: 'Yes' to Reading Tests; 'No' to Exams

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This discussion proposes, on the one hand, that course-initial reading tests in Literature be mandatory to ensure that students are satisfactorily familiar with their texts, but, on the other hand, that class examinations of literary texts be eliminated, on the assumption that such evaluation is singularly unsuited to adequately demonstrating fuller comprehension.

My own assumption in any given class is that around 80% of students have not the required reading. This makes constructive, meaningful teaching practically impossible. Since registration cannot usually be linked to reading tests, I propose that failing such tests should automatically reduce the final grade available to 65% of the original, and discuss a range of related concerns. For class examinations, I suggest that this format is never an ideal means of sufficiently evaluating comprehension of literary texts or critical ideas on these texts.

Eliminating exams and replacing them with an emphasis on the essay, making this the central instrument for evaluation and for students' engagement with literary study (bringing into much closer focus the importance of critical sources), would greatly enhance students' understanding of the study of Literature. In conjunction with mandatory reading tests, this would also foster the quality and effectiveness of our teaching.

Keywords: Reading tests, literature examinations, course registration, assessment

I would once again like to take the opportunity offered by this forum for discussion to use it, in effect, as a teaching think-tank in which to raise questions that, in other contexts, would never get beyond the most initial of formulations and that would, almost certainly, be shot down from their blue-sky thinking by the heavy guns of pragmatic administrative objection.

In light of this, my discussion proposes, on the one hand, that course-initial reading tests in Literature be mandatory to ensure that students are satisfactorily familiar with their texts, but, on the other hand, that class examinations of literary texts be eliminated, on the assumption that such evaluation is singularly unsuited to adequately demonstrating fuller literary comprehension.

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On the basis of my own perception of in-class student response, my assumption in any given session that I teach on Literature (an assumption that I freely admit has no independent scientific confirmation) is that around 80% of students have not done the required reading, or at least have not done it anywhere near adequately. This makes productive, meaningful teaching practically impossible. Although registration in my own faculty cannot be linked to reading tests (that is, it is not administratively feasible to halt full registration until a pre-course reading test has been passed), I propose that a course-initial reading test should anyway be given to students and that failing such a test should automatically reduce the final grade available to 65% (or even 50%) of the original total grade. This, it might be said, is the stick.

As for the carrot, I suggest that formal written examinations in Literature are never an ideal means of sufficiently evaluating comprehension of literary texts or critical ideas on these texts. The nature and specific complexities at academic and individual, personal level of such tests makes them highly unsuitable as a balanced, calibrated opportunity to demonstrate acquisition of the skills of literary criticism. Eliminating exams and replacing them with an emphasis on the essay, making this the central instrument for evaluation and for students' engagement with literary study (bringing into much closer focus the importance of critical sources), would greatly enhance students' understanding of the study of Literature, and bring it more fully in line with professional critical praxis in this field, as well as providing a far more solid and relevant basis for those students who may subsequently wish to take their studies to postgraduate levels. I believe that, in conjunction with mandatory reading tests, this would greatly foster the quality and effectiveness of our teaching.

Many years ago, just about to enter my second year as an undergraduate in English at the University of Edinburgh, I came face to face with the dreaded Reading Test. It was 'dreaded' not because of any intrinsic difficulty (far from it, in fact, as I will consider further below) but rather because it was drastically effective in weeding out anyone who hadn't adequately prepared their reading for the upcoming course. The programme at the time—it has now morphed through several iterations—established the literature content for the first term in year two as the nineteenth-century novel. Before any of us was allowed to formally register for our second-year courses, we had

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to take an obligatory reading test in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*; Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*; and Dickens' *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield* and *Bleak House*. These were not the only texts we would read in that first term, but they constituted the basic diet, so to speak.

What was the content of the test? Here, I have to admit that I'm working more from pure memory than from fact (with characteristic teenage disregard for future professional desiderata, I blithely binned the test as soon as I left the examination hall). But I do remember being distinctly taken aback by its questions. At that point, just past my nineteenth birthday, my entire secondary and early-university education had prepared me—quite expertly, I have to recognise—for the sort of close-reading interpretative analysis that most of my formal exams up to and beyond my finals took for granted as the essential modus operandi of academic assessment. But in this case, as far as I recall (and as subsequent discussions with my lecturers confirmed), the essential purpose of the test was to leave aside any requirement for analysis and to focus, instead, purely on content. The aim of all this, then, was to have clear evidence that students had actually read the texts in question prior to attending the lectures on those works and authors.

In this respect, again inasmuch as I recall, the questions were along the lines of "In *Wuthering Heights*, where did Joseph used to give his sermons to the children?" (answer: in the barn loft); "In *Pride and Prejudice*, where do Darcy and Wickham meet for the first time in the narrative? And where had they met before this?" (answers: in Meryton high street; at Pemberley, as children); "In *Bleak House*, who is Esther Summerson's mother?" (answer: Honoria, Lady Dedlock). And so on.

Notice, to make myself very clear at this point, there was nothing in this test about the particular significance—socially, politically, legally—of the name "Dedlock"; no-one was asked to consider, for instance, the Jacobin/Anti-Jacobin question in relation to Darcy or Wickham; and no comment was required on the telling discrepancy between Joseph's strict religious inclinations and his utter lack of any human warmth. Nothing of the sort; the purpose was only to determine whether or not we had actually read the text.

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That is, the essential objective of a reading test is, in effect, the polar opposite of a Literature exam (about which I have more to say, later). It is simply to determine whether students are sufficiently familiar with the texts—at the basic level of content—in order to adequately follow the lectures on these works throughout the course; there is no requirement of more substantial text analysis or discussion. If it is clear that such familiarity can be assumed, lecturers can begin their course focussing more fully on other aspects of the subject; but if such familiarity cannot be assumed, then we either have a situation such as that which held at Edinburgh—namely, that students are then given a further test a week or so later in which to show that they have read the works in question (until which time registration in the course is postponed; permanently so if the second test is failed)—or we go ahead with our courses under the more-than-likely assumption that most students will not have prepared suitably for the classes they are attending.

As teachers, and most particularly as teachers of Literature to speakers of another language, we have a natural tendency—generally quite correct—to compensate, in class and directly, for our students' shortcomings, whether these be linguistic (by adapting the level of our language to suit their comprehension) or literature-related (by ensuring that the contexts to which we are referring are clear to the class). In the Literature class, however, I would say that this leads us more or less unconsciously towards teaching for shortcoming, filling in those gaps that we need to have completely clear if course content is to be in any way meaningful. Too often we end up taking about plot, if not entirely to the detriment of all other considerations then at least rather too much for the study of the subject at university level. But this is surely one circumstance in which teachers' concerns with covering student needs are mistaken; if the message we communicate through such teaching is that the course itself will largely compensate for any prior lack of familiarity with the text, where then is the incentive to do the reading before the course begins? Yet students who systematically attend Literature classes without having reasonably prepared for the lectures are a sort of classroom tourist group, floating through the course without ever connecting meaningfully to its deeper objectives. If, as this discussion assumes, many and (however disagreeable to us it may be to accept this) possibly most students of

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Literature fall into this category, then constructive, meaningful teaching becomes practically impossible, as I have already indicated. All engagement by the lecturer with the deeper issues of the works in question will essentially be lost on such students, as their unfamiliarity with the underlying text will act against their fuller comprehension of the critical discussion being forwarded.

Teachers who can reliably count on the fact that their students have already gained a solid grasp of the plot content in the text(s) under study are freed from the niggling need to ensure that the class is up-to-speed on this issue, and can therefore engage with the more advanced teaching concerns that are proper to university study of literature, not least (and again, I will return to this later) a far greater focus on theoretical background and critical responses to the works in question. But clearly, if there is an administrative reticence to using pre-course reading tests as a temporary obstacle to full registration, alternative means of ensuring the enforcement and validity of such a test must be explored.

One approach, which I think is perfectly feasible, is to connect the result of the test to the available overall grade. If the student passes a first-day reading test, the final grade available for attainment throughout the course would remain the theoretical 100% that all courses provide in their evaluation system. If they fail, this automatically falls to 65% maximum (i.e., the student cannot thereafter gain a grade higher than 65%); if they fail the second test—programmed, for example, one week later—the available grade falls further still, to a maximum of 50%. In either case, the chance to obtain a high grade will have been lost and, particularly in the second case, the possibility of an overall fail for the entire course becomes far greater. The incentive to do the reading before the test is, therefore, rather considerable.

So much for the stick; now for the carrot. Having ensured (we hope) that students fulfil their reading requirements, how can we make use of this to ensure a better quality of teaching and a more efficient and satisfying form of learning? My answer to this is to propose that we eliminate the traditional (written) Literature exam and replace it with a focus on the essay.

To start with, what exactly are we examining in a Literature exam that cannot more adequately be assessed in other formats? Surely, as I have suggested above, our

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concerns should be far beyond the purely "mechanical" issues of plot. But, if that is the case, in what sense can we reasonably sustain the idea that an examination format provides a suitable framework for the balanced, considered and research-based discussion of literature with which we encourage our students to engage in becoming more proficient and critically informed readers of Literature?

Leaving aside the essential unfairness inherent in any examination (it hardly needs pointing out that everyone can have an 'off' day or that exams favour those students better able to perform test-based requirements, which do not necessarily reflect deeper understanding) most traditional examinations preclude the possibility of using precisely those resources—critical studies, for instance—that distinguish a more elementary approach to Literature from a more advanced engagement with its concerns. Students basically prepare for their examinations by ensuring their familiarity with the texts in question and, in the best of cases, by memorising one or two critical insights from the secondary literature. Is that really the best that we can hope for? Is that really an effective and—ultimately—useful means of assessing students' ability to develop their humanistic abilities and sensibilities?

Unfortunately, although this is of course not their intention, conventional examinations of Literature (unless directly examining critical sources themselves, which is unusual) basically discourage the very critical tools whose use we aim to develop in our students' fuller connection with the study of Literature, since the application of and reference to such critical tools can only ever be—at best—minimal and approximate within the contexts of the formal written examination.

My own view is that the class paper—that is, an essay allowing students the opportunity to develop an interpretative idea with direct reference to relevant critical bibliography—is not only an obviously better format through which to assess students' acquisition of the subject they are currently studying, but it is also (and, in my opinion, far more significantly) one that allows students to develop their understanding both of the texts under study and of the critical apparatuses that surround them. Moreover, a class paper that is the result of perhaps several tutorial-based consultation sessions in which the basic idea for a particular argument will have been reviewed in light of relevant critical sources, and then discussed, re-formulated and essentially trialled

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before final commitment to paper is a far more instructive, constructive and empowering process than the possibly hit-or-miss format of the written examination. Otherwise, how do we propose that students should learn the skills called for in the calibrated use of secondary sources applied to their own discussion of Literature? By what means—other than by teachers simply indicating to their students that such-and-such a critic is 'essential reading', or has made 'a significant contribution'—are students to attain the ability to use such sources effectively? To state it clearly, students cannot learn this through some sort of osmosis: the uptake of this procedure—one that is absolutely central to all advanced humanistic study—simply cannot be assumed to take place without the structured and systematic instruction of this on our part. Yet, if the principal instrument of course assessment is the written exam (or of it is at least an important part of the overall evaluation), then this very format—as we have seen—is singularly unsuited to consolidating this most essential aspect of students' philological training.

As an aside to the above comments, I would also like to suggest that courses requiring a class paper in addition to a written exam are, perhaps, suffering from something of an identity crisis. What is the point of an exam if we also provide the students with the opportunity to develop their ideas far more productively through the essay? If the exam essentially replicates essay-type questions, then the results can at best only ever be decaffeinated versions of the essay responses, which have possibly already been submitted (if the exam is course-final). And if the exam also aims at ensuring that students really have done the required reading by assessing knowledge of plot context, then why not attend to this need at a more effective moment of the course, that is, through a reading test before classes actually begin? Either way, the format itself appears to me to be inherently unsuitable.

In short, if our real aim is to encourage students' active engagement with the development of their humanistic abilities to interpret the deeper significance of works of Literature, both as literary-linguistic texts and as cultural 'artefacts', through discussion and evaluation of related critical and theoretical responses and as a means of fostering their fuller and more creative and dynamic understanding of the subject, then the tutored class essay as a tool for evaluation is, I believe, immeasurably

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superior to the conventional written examination. But, precisely in order to better provide students with an effective introduction to those critical and theoretical responses through class-based discussion of the works under study, teachers need the assurance that students have, first and foremost, done the required reading if the classes are to avoid simply being spaces for discussing the plot.

If these two 'conditions' were brought into play—that is, if we ensured that the required reading had been done and that student assessment were through the tutored essay—my view is that we could then attend far better to our teaching objectives, most especially by contributing in a more direct, more guided and ultimately far more constructive way to developing the skills that our students must necessarily acquire if they are to become competent and effective graduates in Literature.

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BILL PHILLIPS. FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT OF FIRST YEAR ENGLISH LITERATURE STUDENTS

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One of the most serious problems facing the degree of English Studies is the high drop out rate during the first year. According to information provided by the Facultat de Filologia at the Universitat de Barcelona, the first year drop out rate during the 2012-13 academic year was 22.4%. The following year (2013-14) the rate rose 4 points to 26.5%. Although the reasons for this high drop out rate are not available (see Gairín et al. 2010), we feel it is necessary and useful to look into the specific needs of first year students in the hope that a more intensive tutoring of their learning would lead to some improvement in the situation. Consequently, lecturers involved in the teaching of the first year course 'Literatures in English up to the 17th Century' within the degree in 'English Studies' for the academic year 2014-2015, have introduced a method of continuous assessment that leans heavily towards the idea of formative assessment.

Keywords: Assessment, drop-out rate, first year students, feedback, English Literature.

The current situation

'Literatures in English up to the 17th Century' is a compulsory first year subject in the form of a survey course dealing with Literature in English from the Middle Ages to the 17th century from a historicist viewpoint. Students read, analyse and debate a selection of texts from the period. This is the first subject students take which specifically focuses on English Literature and it is taught in English. It is a core subject which forms part of the 'basic training' required of first year students by the Ministry of Education and, as a consequence, teachers have little opportunity to introduce new and innovative ideas. This is significant because the perverse situation arises wherein

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students with specific language difficulties at the beginning of their university studies are suddenly faced with texts produced in the Middle Ages. Both the language difficulties involved, and the specific contents themselves, would suggest that these texts are not ideal for a subject given as an introduction to the world of Literature and we believe that this could be one of the direct causes of the drop out rate among undergraduate students. Given that this situation is out of our hands (despite the fact that we have repeatedly asked the pertinent authorities for change), we consider that direct action at student level is the only means of improving learning outcomes.

Initial problems

With regard to the students taking the subject. First year students from English Studies: The subject is taught in the second term and students have already taken a subject of a general nature ('Literature') in the language(s) of the faculty (Catalan/Spanish) in term one. 'Literatures in English up to the 17th Century' is the first subject specializing in the area of English Literature given in that language. At the same time, students also take 'History and Culture of the British Isles', which is also given in English. The rest of the subjects from the second term are linguistic in nature ('English Phonetics and Phonology', 'English Language'). The students are relatively young, mainly between 19 and 21 years of age, with a reasonably acceptable level of communicative English but less so with regard to specific academic use. Currently there are three groups in the morning and one in the evening. All of the lecturers participating in the subject agree that the students tend to participate well and contribute to class debates. On the other hand we have observed that students require close tutoring and are comfortable with close monitoring of their learning.

Language difficulties: Although students generally have a good level of communicative English (oral and written), they present certain specific needs with regard to academic discourse especially in the area of literary criticism. Intensive tutoring is required both with regard to vocabulary and the organisation of structured writing.

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Recognizing the need for teaching innovation

During the academic year 2013-2014, the lecturers involved in the subject (Clara Escoda, Isabel Seguro, Gemma López) met at the beginning of the course to establish a continuous assessment system which would include intensive monitoring and tutoring (tasks of different kinds every three or four weeks). Once the course was over, the lecturers observed that excellent results had been obtained in comparison to previous years especially with regard to a decrease in the drop-out rate. The following year, 2014-2015, together with Bill Phillips, who came back to teaching the subject after a break of a year, we once again assessed the students' needs in order to further improve the students' learning outcomes. Our objective was to improve on what had been achieved the previous year and to analyse precisely how, where and when the improvements had taken place in order to more easily ensure that the situation would continue in the same positive fashion in the following years. Everyone agreed that students should be made aware of their own progress and so it was recognised that the assessment should not only be continuous but formative as well.

Assessment, therefore, took the form of a variety of different tasks assigned fortnightly with the inclusion of self-assessment by the students together with the possibility of intensive feedback by the lecturer (including qualitative and quantitative assessment, personalized feedback and tutorials). With regard to the previous year, two further innovations were introduced. Firstly, we developed tasks which, in the area of teaching innovation, are known as "the inverted classroom" and "collaborative learning". Secondly, we included a register in which we made individual note of the qualitative and quantitative assessment of each student. Finally, towards the end of the course interviews were held with each student in which they received feedback about their learning. Information was also gathered on student satisfaction with regard to the whole assessment system and the teaching innovation project.

Aims

Teaching: In order to cover the specific needs of first year students the introduction of the technique known as the 'inverted classroom' was found to be particularly useful. In other words, rather than base classes on teacher-centred

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methods, we preferred instead to encourage learning through construction rather than transmission. Following the ideas of John Biggs (2005), we turned the classroom away from a teacher-centred space to one where the student is the absolute subject of learning and the method becomes a part of the content. This 'student-learning focus' led to a transformation in the way students prepared material at home before carrying out learning tasks in class. At the same time we optimised classroom time to concentrate on those activities which required student attendance, such as the broadening and testing of previously prepared material. In this way learning revolved around creation rather than memorisation. Similarly, and following the broad-based studies of Johnson (2003) and more specifically to the field of humanities, the work of Sweet & Michaelsen (2012), we found the application of 'team-based learning' to be particularly fruitful.

Learning: Notable progress in the acquisition of critical tools for the analysis of texts in English. Also a marked increase in the students' ability to use and understand primary and secondary sources.

The general and specific aims

Initially there were two main aims: firstly, the question of content. Students had to obtain general knowledge about authors and representative texts in the English language from the period being studied, using vocabulary appropriate to English literary studies, and within the appropriate historical, social and cultural contexts. These aims, which were already provided by the official teaching plan, were joined by others of a nature more specific to first year students recently enrolled at the university. This teaching innovation project is designed to overcome some of the most serious difficulties faced by students in the early stages of their university studies.

An important aim was that students should feel secure in their ability to read critically and that they become aware of their ability and potential as literary critics, as well as their progress in two highly important aspects of academic life, reading and writing, and textual production. Our aim is to prepare new students for the requirements and skills necessary to pursue a degree in English Studies over the next few years, with increasingly specialised subjects, while working on their particular

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needs and weaknesses with regard to critical reading and writing skills, and to make them aware of their own progress and improvement. This objective follows the principles laid out by Wiggins & McTighe in *The Understanding by Design Guide to Creating High-Quality Units* (2011).

Strategies employed to detect specific weaknesses

- Strategies of formative assessment.
- Strategies of self-assessment with feedback.
- Strategies using the inverted classroom, with preparatory work and knowledge acquisition by the student (student-learning focus).
- Collaborative work strategies(team-based learning) and learning among peers.

Action implementation: Activities employed to achieve the aims desired

- *Activity 1*: an examination type test in the form of a short essay based on the first reading carried out in class. A self-assessment sheet was also provided and feedback was given to the students in the next session.

- *Activity 2*: four tests using worksheets. These teamwork exercises also included self-assessment by the students. All materials and resources necessary to complete the task were made available to the students (tablets, mobile phones, bibliography). The teacher gave personalised feedback in the following session (qualitative and quantitative assessment). As the course continued and students increasingly became accustomed to their own learning progress the tests and tasks became more varied and tailored to the class's needs.

- *Activity 3*: Individualised mid-course tutorial with the teacher to monitor the students' progress particularly with regard to the use of resources related to an improvement in academic production.

- *Activity 4*: Essay prepared previously at home but written up in the classroom with all materials necessary for the task to be adequately carried out. Feedback was provided in the next session.

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- *Activity 5*: oral presentations in which the students prepare and present a research project in small groups. In this case the opportunity was taken to provide feedback on the students' oral skills.

Re-considering the initial aims

It was not necessary to make any changes in the initial aims but it was considered appropriate to adapt the form of some of the activities to the needs of the students as they emerged during the course. It was increasingly observed that feedback during the course was particularly important as a means of knowing how and when to adapt assessment to the specific needs of the group.

Tasks programmed with regard to timetabling and expectations

The calendar was followed meticulously in exactly the way the project had initially foreseen it. It is important to note that each phase had to be completed on time in order for the assessment to be truly formative.

Resources, programmes, questionnaires, instructions, materials etc. used in the project

- Resources appropriate to the subject: virtual campus, primary and secondary sources, resources available from the CRAI (Learning and Research Resource Centre) and internet.
- Calendar: A detailed teaching programme with calendar which is distributed among students during the first weak of the course. This programme was available at all times to the students on the subject's virtual campus website.
- Questionnaire about student satisfaction in relation to the subject and, more specifically, questions related to the specific aims of the teaching innovation project: The questionnaire was not complicated (three open questions) and was handed out during the final sessions. It allowed us to reassess the students' level of satisfaction with the course and further consider ways of making improvements for the future.

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- Continuous and formative assessment materials in the shape of essays, worksheets, project proposals (oral presentations).

Changes or adaptations with regard to the organisation, planning, materials used or activities employed that were initially unforeseen

Some changes were necessary. The first activity, an examination type essay, enabled us to more readily assess the students' existing level of knowledge (experience) not only with regard to the course contents but also with regard to the main aims of the project: critical essay writing skills in the English language. At the same time, by including a self-assessment sheet, we were also able to assess the levels of self-awareness the students had in respect to their learning.

From this first test we were able to observe a series of weaknesses which we had not been aware of before the project. For example, an almost entire lack of experience in the use of secondary sources (to the point that most students found themselves plagiarising without initially being aware). Consequently one of the worksheets was decided to draw students towards good academic practice in the use of bibliographical sources.

As the project progressed it became clear that students were improving immensely in their ability to produce good academic writing in English and some of the activities were modified in order to place greater emphasis on the analysis of literary texts in preparation for future more specialised literary studies in the English Studies degree.

Assessment results

Indicators, procedure for the compilation of data

- *Skill 1: Language use*. Assessment indicators: quantitative (students received a detailed report, with their grades for each of the activities carried out. Qualitative (students received individual reports on where their strengths and weaknesses lay and how to improve).
- *Skill 2: Critical texts*. Assessment indicators: quantitative (report/qualitative (personal report and interview).

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- *Skill 3: Use of English for specific purposes (academic)*. Assessment indicators: qualitative (personal report and interview).
- *Skill 4: Oral expression*. Assessment indicators: quantitative (report on pronunciation, expression, organisation of the presentation, receptivity to listeners, ability to answer questions appropriately)/qualitative (personal report and interview).

During the course as the various tasks and objectives were reached the quantitative and qualitative indicators allowed us to see whether the students had improved their learning skills. Comparison with the self-assessment sheets allowed us to evaluate the degree of self-awareness manifested by the students which, together with the teachers' progress reports provided an overall view of each student's personal progress.

Suitability of assessment employed for obtaining the results hoped for

High, as demonstrated by the high degree of satisfaction expressed by both students and teachers involved in the project.

Results: Taking group G3 as a sample model (the group taught by the project leader) the following results were obtained:

- Did not take assessment: 5 (2 of whom did not attend the course at all, while the rest claimed that personal problems prevented them from participating in all of the tasks).
- Fail: 5 (in the end-of-course tutorial it was decided which tasks would need to be redone at a later date following the university's policy on reassessment)
- Pass: 22
- Good: 20
- Excellent: 4, of which 3 were obtained 'with honours'

Qualitative results: From the observation reports we observed that the students were aware of their own learning progress. Furthermore, and rather unexpectedly, a large proportion of the students were made aware of the strategies needed to increase their

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potential and, as a consequence, their future progress as critical readers within the area of English literature.

Aims and results

Do the results obtained and the proposed aims match up?

The aims are largely long term. Nevertheless, it can be confirmed that the results obtained and the proposed aims do match up.

Do the results reflect improvement? With regard to the learning process, has any particular method or system been particularly useful for the students?

Without doubt, and comparing the results from the previous year's course, also taught by the teaching innovation project leader, the improvement has been extremely clear. We can affirm that the students have achieved a genuine improvement in their learning. We believe we have begun a change in our teaching methods which has made us more aware of the students needs and weaknesses, and how to tackle these issues. Following John Biggs (2005), we realise that we have achieved a 'constructive alignment', in that we have been coherent and consistent in our aims and in the results obtained.

Assessment of the experience

Do the results obtained justify a reassessment of teaching methods? If not, are there any changes that might prove useful?

The degree of satisfaction among both the students and the teaching staff indicates that the project was not only successful but suggests that similar projects, changes and reassessments should be made further afield, particularly in first year courses in the degree of English Studies.

How did the students and the teachers feel about the experience? How satisfied were they?

In the final meeting of the project the teaching staff involved were highly satisfied with the project, and with the idea that there should be an assessment task

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for every text led to greater concentration by the students. More importantly from the point of view of the drop-out rate it enabled the teaching staff to closely monitor those students who presented problems of one kind or another. In this sense the project also proved to be a formative experience for the teaching staff as well. It should be noted that the tasks and tests carried out by the students were made with access to all of the texts and other resources that might be useful to them. This allowed the students to exchange ideas, readings and interpretations and was a clear incentive to collaborative learning. It is significant that the teaching staff as a whole observed a clear improvement in their students' grades.

Final survey

At the end of the course a survey was answered by the students following the course:

- 1. Degree of satisfaction with the course?
- 2. Opinion on the assessment system. Possible improvements to incorporate in the future.
- 3.Do I feel I have learnt anything? And that I have improved my skills?

The students answered the questionnaire anonymously and in the absence of the teaching staff. All agreed that their satisfaction with the course was very high and they were very positive about the assessment system. Everyone felt that they had improved their skills as critical readers as well as their academic writing and oral skills. It was particularly noteworthy and satisfying that a large number of students expressed their satisfaction at being able to remember everything that they had studied during the course and of having made good use of every minute of their time.

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ELISABET PLADEVALL BALLESTER. USING PEER AND SELF-ASSESSMENT IN A FOURTH-YEAR SUBJECT: INCREASING RESPONSIBLE LEARNING

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The fourth-year course 'English Teaching Methodology' aims at introducing students to both theoretical and practical knowledge of language learning and teaching. However, most of our students have been teaching for a while when they join the course. They are thrown into the teaching world with little or no training and with often biased ideas of what language learning is and how it is supposed to take place. Their varied experiences and constant doubts make practical class sessions an enriching space open to debate and discussion. In an attempt to make the most of the students' previous experience, increase their learning awareness and make them take responsible decisions, peer and self-assessment were introduced in the formal and informal assessment procedures of the course. Their initial reluctance gave way to honest and insightful contributions and surprisingly accurate judgements that made them reflect on their responsibility as learners and teachers.

Keywords: English Teaching Methodology, peer-assessment, self-assessment, responsible learning

1. Introduction

Fourth-year courses offer valuable opportunities for both teachers and students to combine theoretical and practical knowledge as well as personal and professional experience in a way that autonomous and responsible learning is enhanced. The present teaching experience was designed within the context of 'English Teaching Methodology', a fourth-year course that applies theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Foreign Language Learning (FLL) to the learning and teaching of foreign languages. It focuses on the knowledge and teaching techniques that an English language teacher needs to know. By the end of the course, students are expected to be familiar with the most well-known theories of SLA and FLL, master a set of teaching techniques, be equipped with strategies to design teaching materials relevant to the four language skills and be able to critically evaluate published material. More specifically, the course covers the basics of Instructed Second Language

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Acquisition (ISLA), the role of individual differences in FLL, the most commonly taught teaching methods, the role of the teacher and the learner, specific learning contexts, the teaching of language systems and skills and the role of error correction and feedback. However, most of our students already have some teaching experience when they join the course but have little or no training on language teaching and bring into the class biased ideas of what language learning is and how it is supposed to occur. Their varied experiences and constant doubts make practical class sessions an enriching space open to debate and discussion, which often leads students to help one another.

In an attempt to maximise the students' previous experience in the teaching world, increase their learning awareness and make them take responsible decisions as regards their learning and future teaching, peer and self-assessment was introduced in the formal and informal assessment procedures of the course. Their initial reluctance gave way to honest and insightful contributions and surprisingly accurate judgements that made them reflect on their responsibility as learners and teachers. A brief review of the relevant concepts will be presented in the next section. The details about the teaching and learning experience will be explained in section 3 and will be followed by a description of students' reactions to their peers, their own work and the use of peer and self-assessment in class. A number of final remarks will conclude the paper.

2. Peer and Self-assessment

It is generally acknowledged that assessment can have a summative purpose, where marking or certification is the main aim and a formative purpose, which is learning-oriented. In any case, assessment is usually associated with measuring knowledge and ranking students by grading or marking them (Liu and Carless 2006). However, assessment should be considered beyond the mere grading aim. Assessment procedures, particularly with a formative purpose, should include the definition of learning outcomes, assessment criteria and quality standards in relation to both learning product and process. If assessment is to have a learning component, learners should be encouraged to take part in it by means of peer and self-assessment.

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Peer-assessment is defined as "an educational practice in which students assess the quality of peer students' work and give feedback to one another" (Dochy et al. 1999). The choice of this definition for our teaching experience is relevant as it includes the concepts of assessment and feedback. When students assess their peers, they grade their work by means of a set of criteria (Falchinov 2001) and when they give their peers feedback, they engage in a communicative process in which standards are discussed. Both assessment and feedback favour the learning process (Liu and Caress 2006).

A number of reasons justify the use of peer-assessment. It enables learners to manage their learning in a responsible manner as an important part of self-regulated learning (Butler and Winne 1995), which also includes the development of understanding and objectivity towards assessment criteria (Nicol and MacFarlane-Dick 2006). Peer-assessment enhances students' understanding and subsequent learning of subject matter (Falchikov 2001) and develops learner autonomy and self-confidence. In the same vein, peer-assessment favours self-assessment practices, which also contribute to better understanding of subject matter and enhanced learning processes. Self-assessment is defined as "the involvement of students in identifying standards and/or criteria to apply to their work and making judgements about the extent to which they have met these criteria and standards" (Boud 1991: 4). As Boud et al. (1999) suggest, peer comments and contributions to your own work foster one's reflection and willingness to improve.

Although the use of peer-assessment has been shown to be beneficial for learners, we should also consider its potential pitfalls or reasons to resist its implementation. Some authors have questioned the reliability of peer and self-assessment practices, which are carried out by 'less' expert graders. Yet a number of peer-tutor grade correlation studies show reasonable correlations and accurate judgements on the part of the learners (Falchikov and Glodfinch 2000; Sluijsmans et al. 2002) and it is true that if peer and self-assessment should be formative then peer-feedback practices should be favoured over more formal individual forms of assessment. At the same time, ineffective peer-assessment might lead to lack of cooperation and competitive practices (Boud et al. 1999). As Liu and Carless (2006)

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highlight, power relations between teachers and students and among students might also affect and be affected by this type of assessment with teachers resisting the loss of their assessment power and students disliking having to judge their peers and being judged by them. Time reasons might also prevent teachers from using peer-assessment activities, which usually involve more reflection and discussion practices.

3. The Experience

In an attempt to increase students' awareness of the learning process, peer and self-assessment activities were introduced in 'English Teaching Methodology' sessions. Students worked in groups of three and prepared two microteaching sessions from a Teaching Unit they were preparing as a course project. The first microteaching session had to be video recorded during students' free time and uploaded in a YouTube private channel especially created for this fourth-year course. Students were required to provide informal peer feedback based on a set of criteria by means of comments in YouTube. The set of criteria included the adequacy of the teaching method employed, the adequacy of the activity in relation to level and age of students, non-verbal communication and the quality and use of verbal communication including use of English, classroom language and instructions. This activity was part of the course formative assessment and did not count towards the course mark. All students participated in the microteaching sessions but not everyone provided peer feedback.

The second microteaching session was done in-class. Students were required to provide formal peer-assessment in the form of grades and feedback based on a set of criteria previously specified in a grid. The grid included a description of the activity and the skills involved, a description of the claimed methodological procedures and feedback and grades on the selection of the activity in relation to claimed methods, age, level and teaching context, on the use of gestures, body posture, eye-contact and tone of voice and on the use of classroom language, instructions and use of English. This was included in the course final mark with only 2.5% and was a formative and summative type of assessment. All students carried it out.

Finally, students were required to complete a peer and self-assessment online questionnaire on their ability to work in groups and on what their opinions were in

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relation to using peer and self-assessment as a learning tool. The questionnaire consisted of nine 1 to 4 Likert-type questions ranging from Very unsatisfactory to Very satisfactory, further comments and an open-ended question on the use of group work peer and self-assessment questionnaires. The Likert-type questions elicited information on regular meeting attendance, equity of contribution to the teaching unit, evidence of cooperative behaviour, appropriate time and task management, application of creative problem solving, use of a range of working methods, appropriate level of engagement with the teaching unit, evidence of capacity to listen and responsiveness to feedback/criticism. This was also part of the course final mark with the same weight as above (i.e. 2.5%) including formative and summative types of assessment. Again, all students participated in it.

4. Peer-assessment, Peer-feedback, Self-assessment and Students' Reactions to Group Work

In relation to the summative peer-assessment carried out during the experience, the grades given by students on the in-class microteaching session were statistically correlated with the grades given by the teacher. A strong, positive and significant correlation was obtained (r=0.869, n= 42, p= .000) between the teachers' and the students' grades, thus showing that learners were able to produce accurate and responsible judgements on their peers' work. Peer-feedback on the first and second microteaching sessions included both positive and negative comments but was always constructive. Students' comments were accompanied by suggestions for improvement and personal recommendations based on personal experiences. Students also employed technical terms and strategies learned in class thus showing evidence of the learning power of peer-assessment practices.

Regarding the online peer-assessment group work questionnaire, students showed a tendency to start rating the most valued member of their group. Percentages of Very unsatisfactory responses ranged from 0% to 2.4%, unsatisfactory responses ranged from 0% to 7.1%, satisfactory responses ranged from 4.8% to 26.2% and Very satisfactory ranged from 73.8% to 85.7%. The less valued member of the group obtained percentages of Very unsatisfactory responses ranging from 2.4% to

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14.3%, percentages of unsatisfactory responses ranging from 4.8% to 14.3%, percentages of satisfactory responses from 14.3% to 38.1% and percentages of Very satisfactory responses ranging from 45.2% to 61.9%.

In the self-assessment part of the questionnaire, no students rated their performance on any items as Very unsatisfactory and percentages of unsatisfactory only reached 4.8% in one item. Percentages of satisfactory ranged from 19% to 42.9% and percentages of Very satisfactory ranged from 54.8% to 81%.

As regards the more qualitative comments on their peers' ability to work in group, students highlighted decision-making problems, difficulty in reaching consensus, students falling behind schedule, non-professional and unethical contributions, integration problems and lack of contribution and cooperation. On a positive note, students also pointed out their peers' responsible and hard-working attitudes, the fact that they were committed and open to discussion and their level of engagement. As for self-assessment on teamwork abilities, only a small number of students decided to provide qualitative comments, which reflects the high scores obtained in the Likert-type questions. Those who did provided positive comments or justifications for their lack of commitment and included comparative comments to their peers' work.

On the basis of the students' comments on the use of peer and self-assessment during the course, students generally thought it is a good initiative and a good opportunity to share their thoughts towards the work of their peers. They feel their opinions are taken into account and point out that peer and self-assessment encourages self-reflection and cooperation. They generally think these practices improve the learning process and increase their learning autonomy and their capacity to evaluate their development from a critical perspective. Students also pointed out a number of weaknesses, namely that their judgements might not be very accurate due to their lack of expertise or that peers might not be objective or honest in their judgements. They highlight the importance of doing peer-assessment once the course has finished and as long as it is not a decisive component in the final course mark.

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5. Conclusions

As seen above, not all learners contributed to the first peer-assessment activity (i.e. microteaching video-recorded sessions in YouTube), which shows students' initial reluctance to this teaching experience. For some of them this was the very first time they were given the opportunity to judge others' work and it was difficult for them to do it in a constructive way. Yet 'English Teaching Methodology' is a course for future teachers and although they were students, they had to experience feeling like a teacher by assessing and providing feedback to their peers. Once the summative component was added by counting peer-assessment in the final course mark all students participated in it and honest and insightful contributions were made. Their judgements were surprisingly accurate with students typically obtaining lower grades being harsher to their peers than more advantaged students. Peer-assessment on students' teamwork abilities displayed a variety of results with a tendency to give favourable judgements and self-assessment displayed remarkably good judgements, which do not correspond to the ones obtained in peer-assessment but encouraged self-reflection and learning awareness among students.

Using peer and self-assessment requires teaching and learning time, mainly because it involves self-reflection and because students are not used to being given responsibility for their own learning. Teachers should give away some of their assessment power to their students. It is definitely a rewarding experience from which learners obtain enhanced responsibility and increased awareness of the learning and teaching process.

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Esther Pujolràs. Poetic Lessons: Poetry In/From the Classroom

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In the 2014-15 academic year I was given the chance to teach the elective subject 'Poesia en anglès'. To me, a scholar and poet, teaching a course exclusively focused on poetry was a challenge that I met with unending enthusiasm but a considerable degree of fear. My previous incursions into teaching poetry via other Literature subjects left me with a feeling of dissatisfaction; a feeling that I had not managed to transmit to my students the mundane, banal and exquisite composite that poetry is. This article is not aimed at providing a list of scientifically proved methodological tools which will enhance the university teaching practice, but rather, it offers a teaching experience, my teaching experience, which I qualify as extremely fruitful and satisfactory and which I would like to share with other university teachers. Hence, I would like (1) to explain how I structured the course, that is to say, the division into the different units that configured the subject, (2) to show some reading and writing exercises that were employed as a means to 'appropriate' poetry and, finally, (3) to present the book that came out as a result of this course, namely a collection of the students' own poetry entitled *Poetic Lessons: Poetry In/From the Classroom*.

Keywords: Poetry, creative writing, image, word, abstract/concrete

I would like to start this article by sharing a remembrance from my childhood. My primary education developed in an ostensibly conventional nuns' school. I am a person who finds spirituality in other realms than the religious ones, so, I often wonder why I have such good memories from my experience in that school. Preparing this article, which is the outcome of the paper I presented in the TELLC 2015 conference, I realized that the reason why I harbour such good remembrances from this primary school experience is that students' creativity was fomented and reinforced; creativity not only in the arts and crafts subjects but also in the language/Literature area. For this remembrance, I have to go back to when I was 12 years old and to a subject, Catalan. The teacher in charge had a reputation, not a bad one but a 'peculiar' one nonetheless, since she was renowned for making students write poetry. I was absolutely enthusiastic about the prospect of being taught how to write poetry, but more so,

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about the prospect of being handed down the secret formula that would allow me to write poems. To me, poetry was a mystery, something that loomed 'up there', distant from the 'down here' of our banal, daily life experiences. But poetry, to my untrained poetic mind, was a mystery that could be solved by possessing the right 'formula' that would dismantle the myth. This teacher that I am today recalling and, in a way, giving credit for my poetic adulthood, was a nun, dressed with the imposing habit of nuns, seemingly old, apparently conservative and yet, a woman who defied the standard teachings of the time by, first, introducing students to an area which at that time was still unchartered, Catalan literature, and secondly, making students experience poetry.

Why this autobiographical detour, you may ask? This early experience with poetry would leave an indelible mark in my future experience with the genre, both as a practitioner but, I would dare to say, even more so as a teacher of poetry. It is as a teacher of poetry that I detected fear and resignation on the faces of my students, probably the same fear and resignation that Sister Montserrat had probably observed on my—and my classmates'—face(s) in that first poetry class. Fear of the unknown, of the mystery; resignation to the unattainable, to that which lies 'up there'. But on my face—and certainly also on the faces of my students—there also resided a strong desire to possess the 'formula' that would elucidate poetry to us. Sister Montserrat did indeed provide me with that longed after formula; her formula was that there was indeed no formula at all, that there was no mystery to be unravelled, that poetry was not 'up there' but 'down here'. And that has always been my objective when teaching poetry: to awaken students' poetic eyes so that they realize that poetry is 'down here', that the mystery is there is no mystery at all.

In the 2014-15 academic year I was given the chance to teach the elective course, 'Poetry in English'. That was a challenge and I met the challenge as all challenges are to be met: with enthusiasm and respect. However, in my case, this challenge also involved a considerable degree of angst since, I have to confess, my previous incursions into poetry teaching via other Literature subjects, always had left me with a bitter aftertaste of failure on my tongue. In other words, I felt that I could not manage to transmit to my students the terrible truth about poetry, namely, that poetry is 'down here' and that the mystery is no mystery at all. With this feeling of

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failure on my shoulders I confronted the big question: how could I succeed in what I, in the past, failed, or to use a less tragic approach, did not fully succeed?

1. Poetry in English: Objective and the Problem of Structure

My main objective when facing this subject was twofold: first, to make poetry approachable, to bring it down from its insurmountable pedestal and, in this way—and that fuses with my second objective—to turn reading poetry into a pleasurable experience. At that point I asked myself: what had not fully worked in my previous poetry teaching experiences? Was it a too focused chronological approach? Was it a too centred authorial presence? Classifications are useful, they indeed can make our learning experiences easier and yet classifications can also be dangerous, precluding rather than opening up free channels of experience. It was clear to me that in my experience teaching poetry within other Literature subjects, literary movements and authors determined the choice of poems, which is not a bad thing in itself, but for a course entirely devoted to poetry I sensed that this classification was unfair to what I conceived to be the true protagonist of the teaching sessions, namely, the poem. Hence, I realized that I had to move beyond the historiographic tyranny of literary movements and the constraints of authorship in order to make the poem the unique centre of the sessions. But how could I turn the poem into the supreme and unquestionable centre of the sessions, liberated from its authorial ties and free to be itself outside fixed critical temporalities?

I decided to centre the sessions around themes; this would allow the poem not only to be the sole protagonist but also it would allow the unit to be inhabited by poems from a diverse range of authors and epochs, shaping a sense of poetry that shares rather than secedes, a poetry that creates links rather than draws borders. It also provided me with a space where poetry was apprehended as more than just the words written down on a page, thus songs were also included as examples of poems. The practical outcome of this very idiosyncratic approach was the following classification:

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Unit 1. Introduction. Experiencing Poetry: Language, Rhythm, Imagery
Unit 2. Love / Death / Eroticism
Unit 3. Nature vs. City
Unit 4. Political Poetry: Resistance; Appropriating the Classics; Gender Stance; Postcolonialism
Unit 5. Spaces / Objects
Unit 6. Family: Childhood Memories Intergenerational Connections; Home
Unit 7. Voyages: Exile; Foreign Landscapes; Geographies of the Mind
Unit 8. Unclassified Material

2. In Search of a Method: Experiencing Poetry

The word 'methodology' is imbued with a sense of scientific expertise, as a somewhat fixed procedure, fed by certain rules which eventually pave the way towards knowledge. I could not term the working method I utilized in this poetry course as 'scientific', nor could I claim that it led irrevocably to 'knowledge', but what I can guarantee is that it contributed to the disclosure of the exquisitely mundane that is the essence of poetry, or to put it in slightly different words, it helped to free poetry from its aura of elusive mystery.

My methodological approach consisted in experiencing poetry. Encapsulated in the word 'experience', there lie the following meanings: (1) direct observation of or participation in events as a basis of knowledge, (2) the fact or state of having been affected by or gained knowledge through direct observation or participation, and (3) practical knowledge, skill or practice derived from direct observation or participation in events or in particular activity (*Webster Dictionary*, 2002). In all three definitions, there is the recurrent presence of two words, observation and participation. When applied to the subject 'Poetry in English', I surmised, observation would be acquired through the intensive reading of poems, whereas participation could only be reached via writing poetry. At the core of observation/reading and participation/writing, there resided the skill, that is to say, the practice whereby poetic knowledge would unfold.

Thus, the objective(s) for this course were transmitted to students in the very first session: first and foremost, poetry was to be apprehended as an artistic product to be enjoyed and, in order to make this enjoyment accessible, an operation of appropriation had to be enacted. To appropriate poetry means, basically, that poetry

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has to become part of your daily life experience and this entails, necessarily, a debunking of the myth that poetry belongs 'up there'; poetry must be brought down from its pedestal and made it closer to, or rather, detect it, in ordinary, daily life experiences. The cult of the ordinary, as my continuing poetic journey has taught me, incites the eyes to see beyond the concrete, to configure abstractions firmly anchored in genuine materiality, to authenticate, so to speak, the spirituality of the substantial world. And yet this cult of the ordinary also stimulates the ears to perceive the musicality of words, to inflame the sensibility that moulds the visual—the words on the page—with the aural: the sounds that translate the words into melodies. This conflation of the mundane with the spiritual, the concrete with the abstract, the visual with the aural is knowledge and this knowledge is gained academically and creatively, so that, in the end, another conflation emerges, that of the academic with the creative.

This melting of the academic with the creative is well expressed in poets' narrations of their poetic lives. It is for this reason that I included as complementary reading material essays written by acclaimed poets who render their poetic experience, their individual search of a poetic voice, to us. Seamus Heaney's "Crediting Poetry" and Derek Walcott's "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory" offered an honest account of their respective poetic sojourns, both crediting poetry in probably one of the most important poetic events in their lives, the speech they gave when they were awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Eavan Boland's "The Woman Poet: Her Dilemma", the last chapter of her literary autobiography, *Object Lessons: The Life of the Woman and the Poet in Our Time*, sensitized students towards the gender struggle that permeates women poets' search of their own, distinctive female voices. Boland's testimony is a brave narration of the weight of tradition, in its dual manifestation as propeller and detractor of the individual imagination. Poetic historiography has persistently placed the woman as object of desire but when it is the woman the one to take up the pen to write poetry, how does she translate her traditional object position into one of subject? In other words, how do women poets construe women as subjects of desire? This is the question Eavan Boland attempts to answer in her incisive poetic quest, her object lessons.

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The tone of the other two essays that completed this section was less personal but, to my mind, they are unavoidable readings in a poetry subject: Cleanth Brooks' emblematic "The Language of Paradox" and Octavio Paz's "Inspiration". The former is a chapter from *The Well-Wrought Urn*, a paradigm of the practice of New Criticism but, more significantly, an exceptional exercise in close reading. In "The Language of Paradox", Brooks intelligently fuses the scientific with the poetic through his scientific dissection of the paradoxical nature of poetic language. His scientific method, notwithstanding, unmasks the sensitivity required to actually carry out a poetic dissection; the intellectual and the emotional beautifully interact in the language of poetry, in short, the language of paradox. The latter is a chapter from *The Bow and the Lyre*, Paz's lucid treatise on the nature of poetry. The historical perspective he takes on in his attempt to unravel the 'secret' of inspiration balances elegantly critical insight with emotional perception.

The academic and creative combination displayed in these essays simultaneously fostered the students' poetic intellect and sensitivity, which they employed in their reading and creative writing practice.

3. Getting Practical: What/How to Read and What/How to Write

The sessions were aimed at exploring two interrelated components of poetry: the intimate connection between word and image, on the one hand, and the seamless alternation of the concrete with the abstract, on the other. The tasks performed in class and at home were devised to enhance the interaction of the image with the word and the fusion of the concrete with the abstract. Due to the scope of this article, what ensues is a sample of some of these activities.

3.1. A Breakthrough. e. e. cummings—[l(a]

The strength of e.e. cummings's [l(a] resides in its delicate simplicity. The word "loneliness" is embedded in the sentence "a leaf falls" (see appendix 1). The leaf falls literally on the page, the falling of the leaf embodies the poem. Image and word, the leaf falling and "loneliness" form an indissoluble link which is naturally transmitted to the reader. The clarity and directness of this imagistic and linguistic fusion ties the

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reader's intellect to her/his emotions. There is no need to explain the poem, so to speak, the poem breaks through the readers' minds effortlessly, their poetic sensitivities smoothly awaken.

3.2. Matisse and Jazz. The Poetic Turn of the Political. Christian Campbell's "Rudical"

The origin of Christian Campbell's "Rudical" is a painting by Matisse entitled "Jazz", dated 1943 (see appendix 2). Campbell, a Barbadian poet, identifies this

painting as the originator of his poem in his dedication but what his words uncover is a subtler association, that of art with politics. Derek Bennett, aged 29 was killed by the police in Brixton (London) in 2011. His death Campbell melds with Matisse's painting which features a black body balancing, as if dancing, against a blue background speckled with yellow stars. On the upper left side of the body one can see a red spot, the mark left by the bullet that had been shot. "Jazz", the intriguingly evasive title of the painting transports us to the music, the dancing ingrained in the word, but it also motions us to the world of racist violence that also menacingly surfaces the word. And from this melting of the image with the word, Campbell's "Rudical" emerges. This poem is written with the rhythm of jazz, the second stanza mimicking the call and response flow of jazz compositions. However, this poem, just like Matisse's painting, is an artistic as well as a political call, opening readers' eyes to the racial violence exerted in the UK; the names of the towns and cities that appear in the last stanza have all been spots of police abuse against black citizens, mainly from the Caribbean, the "Windrush" generation mentioned in the first stanza. But the last stanza visually encapsulates the terrible confusion that emanates from violence; the sentences have lost connectors and punctuation marks, the reading can only come forth coarsely, the words on the page are agitated, disturbed, they too have succumbed to the violence they describe. "Rudical" is Campbell's radical and rude response to racial violence. It is also a poem written with the image of Matisse's Jazz.

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3.3. Cityscapes: The Image Is the Poem - Edward Hopper

Whereas the former tasks were geared towards reading poetry, this one was designated as a writing exercise, as a continuation of the fusion of image and word that the previous poems exhumed. Students were asked to observe in class the following paintings by Edward Hopper: "Hotel Room" (1931), "Morning Sun" (1952), "Automat" (1927). This exercise was inserted in 'Unit 3. City vs. Nature', which examined poems whose thematic thread revolved around urban landscapes and natural landscapes. I interpret Hopper's paintings as 'poems' that grasp, in a compelling and disturbing manner, the isolation enveloping individuals thrown in the anonymity of urban landscapes. The three women that appear in each of Hopper's paintings—the absent-minded reader of "Hotel Room", the sadly dignified woman who

looks wistfully through the window as if in search of answers in "Morning Sun" or the dejected, heartbroken young girl sipping her coffee in the sombre automat of the title—carry a story behind them. How did they all end up there, in unidentified hotel rooms or unnamed automats? What is the source of their melancholy? How can their images be translated into words?

These were the questions students were asked to consider and through meditated observation, they produced a linguistic translation of each of the images/paintings they contemplated. In class, the task consisted in merely writing one line for each image, focusing on one aspect of the painting that called their attention. That served as a starting point, as a way to break the ice since one of the lines they wrote had to be developed into a poem. Hence, at home, they poetically convened the story that emanated from the image they finally selected.

3.4. Celebrating Nature: The Elusiveness of the Image – Sebastiao Salgado's Genesis

Salgado's exquisite collection of natural images, *Genesis*, was used as a contrast and complement to Hopper's paintings. For this writing exercise, students abandoned the isolation, nostalgia, vivid sadness that Hopper's images exuded and welcomed

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Salgado's photographs, a sheer celebration of Nature's wonders. After having captured the horrors of Ethiopia's hunger and the atrocities of Rwanda's genocide in his pictures, Salgado confessed he had lost faith in human beings. His return to Nature was his personal healing, his reconciliation with life; the images of *Genesis* are an exaltation of precisely this, the miracle of life. For the subject 'Poetry in English', Salgado's pictures rendered an invaluable poetic moment, the moment when the image eludes its original meaning, the moment when the image resists being imprisoned by one single signifier, the moment when the image transcends its substance, the moment when the concrete yields to the abstract.

The pictures I selected to illustrate the elusiveness of the image were those of a marine iguana, an iceberg and the tail of a whale in the middle of the ocean. In each of them the image loses its former materiality and embraces another one. Thus, the leg of the iguana fearfully resembles the arm of a mediaeval knight enveloped in the armour of the times, the iceberg is admiringly remodelled as a castle we might encounter in fairy tales and, finally, the tail of the huge whale, when contemplated from a distance, relinquishes its gigantic size and becomes a graceful butterfly. And yet the images remain the same, it is our capacity to see differently that allows the poetic metamorphoses to take place.

The writing exercise that ensued was to see differently an everyday object by placing it elsewhere, distancing oneself from it in order to glimpse it from another perspective, or simply by actually seeing it, detecting it, and not taking it from granted. This capacity to see nature differently was perceived in the poems that configured the section on Nature in the dossier. However, the poem that I believed worked better to stimulate students to see differently was Charles Simic's "Live at the Club Revolution". (see appendix 3). In this poem, a red object observed from a distance can be equally apprehended as the sexy "red panties" of Corinna Brown and the execrable red meat from a dead animal that a "lone crow" has gathered for today's food.

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4. Assessment: *Poetic Lessons: Poetry In/From the Classroom*

An idiosyncratic methodological approach requires a likewise idiosyncratic assessment pattern. The reading-writing/academic-creative junction that determined the philosophy of the course and shaped its structure had to be reflected in the assessment method. So, students were required to produce some academic work in the form of two short papers (1,000 words) based on (1) an analysis of one single poem and (2) a comparative analysis of two poems, which assessed their ability to read poetry critically. But the ability to read poetry critically can also be measured alongside the capacity to transmit your critical interpretation to an audience by engaging people, in this particular case, classmates, with the poem(s) you present. To complement their critical academic competence, in pairs, students taught a poem to the class. These oral presentations were classified as the course, in thematic units, and students could therefore choose a poem from the dossier from the thematic unit they preferred, provided the poem had not been dealt with in class previously. They were encouraged to enhance their presentation with any visual and aural material they thought of as convenient.

The challenging part of the assessment, however, was the writing of their own collection of poetry. Students were given two options: either they followed the units that delineated the course and conceived two poems from each theme or they constructed their collection following their own thematic thread.

Students were informed about this assessment mechanism in the first session of the course. They, of course, had had access to the description of the subject in the 'Guia Docent', and this description included information about the assessment method, but a clearer explanation about what a poetry collection entailed was necessary, I felt, to be provided in class. Likewise, it was announced that their poetry—if they wanted to—would be published using UAB's online repository or DDD in a volume entitled *Poetic Lessons: Poetry In/From the Classroom*. Students' reactions were a riveting mixture of awe and terror. As the course progressed, though, their enthusiasm and confidence towards poetry increased and, as a result of this, they willingly contributed to the making of this volume through their poetry. The fact that a

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publication was there on the horizon intensified the seriousness of the creative work they were undertaking since their effort surpassed the individual reward of the teacher by reaching a public platform to which a considerable number of 'outsiders' had access.

To round up the course, a poetry recital was organised. Throughout the course, I insisted on the importance of reading poetry out loud. Each poem has a distinct rhythm which a critical reading must unfold. A poetry recital offered the space for students to appropriate—reproduce it with their own voices—one favourite poem and read one of their own poems. This was also an exercise that not only trained their reading poetic skills but also celebrated poetry.

To conclude, just a few words about the publication, *Poetic Lessons: Poetry In/From the Classroom*, now available from the UAB's digital repository (http://ddd.uab.cat/record/148650). The inspiration for the first part of the title, *Poetic Lessons*, came from Eavan Boland's already mentioned poetic memoir, *Object Lessons*. The poetic lessons alluded to are not those of the teacher, but rather, they are the lessons we, poetry readers—and writers—shared in a genuine atmosphere of knowledge exchange. Images are paramount in the poetic world and so this book is introduced also by an image, the one that frames the front page. A distracted look at the front page will discern an overpowering, domineering old façade, and yet, a careful look will detect on one corner a minute, at first sight, paltry and insignificant moth. This moth, though, makes the whole difference. This is the Man-Moth of Elizabeth Bishop's poem (see appendix 4), the strange creature that generously bequeaths a tear, "his only possession", to those who dare to see him. This tear is poetry at its simplest, most concise and most crystalline manifestation. We are surrounded by poetry, we only need to set our poetic eyes in motion in order to recognize it. And this, the 2014-15 poetry class have understood. Ultimately, *Poetic Lessons* are their lessons. In a Man-Moth manner, they have generously entrusted their poetry to us, this most magic and yet banal phenomenon that poetry is.

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Appendix 1.
e.e. cummings - [l(a]

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l
iness

Appendix 2.
Rudical (Christian Campbell)

Derek Bennett, killed by the police

after Matisse's Icare (Jazz), 1943

I who born
Twenty-four years
Since *The Windrush* come
Twenty-four years
Life of a man
I who born
Four gold bullets
Life of a man
I who born

    & because we suck the neon of the streets
    & because we tote a solar plexus of islands (it's true)
    & because we yuck out the blue heart of night (right)
    & because our heads gather thick as a bloodclot (teach them)

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      & because we eat out the honey of mad laughter (everytime)
      & because we outrun the delirium of streetlights (more fire)
      & because we are bugs scuttling from the lifted rock
      & because & because & &
      & because each eyehole grows iridescent with the moon
      & because we holler for the bloodclad sun
      & because we mourn the burst testes of the stars
      & because we skank cross rivers of blood

Mine New Cross mine Oldham Notting Hill Bradford Brixton mine
too Nassau Laventille Bridgetown Kingston Britain has branded an
x this rolled throat of killings this septic eye of maggotry this seed of
Mars this blasted plot this hurst realm this ogly island this England.

Appendix 3.
Extract from Charles Simic's "Life at Club Revolution"

      Are those Corinna Brown's red panties

      We see flying through the dark winter trees,

      Or merely a lone crow taking home

      His portion of the day's road kill?

Appendix 4.
Extract from Elizabeth Bishop's "The Man-Moth"

If you catch him,
hold up a flashlight to his eye. It's all dark pupil,
an entire night itself, whose haired horizon tightens
as he stares back, and closes up the eye. Then from the lids
one tear, his only possession, like the bee's sting, slips.
Slyly he palms it, and if you're not paying attention
he'll swallow it. However, if you watch, he'll hand it over,
cool as from underground springs and pure enough to drink.

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Rosanna Rion Materials for Two Translation Skills: Understanding Historical and Cultural References and Using Imagination
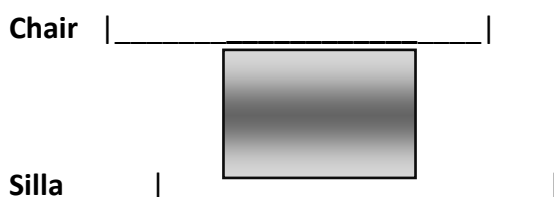
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The teaching of literary translation requires the use of materials to help in the development of different translation skills. Students have to be aware of the meaning of historical, cultural and social references in the texts and, therefore, they need to be provided with passages in which they will have to find out and decide on these matters. Thus, we are going to look into a passage from Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, in which the systems of the English clergy, the dowry and the aristocratic titles of the early 19th century appear. On the other hand, imagination is another very different skill that needs practising. The passage chosen as an example is from Christopher Hampton's *Tales from Hollywood*, set during World War II, in which we find a dialogue between Chico Marx and Harpo Marx; in this text Harpo makes gestures to describe the sounds of a name in English and that conversation will have to be completely changed in order to be translated.

Keywords: Teaching translation, cultural references, imagination, translation skills, Anglophone culture.

The most violent act we are doing when we undertake a translation is the changing of language itself. Each language is a conceptual map which, when transposed to another language, inevitably displaces meaning. Even with the simplest words, we can see there are not perfect matches or perfect equivalents and only part of the meaning can be shared. Let's try to see it graphically, describing the range of meaning with a line:

Chair |_____|

Silla |_____|

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Some of the uses of the word are about the same, but others are not, for example in 'the chair of the meeting'.

Regarding Literature, one of the first issues we have to tackle is the problem of translatability. The reasons why some texts are thought to be untranslatable have to do with historical and social circumstances and not with languages themselves. If a literary tradition has the same aesthetic movements as the source text, translation is more feasible.

The modern idea of untranslatable texts comes from Croce's aesthetics; he claimed that it is impossible to give a new aesthetic form to something which already has one. Walter Benjamin, however, was of the opinion that translation inevitably breaks the limits of language and literary traditions; this is very enriching for a language and Literature and it is what really makes translation interesting and worth the effort. Translation is always possible, although sometimes it will imply great changes and adaptations.

The two texts we are going to see have different difficulties. The first one, by Jane Austen, is written in long complex sentences, which show the subtle way in which the author connects thoughts in her mind. Some of the words have changed meaning, and to understand others, we need to know the workings of Regency society.

Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (1811)

CHAPTER I

About thirty years ago Miss Maria Ward, of Huntingdon, **with only seven thousand pounds**, had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park, in the county of Northampton, and to be thereby raised to the rank of a **baronet's lady**, with all the comforts and consequences of an handsome house and large income. All Huntingdon exclaimed on the greatness of the match, and her uncle, **the lawyer, himself, allowed her to be at least three thousand pounds short of any equitable claim to it**. She had two sisters to be benefited by her elevation; and **such of their acquaintance as thought Miss Ward and Miss Frances quite as handsome as Miss Maria, did not scruple to predict their marrying with almost equal advantage.** But **there certainly are not so many men of large fortune in the world as there are pretty women to deserve them**. Miss Ward, at the end of half a dozen years, found herself obliged to be attached to the Rev. Mr. Norris, a friend of her brother-in-law, with scarcely any private fortune, and **Miss Frances fared yet worse**. Miss Ward's match, indeed, when it came to the point, was not contemptible: Sir Thomas being happily able to give his friend an income **in the living of Mansfield**; and Mr. and Mrs. Norris began their career of conjugal felicity with very little less than a thousand a year. But Miss Frances

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married, in the common phrase, to disoblige her family, and by fixing on a lieutenant of marines, without education, fortune, or connexions, did it very thoroughly. She could hardly have made a more untoward choice. Sir Thomas Bertram had interest, which, from principle as well as pride—from a general wish of doing right, and a desire of seeing all that were connected with him in situations of respectability, he would have been glad to exert for the advantage of Lady Bertram's sister; but *her husband's profession was such as no interest could reach*; and before he had time to devise any other method of assisting them, an absolute breach between the sisters had taken place. It was the natural result of the conduct of each party, and such as a very imprudent marriage almost always produces. To save herself from useless remonstrance, Mrs. Price never wrote to her family on the subject till actually married. Lady Bertram, who was a woman of very tranquil feelings, and a temper remarkably easy and indolent, would have contented herself with merely giving up her sister, and thinking no more of the matter; but Mrs. Norris had a spirit of activity, which could not be satisfied till she had written a long and angry letter to Fanny, to point out the folly of her conduct, and threaten her with all its possible ill consequences. Mrs. Price, in her turn, was injured and angry; and an answer, which comprehended each sister in its bitterness, and bestowed such very disrespectful reflections on the pride of Sir Thomas as Mrs. Norris could not possibly keep to herself, put an end to all intercourse between them for a considerable period.

1. "with only seven thousand pounds"

To understand these words, students have to be acquainted with the idea of dowry and private income. At the time of our novel, the United Kingdom was receiving enormous wealth from the colonies and those who wanted to be part of high society lived in incomes as it was not well looked upon that they should have to work.

2. "a baronet's lady"

There is no correspondence between all the ranks in the British nobility system and the Spanish one. 'Baronet' is an example of this mismatch and, therefore, the word has to be transcribed.

3. "the lawyer, himself, allowed her to be at least three thousand pounds short of any equitable claim to it"

Students find this statement quite difficult to understand and in order to clarify it, first they have to analyse it syntactically and make sure they know referent for the pronoun "it" (the match) and then realise that people were not supposed to marry above their station, that is to say, marriages took place between people of a similar social status. In this case, Miss Maria Ward married someone richer than her.

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4. "such of their acquaintance as thought Miss Ward and Miss Frances quite as handsome as Miss Maria, did not scruple to predict their marrying with almost equal advantage"

Here again, we find the same idea and, again, sentence structure is complex and has to be unravelled.

5. "there certainly are not so many men of large fortune in the world as there are pretty women to deserve them"

The translation for this sentence can be very controversial for its obviously sexist connotation, but we cannot distort the past and make Jane Austen's time different from what it was.

6. "Miss Frances fared yet worse"

7. "her husband's profession was such as no interest could reach"

These two sentences are examples of words which have changed meaning or have seen their use limited. This is a phenomenon which should also be considered when translating a text from the past.

8. "in the living of Mansfield"

This expression describes the Anglican system of clergy, in which the noble gave house, land and money to their parish priest.

I turn now to Christopher Hampton's *Tales from Hollywood* (1982), a play which describes the life in exile of the German writers who fled from Nazi Germany to the United States. The burning in 1933 of 'un-German' books was a turning point for many intellectuals; once in the United States, many of them settled down in Hollywood. Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann or Berthold Brecht, among others, had to earn their living at some point by writing film scripts. Thomas Mann was a liberal but, during McCarthyism, he was accused of being a communist and expelled like Brecht from the USA. These two writers met later on again in Switzerland. The passage chosen is a conversation between Chico and Harpo Marx in Hampton's play, in which Harpo, who does not speak, is trying to make Chico understand the name 'Schoenberg' through gestures:

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CHICO: Who wuza this little guy you wuza playin tennis with?
(HARPO *shakes his head; disconsolate expression.*)
He beat you, uh?
(HARPO *nods, tearful*.)
Who wuz he?
(HARPO *draws his racquet, which has a motor horn on the end of it, across an imaginary violin*.)
Heifetz?
(HARPO *drops to one knee; his sneakers have no toecaps. He counts out silently; six toes to each foot*.)
What?
(*Same routine*.)
He gotta twelve toes? No wunna he beat you. What's his name?
(HARPO *works his jaw furiously*, CHICO, *puzzled. As the excitement of the question-and-answer session mounts*, HARPO *punctuates it with blasts on the motor horn*.)
Teeth?
(HARPO *shakes his head*.)
Moosejaw?
(HARPO *shakes his head. His jaw now working frantically, he takes an imaginary something out of his mouth and sticks it behind his ear*.)
Chewinagum?
(HARPO *nods: then shakes his head. Continuing to chew, he begins to flap imaginary wings*.)
Ostrich?
(HARPO shakes his head: begins to move around the stage chewing and flapping his wings.)
Chicklet?
(He's pleased with this, but HARPO shakes his head, exhibiting terrible frustration; redoubles his efforts.)
Chewingaboid?
(HARPO nods delighted: congratulatory blasts on the horn. CHICO, however, is puzzled again.)
Chiwingaboid? Chiwingaboid? I don't know no chiwingaboid. (HARPO holds up a finger for silence. Then, magically, he strums on his tennis racquet the four regular, melancholy, opening notes of "Verklärte Nacht", CHICO's expression clears.)
Ah! Arnold Schoenberg!

The first thing to be tackled is intra-translation, because we have the passage written trying to transcribe the way in which the sentences were spoken. Once we have deciphered the meaning, we have to decide whether to show this effect on our translation. Here, we find a tradition of translation that cannot be ignored: if in all the dubbing for the Max brothers' films the characters speak perfect Spanish, why should we make them speak differently? Readers may wonder why are they, suddenly, speaking funny.

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In order to translate the passage, we have to change, then, the words in the text for other words which may sound similar to 'Schoenberg' in the target language. In this case, dictionaries and encyclopaedias are useless and we need to use our imagination.

Here is a suggested translation into Catalan:

CHICO: qui era aquell tio amb qui jugaves a tennis?
(HARPO *mou el cap; expressió desconsolada.*)
T'ha guanyat, he?
(HARPO *assenteix, plorós.*)
Qui era?
(HARPO *mou la raqueta, que té una botzina a la punta, com si fos un violí imaginari.*)
Heifetz, el violinista?
(HARPO *fa el gest de fer callar.*)
Què?
(*Repeteix el mateix.*)
Tan concentrar, és clar que et va guanyar. Com se diu?
(HARPO *fa el gest de xuclar amb violència.* CHICO, *se'l mira estranyat. Mentre va pujant l'excitació de la sessió pregunta-resposta*, HARPO *va marcant-ho amb cops de botzina.*)
Dents?
(HARPO *mou el cap.*)
Mandíbules de cavall?
(HARPO *mou el cap. Xucla ara frenèticament, es treu alguna cosa imaginària de la boca i l'enganxa darrera l'orella.*)
Xuclaxiclet?
(HARPO *fa que sí: després que no. continua mastegant, comença a moure els braços com si fossin ales.*)
Un estruç?
(HARPO *mou el cap, comença a moure's per l'escenari xuclant i movent els braços.*)
Un gran lloro verd!
(*Està content, però* HARPO *mou el cap, mostrant una terrible frustració; i redobla els seus esforços.*)
Xuclalloro, xuclaverd?
(HARPO *assenteix, encantat: toca la botzina per felicitar-lo.* CHICO, *però, torna a estar perplex.*)
Xuclaverd? Xuclaverd? No en conec cap de xuclaverd.
(HARPO *posa el dit per indicar silenci. Llavors, màgicament, toca a la seva raqueta les melangioses notes introductòries de "Verklärte Nacht". L'expressió de* CHICO *mostra que finalment ha entès.*)
Ah, Arnold Schoenberg!
(HARPO *assenteix extasiat.*)
Perquè no has començat per aquí?

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Lefevre (1997) describes translation as manipulation and rewriting. Thus, the translator becomes a co-author of the literary text and gives the original work an afterlife, different in every literary tradition. Translations are perfect examples of the literary conventions and trends of the moment and, at the same time, imply a critical comment on the source text. Even-Zohar (1979), in his description of the polysystem theory (1990), assigns translations a fundamental role, previously neglected, in the history of Literature, because the concept of literary generation or period does not include all the works influential at a particular moment in time. Therefore, translations and translators have a new visibility that does away with old metaphors like 'faithfulness' and even newer ones like 'equivalence': "I [the translator] have highlighted what I wanted to see"(1990: 150 in Moya 2004: 174).

The history of translation is also the history of the relations of power between cultures. The Kenyan novelist and playwright Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o expresses very well the danger involving translation between languages of uneven reputation: "European languages have played the role of giving visibility to the colonised and marginalised cultures, but have done so through the uprooting of the native voices in those same cultures and languages" (Thiong'o 2007: 131). Translation is one means, among others, of preserving the culture, but not a substitute for another culture. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o tries to find a conciliatory formula:

> translation between the dominant and marginalised languages; translation between marginalized languages; translation as the common language of the languages should go a long way to allow dialogue between the different cultures of the world, large or small. In contrast to globalization which enlarges only Western culture, we could create a cultural foundation to improve equitable globalism. (Thiong'o 2007: 131)

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