Melville by Design

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Why read Herman Melville for a whole semester? Here is an official answer. In MIT's Literature department, an advanced undergraduate seminar devoted to a single author can introduce students to literary texts and to historical and theoretical contexts as well as research and writing skills used by scholars in the field. But since few MIT students major in literature, and only a small number seek graduate degrees in the humanities, we offer seminars to familiarize students with the distinctive discourses of the humanities. Students themselves also give "official" reasons for taking a literature seminar: to learn more about a writer and her works, improve communication skills, complete a concentration, minor, or major, experience the pleasures of a small discussion class, or come away with new insights about human knowledge and social behavior. Increasingly aware of how much humanities scholars depend on digital tools, I have included them in my teaching over the years. Students in my seminar Mapping Melville learned something about digital resources, and significantly, how to implement these tools themselves. In several iterations of the Melville seminar, I have seen striking results in terms of students' greater appreciation for a complex, nineteenth-century white male author viewed in contexts made accessible through experiments in digital pedagogy.

Recently, I learned another answer to the question of why students might study Melville for an entire semester, an unanticipated one contained in a single word: design. After reading Melville's works and using digital tools to map place-names, annotate text

and sources, and code manuscript revisions, one student noted at the end of the semester that she had begun to consider literary study "in the context of engineering and 'design thinking.'"[1] In fact, most of the tools we used were still in design and testing phases, and students found that working with them experimentally freed them to read, discuss, write, and think critically in new ways. We drew on a number of perspectives. John Bryant's theory of fluid-text editing and the resources of the *Melville Electronic Library*, including TextLab (a tool for coding and analyzing manuscript revisions), provided a primary foundation.[2] Reading practices grounded in research by Henry Jenkins, *et al.,* informed classroom discussion and assignments. Annotation Studio, developed in MIT's HyperStudio, expanded students' power to track verbal patterns, share comments, and build reports and essays. And a geo-mapping tool, Locast, from MIT's Mobile Experience Lab, offered ways to visualize Melville's global imagination. This blend of tools apparently showed my student that she might encounter design thinking in a humanities classroom; and that discovery led me to speculate on what makes nineteenth-century American literature especially hospitable to such an approach.

"Design thinking" is, like digital humanities, a broad abstraction that has inspired strong criticism even as it has been adopted more widely throughout academic and popular culture. Developed in part as a model for creative practices in product design (with considerable impetus from the d.school or Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University, partnering with Silicon Valley companies), design thinking suggests what engineers have adapted from humanities methods to release creative and aesthetic potential in their own fields. With Steve Jobs and Google, the open-floor plan, and a mandate to ideate, test, and create, a flourishing design culture produces elegant tools that

touch people's lives across the globe. It seems ironic that humanities fields may be taking design thinking *back* in serious ways,[3] even as outside the academy the term has become more fuzzy and silly.[4]

In a field as broad as design thinking, Johanna Drucker provides a useful starting point for thinking critically about digital pedagogy in particular. Technically she devotes her work to "designing digital humanities" (as the title of her 2012 lecture at MIT implies), not applying design thinking *to* the humanities, as my student's comment suggests. But her method, drawing from graphic design and book history, illuminates the issue of design in humanities classrooms. In her MIT lecture, she identifies a blind spot in humanities studies: "Most humanists . . . remain convinced that this [digital humanities] is the work of professional librarians and archivists . . . that humanists have everything to gain by using these materials in various ways, but they don't necessarily see it as their responsibility to engage in the process of design."[5] She sees design, however, as social behavior that creates new models of research and learning: "What does it mean to show interpretation? We wanted to create a space in which all reading activity, all annotation activity, all interventions in a text [*Ivanhoe,* in this case], through collaboration and a social space of exchange around that process, could be recorded and rendered visible, . . . [to] show interpretation as a collaborative social behavior."[6] In the "collaborative social behavior" that likewise produced her co-authored book *Digital_Humanities*, a similar argument appears in the section "Designing Digital Humanities," which speaks of "design as a method of thinking-through-practice": "Digital Humanities is a production-based endeavor in which theoretical issues get tested in the design of implementation, and implementations are loci of theoretical reflection and elaboration."[7] Drucker and her

collaborators, call not so much for coding expertise as for "understanding the *rhetoric* of design" (emphasis mine) in a collaborative space, a "space to iterate and test," where "process is favored over product; versioning and extensibility are favored over definite editions and research silos," and students can be "active participants and stakeholders in the creation and preservation of cultural materials."[8]

In this emphasis on the social dimensions of the classroom as learning lab or design space, Drucker's work dovetails nicely with Henry Jenkins's focus on participatory culture in his MacArthur white paper. Recognizing fan cultures as models of robust social learning, Jenkins proposes a classroom structure that draws on participatory practices found in digital communities. These communities, he argues, can be recognized as ones:

1. With relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement

2. With strong support for creating and sharing one's creations with others

3. With some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices

4. Where members believe that their contributions matter

5. Where members feel some degree of social connection with one another[9]

Such principles, also underlying his *Reading in a Participatory Culture: Remixing "Moby-Dick" in the English Classroom*, redefine traditional models of literacy and textual interpretation, redistribute expertise in the classroom, and give students larger, more dynamic communities within which to share creative and critical work.[10]

John Bryant's theory of fluid-text editing establishes a significant context for digital pedagogy as well. First, his book stresses the historical role of social communities around multiple versions of a text, thereby breaking down the "definite editions and research silos" Drucker mentions. Second, he creates a thick description of editing as an inclusive function that, as much as preserving textual artifacts from the past, also records the many acts of interpretation—including censorship, remixing, bowdlerization, and multimedia adaptation—that speak to diverse strategies of meaning-making and story-telling over time.[11] In so doing, he has inspired me to develop pedagogy around the idea of "students as editors," as agents in the ongoing cultural work of texts, rather than as simply novice learners.[12]

My ideas about pedagogy design, however, also grow organically from the texts I work with most, and as the above review of resources suggests, Melville's writings have proven compatible with this effort. Especially in *Moby-Dick*, Melville seems preoccupied with design himself: Ishmael often wonders how to create a narrative that can encompass his vast subject, how to approach so difficult a task, what tools to use, what resources to borrow—where, even, to begin? In chapter three, "The Spouter-Inn," for example, Ishmael puzzles for some time to understand the artist's "design" in a "boggy, soggy, squitchy picture" he observes hanging in a dim corner.[13] His analysis resembles the problem-solving methodology my student identified at the end of our seminar—a creative blend of traditional humanities methods and new user-oriented thinking.

Thus Ishmael begins with classic research: "it was only by diligent study and a series of systematic visits to it, and careful inquiry of the neighbors, that you could any way arrive at an understanding of its purpose."[14] Hence follows close reading and thick

description: "But what most puzzled and confounded you was a long, limber, portentous, black mass of something hovering in the centre of the picture over three blue, dim, perpendicular lines floating in a nameless yeast."[15] Finally, Ishmael throws out a series of hypotheses that show both creative imagination and practical ingenuity:

> Ever and anon a bright, but, alas, deceptive idea would dart you
>
> through.—It's the Black Sea in a midnight gale.—It's the unnatural combat
>
> of the four primal elements.—It's a blasted heath.—It's a Hyperborean
>
> winter scene.—It's the breaking-up of the icebound stream of Time. But
>
> last all these fancies yielded to that one portentous something in the
>
> picture's midst. That once found out, and all the rest were plain. But stop;
>
> does it not bear a faint resemblance to a gigantic fish? even the great
>
> leviathan himself?[16]

Ishmael's speculations and false starts bring him finally to a correct, or at least sustainable identification of that "black mass of something" at the center of the picture, and at the center of his story as well.

But Ishmael's wild guesses suggest that he is thinking about not only *what* makes the picture meaningful but also *for whom*? For someone interested in maritime voyages, then, "the Black Sea in a midnight gale" would satisfy. For a romantically minded reader, "the breaking-up of the icebound stream of Time" makes the most sense. Finally, however, because Ishmael has some inkling of his reader's expectations, he recognizes "the great leviathan himself" as the likeliest possibility. Specifying not just *what* but *for whom* suggests that the reading process has a design beyond satisfying an individual's

desire for a certain kind of meaning. It opens up the process to experiment, trial and error, visualization, collaboration, and perhaps the "breaking-up" of meaning itself.

I wanted to make my seminar, Mapping Melville, a place where students could engineer—hack and redesign—the reading process for themselves and their peers.[17] The tools I describe in the assignments that follow focus on reading itself, *close* reading, and it might be fair to ask if I am simply adopting new devices to serve old paradigms, "close reading" being by now one of the oldest and most controversial of them all. As several essays in this *D19* volume suggest and as debates in participatory-culture and literacy studies also imply, mid-twentieth-century models of close reading have often proven themselves arcane, exclusionary if not racist, ahistorical, and outmoded. Students strenuously resist what appears to them as literary vivisection. Critics of the humanities certainly make a compelling case against a form of exceptionalism that would claim the particular value of close reading of literature and culture. And yet, what else do humanities classrooms provide and students seek there but the satisfaction of close study and understanding of a text that might seem alien on first reading? With only a dim sense of exactly how it happened, I had seen in the projects described below that students' reading became sharper, cannier, more social, and more productive. In Mapping Melville, digital tools proved indispensable to the design of new learning outcomes.

As much as possible I tried to share the design of the class and its use of digital tools with students. Thus I set up three projects, each one exploring a different mapping strategy, each focused on a different digital tool, and each addressing different Melville texts. For their part, students provided materials from their research, shared their annotations and reports on work-in-progress and final essays, and tested the tools

critically, giving feedback on functionality, drawbacks, and discoveries. With an eye to this project-oriented learning, I also tried to break down assessment into component parts. Each report was graded separately from the final essay. When grading the essay, I made reference to annotations and other preliminary stages (annotated bibliography, reports, workshop discussion) as a way to emphasize process as well as product. No assessment strategy works perfectly, as we are constrained by conventional grading rubrics, but I tried in my feedback to acknowledge the students' creative use of tools, their generous support of each other's work, and their spontaneous contributions to class discussion and annotation as well as their formal written essays. I hope that this approach lent itself, at least in part, to the idea that we were designing the class together.

We began with Locast and an attempt to map *Moby-Dick* using geographical references. Locast is an open-source mapping tool developed by Federico Casalegno of MIT's Mobile Experience Lab (a research group in the department of Comparative Media Studies/Writing). Designed originally for Italian tourism and for Android or computer, Locast allows users to upload images, video clips, and text to a "cast" or enriched site on a Google map. Casalegno's Open Locast Project collects digital narratives, media-rich guides, and community development initiatives, for which Locast technology lends coherence by gathering different kinds of geographical, visual, and textual information. Together we adapted it for a literary-studies classroom and as a basis for class discussion, student reports, and essays.

<Insert Figure 1 about here>

<Insert Figure 2 about here>

The *Moby-Dick* site at Locast builds on the efforts of a team of *Melville Electronic Library* (*MEL*) researchers: Dawn Coleman, Elyse Graham, Peter Riley, Haskell Springer, Brian Yothers, and myself. Using the Longman Critical Edition (LCE) of *Moby-Dick* edited by John Bryant and Haskell Springer, we created a spreadsheet of place names in the novel, labeling them as mappable (Tahiti, for example) or unmappable (Tartarus), supplying modern names for old (Mosul for Nineveh), providing geographical coordinates and brief quotations, and identifying quotations by page and line numbers. We included names explicitly identified with a particular place (Greenland), as well as adjectives clearly betokening locations as well (Parisian). Working from our approximately 1500 entries, Locast developer Amar Boghani created the Melville Locast site and with Pelin Arslan conducted a study of students' uses of Locast in several of my classes.

I began our discussions of *Moby-Dick* by explaining that as both sailor and reader, Melville had traveled widely before writing the book, and that knowing his particular geographical context would help us make sense of this global narrative. Although we would engage with Melville's themes and ideas, students' reports and essays for this first mapping assignment would build on what they learned about places mentioned in the text. As well as researching what I called Melville's "geographical imagination" and sharing their findings with other students, they would be enriching the Locast *Moby-Dick* site by adding their images, clips, and comments for other students (current and future) to see.

As a side benefit, all of this work would also be distracting them from the terrifying discovery that they were reading and taking apart the Great American Novel in wholly unconventional ways.

In a most remarkable development, students chose locations that had meaning to them. One student noted Melville's references to an old Manxman and was delighted to discover that her father, whose family came from the Isle of Man, might have inherited a culture of fisheries along with his genes. A student who played the pipe organ got interested in Haarlem's "pipes" (mentioned in a description of the whale's baleen in chapter seventy-five), and another student, fascinated by Melville's giant wine cask in chapter seventy-seven, researched the Heidelburgh Tun. One was surprised to find so many references to Africa in a book more generally concerned with Pacific whaling grounds. Another stayed close to Melville's home by exploring the many moments when Nantucket appears in the text. In every case, their reports and essays took them to neglected corners in the book, offered unexpected readings of passages they might have considered from more conventional perspectives, and gave them a personal sense of connection with a novel that had intimidated them at the start. The essays, in particular, gave them an opportunity to develop beyond their Locast map-reading and to analyze Melville's language in greater detail.

A second assignment considered mapping as a metaphor for literary source study. I asked students to locate literary references in Melville's short fiction and to annotate them using Annotation Studio, an open-source MIT instance of the Annotator (http://annotatorjs.org/). Built in MIT's HyperStudio, Annotation Studio provides a workspace where users can upload texts, search and select passages, add comments, share

or not as desired, import links and images, and tag for themes, versions, or a classroom folksonomy.

<Insert Figure 3 about here>

I used Annotation Studio previously in writing classes to make visible students' reading process, to open up the layers of private or shared encounters with the text that a finished product, the essay submitted for a grade, cannot reveal. In the Melville seminar, we relied on Annotation Studio for each assignment, but the literary source-study project focused on combining traditional humanities research with the special affordances of an annotation tool of considerable flexibility and range.

Students first chose a source for one of Melville's mid-1850s works—say Dante's *Inferno* in "The Paradise of Bachelors and The Tartarus of Maids" or Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* in "The Encantadas." Their process involved both collaborative exercises—sharing their digital annotations, reporting on their findings, and presenting their final work to the class—as well as working alone to research and write their essays. Similarly, they blended print and digital resources. Research in books and literary databases established that Melville borrowed from literary sources, and as the assignment was designed to exercise their research skills, students learned to search databases and library shelves, employing traditional tools. But in using Annotation Studio to chart exact passages where Melville quotes from or adapts a text, students made new discoveries of their own. Furthermore, when they reported on their findings and wrote their essays, they

had a precise record of their close readings of the text to share with the class and draw on for their own writing.

<Insert Figure 4 about here>

The clear, detailed annotation that Annotation Studio enables supported their research and writing in manifold ways. Given specific passages to consider and compare, students tended to proceed more confidently and to choose more arcane projects than I would expect of undergraduates. Essays included such topics as: melodrama in Frederick Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* and Melville's "Benito Cereno"; slavery, technology, and the story of Jael and Sisera in "The Bell-Tower"; the presence of Poe in "Bartleby" and "The Bell-Tower"; *The Confidence-Man* and *Paradise Lost*; or, in an unusual historical topic, the reference to reformer Elizabeth Fry in *The Confidence-Man*. I have included here the topics that most strikingly went beyond the norm. All, however, showed remarkable initiative and willingness to venture widely afield.

I cannot attribute these developments solely to the use of Annotation Studio. In their comments on the tool, however, students mentioned how it helped them to locate precisely the points of interest they wanted to consider in a text. I may have led them to literary sources and scholarship, but their experiments with Annotation Studio sharpened close reading, made their writing more detailed, and allowed them to learn from each other by sharing their work. For example, those who researched Melville's English antecedents—Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton—clearly took pride in what they learned about these (to them) remote authors and began to recognize that, as a group, they were

providing a sort of literary history for the rest of the class. A student who particularly gravitated toward the Bible found that other students' work challenged—and refined—his own. The workshops where students presented their reports—one on research-in-progress, then another on the final essays—produced genuine arguments about specific passages the students had annotated and interpreted. I had not expected such a level of engagement in the texts themselves. Students seemed to appreciate the idea that just as literary antecedents of *Moby-Dick* had shaped the novel, those earlier authors could also speak to twenty-first-century readers in unanticipated ways.

The third assignment engaged students in perhaps the most complex "mapping" of all, reading *Billy Budd* and tracking Melville's writing process by studying revisions in his manuscript text. TextLab, housed at the *Melville Electronic Library* and developed by John Bryant at Hofstra University and Nick Laiacona at Performant Software, digitally displays the *Billy Budd* manuscript (as does the Houghton Library, who generously gave *MEL* access to the digitized text) and furthermore allows users to transcribe it in TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) format. I have found TEI difficult and time-consuming for undergraduates to learn, but it has considerable advantages in rendering their editorial work searchable, shareable, and plastic in other ways.

TextLab's first stage of engagement, called Primary Editing, allows users to make their own decisions about Melville's revisions as recorded on the page, hence putting them in the same position as Melville's early-twentieth-century editors Raymond Weaver, Barron Freeman, Harrison Hayford, and Merton M. Sealts, Jr., none of whom had a print text of *Billy Budd* to consult.

<Insert Figure 5 about here>

TextLab then enables users to construct the "revision sequences" and "revision narratives" (at the Secondary Editing stage) that provide a foundation for interpreting Melville's revisions throughout the manuscript. A student could go from noting Melville's addition or deletion of a significant word in the Primary Editing stage, to creating a step-by-step model of Melville's likely choices (for example, to write then delete a word and substitute another), and finally to advancing an editorial argument for the causes and effects of certain changes. It sounds gritty, and it is. No other device I've tried gets students so involved in the precise workings of a text under construction.

 <Insert Figure 6 about here>

For students with technical skills, it turns out, this kind of work is tremendously appealing. It also uncovers sophisticated issues in Melville's prose, fine-grained matters of word choice and sentence structure that open up significant thematic complexities and philosophical questions. Students quickly feel themselves experts on a particular section, character, or even word in *Billy Budd* and devise innovative theories for the effects of Melville's changes.

The essays responded creatively to what these TextLab exercises made visible. One student, for example, looked at Melville's change from "oakum" to "pretty silk-lined" to describe the basket in which orphan infant Billy is found; her essay probed the story's gender politics as revealed in that telling phrase, while another student, examining

the same wording, took it to refer to equally significant class differences. In an early description of Billy, Melville's narrator compares him to a "grand sculptured Bull." Melville initially wrote "deified Bull"; a student explored the other references that suggest Billy's godlike—though often heathen—character. Another student followed John Bryant's suggestion that Melville's revision of "white . . . forecastle-magnate" to "handsome sailor" opens up the possibility that Melville initially envisioned Billy as black, like the Liverpool Handsome Sailor of the opening pages; she expanded this insight to speculate on possible connections between Billy and the African mutineer Babo in "Benito Cereno."[18] A student's study of the changes in language describing Captain Vere led to speculation that Melville began with a "sketch" but developed his narrative unexpectedly into something that probed human character more deeply. Melville's late addition of "that great heart" to his dedication to Jack Chase struck one student as indicating the increasing role of the *heart* in the story as it developed. A subtle reading of "conscientiousness" as a term applied to the minor character Captain Graveling appeared to another student as evidence that conscience likewise grew in importance as the story proceeded, and as Vere wrestled with his own. A different essay located the workings of conscience in Melville's tinkering with the word "disquietude" to draw attention to the difficulty characters face in squaring moral training with martial duty. In chapter one Melville's narrator changes his reference to "important variations that will evolve themselves as the story proceeds" to read "important variations made apparent as the story proceeds"; did Melville mean to make the reader a passive spectator of events "made apparent" throughout the text rather than "evolving" according to some logic or intention? One student was curious to find out.

I have been teaching *Billy Budd* to students at various levels for many years. In my other classes, students have used Annotation Studio to focus and develop their close readings of the text. The seminar students' use of TextLab opened up even more dazzling feats of close reading, but these amplified themselves further through the social momentum of the class, which by the final weeks of the semester had developed enormous esprit de corps. I should not then have been surprised when one of the students asked when I would take them to see Melville's manuscripts at the Houghton Library at Harvard University. We had been studying his works, including poems, marginalia, and letters, in various media and at different stages of composition and reception history. It apparently seemed natural to students that they would take the next step of consulting Harvard's collections for themselves. But I have never received such a request before, and the students could not have known how much I rejoiced in it. I could well remember speaking on digital tools many years ago and having the renowned scholar Walter Bezanson ask me if I were not just replacing the reading process with a set of games and distractions. I have often returned to that question since. At least with this particular class, the outcome of using digital resources was to *return* them to the texts in their material forms.

Obviously my students enjoy extraordinary privileges, among which the least might appear to be proximity and access to rare Melvilleana at Harvard. But that is just my point. The fact that they would *desire* this access—arising, apparently, from my offhand comment one day, "You know, you can just go down the street and see these things for yourself!"—seems an unexpected outcome of their use of digital technology. Yet their mapping of Melville's geographical and global imagination, his capacious

embrace of literary sources, and his complex writing process as revealed in unpublished manuscripts, provided them with, well, a map to an author they might otherwise have found impenetrable.

But how did this famous but still somewhat fearsome nineteenth-century author, with or without the twenty-first century technology we explored, inspire such excitement in students who are heading into non-humanities fields? They do tell me jokingly that their thoughts on *Moby-Dick* have consumed at least ten minutes of a medical school interview. But you cannot sell a class on the fact that many doctors, engineers, and other professionals cherish a nostalgic love for their college English texts. If my students began the class thinking of Melville as a trophy author, they did not expect to experience as much satisfaction as they apparently did—one student even going so far as to say that her reading of *Moby-Dick* had produced an intense existential crisis and was keeping her up at night more than her problem sets. No, I have come to think that the study of nineteenth-century literature resonates in particular ways with twenty-first century students, and that we can design pedagogy to capture that resonance in our classes.

Without over-simplifying this problem, I would suggest that students experience their learning as meaningful when given the power to choose and investigate for themselves. At MIT their science and engineering classes stress the importance of failure, and even in as competitive an environment as theirs, they can experience the lessons of crashed experiments. In a literature class, however, they often imagine that their only choice is to find out what the teacher wants to hear or thinks is embedded in the text and dig it out. If literary study is a treasure hunt, then the prizes go only to the best equipped, and I find students often lack the confidence even to begin.

But in the Mapping Melville seminar, students seemed compelled to make judgments for themselves because they found that Melville's characters, even fictional and incomprehensible figures like Ahab, Hunilla, Babo, and Captain Vere, were wrestling with "real" problems of serious consequence. They seemed too to see in Melville someone engaging with social, intellectual, and literary issues of great weight. Their reading of Melville had led them, even without the digital tools we explored, to global geographies, deep histories, and broad social concerns—abolition, gender rights, labor issues, to name just a few. Through Melville they found a Bible they did not recognize and a Shakespeare they had never seen before. Previously taught to appreciate characters for being "relatable," they found themselves in an intellectual landscape they could not easily navigate—until they created a map of their own design, one fashioned from their own studies and discoveries.

Although I chose Melville by default, knowing both the subject and digital resources best, I would not hesitate to take a similar approach with authors like Phyllis Wheatley, Frederick Douglass, Emily Dickinson, or Mark Twain whose work offers students the opportunity to make choices about what they are reading, even what version they are reading, and what it means. I would characterize their choices in several ways. The most common one is thematic and still structures much of literary discussion in the classroom: what do we think of the dilemmas this character faces? How would we act in this situation? What does the author expect us to think or make of this problem? How does the author complicate and then resolve it? Such questions, I have found, engage students powerfully but do not ultimately lead to choices they find meaningful. They are not, after all, having to choose for themselves. The choice remains in a hypothetical or

fictional world and is one I would associate with "students as readers," that is deciding what they respond to or do not respond to in a text, what moves them, what reading reveals about themselves.

When students can study multiple versions of a fluid text, however, or revisions of a text they thought was stable or histories of a text that has changed its impact over time, then they are making the decisions editors have to make. What in the history of this text has survived and what was dropped? How does this text read its sources and how has it been read by later readers, fans, and adaptors? What do those readings say about reading cultures over time? What does the choice of this particular word say about the author's historical or ideological context, about her readers and circuits of communication? These choices position "students as editors," as having to decide if a previously admired text will survive into the next generation, and in what version.

Another set of choices faces "students as designers." They can choose not only what they think of a literary work or shape its meaning in different versions or for different audiences but also map and thereby create a learning experience for themselves. Here I would argue that although digital pedagogy enables certain possibilities, technology is not the only answer. Distance is at least one important dimension. That is, in order to be aware of oneself as designing the experiment by which she reads a text, the student has to have some depth of resources to draw on—histories, scholarship, reception studies, fans, multimedia adaptations. Such textual complexity calls for smart finding aids, annotation strategies, and analytical tools.

America's long nineteenth century provides a comfortable amount of distance for many of our students. The language, if occasionally verbose or unfamiliar, is not foreign.

The issues are recognizable in a current context but also stand at a historical remove. Whereas students may find current global conflicts frightening or complex, they may more easily grapple with problems from another era. More than that, they can sift the language of another time, their eyes and ears trained by attention-getting devices like Annotation Studio and TextLab to test and fine-tune their assumptions.

The case of Melville suggests not just the exceptional advantages of reading, mapping, annotating, or deconstructing his texts but also the manifold possibilities of encountering authors who seem *just* far enough away.

Notes

[1] I distributed questionnaires at the end of the semester; students' comments appear here anonymously. I have drawn on three different occasions when I taught Melville's texts using these tools and am presenting them here as one semester.

[2] John Bryant, dir., *Melville Electronic Library*, Hofstra University, accessed March 10, 2016, http://mel.hofstra.edu/.

[3] See, for example, Steven Henry Madoff, ed. *Art School (Propositions for the 21ˢᵗ Century)* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009) or Michael Shanks and Jeffrey Schnapp, "Design thinking as arteriality: a manifesto for the arts and humanities" (Palo Alto: Stanford University, 2011), accessed March 10, 2016, http://jeffreyschnapp.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Design-thinking-as-artereality.pdf.

[4] See Adam Kirsch, "Technology is Taking Over English Departments: The False Promise of the Digital Humanities," *New Republic*, May 2, 2014, https://newrepublic.com/article/117428/limits-digital-humanities-adam-kirsch; and Tara Parker-Pope, "'Design Thinking' For a Better You," *New York Times*, January 4, 2016, http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/01/04/design-thinking-for-a-better-you/

[5] Johanna Drucker, "Designing Digital Humanities" (lecture presented in the Comparative Media Studies/Writing Colloquium, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, April 23, 2013), podcast at http://cmsw.mit.edu/podcast-johanna-drucker-design/.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Johanna Drucker, "Designing the Digital Humanities," in *Digital_Humanities*, Anne Burdick, et al., eds. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013), 13.

[8] Drucker, "Designing" in *Digital_Humanities*, 21-23.

[9] Henry Jenkins, et al., "Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century," (occasional paper, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, 2006), 9, http://www.macfound.org/media/article_pdfs/JENKINS_WHITE_PAPER.PDF.

[10] Henry Jenkins and Wyn Kelley, eds., *Reading in a Participatory Culture: Remixing "Moby-Dick" in the English Classroom* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2013).

[11] John Bryant, *The Fluid Text: A Theory of Revision and Editing for Book and Screen* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

[12] See Jim Paradis, et al., "Annotation Studio: Bringing a Time-Honored Learning Practice Into the Digital Age," (white paper), MIT Comparative Media Studies/Writing, 2013), http://cmsw.mit.edu/annotation-studio-whitepaper/.

[13] Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, John Bryant and Haskell Springer, eds. (1853; New York: Pearson/Longman, 2007), 30.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] While trite, the term "hack" has resonance for my enterprise. It is an ancient and honorable word going back to the thirteenth century; I work in an institution where students celebrate a history of "hacking" as playful and ethical pranks (http://hacks.mit.edu/Hacks/); and I want my students' hacking to exhibit creative skill, not hackneyed drudgery.

[18] See John Bryant, "How Billy Budd Grew Black and Beautiful: Versions of Melville in the Digital Age," *Leviathan* 16, no. 1 (March 2014): 60-86.