



The Future of the Literary Text in the Posthuman Condition

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Received: 03 May 2022; Received in revised form: 26 May 2022; Accepted: 01 Jun 2022; Available online: 06 Jun 2022

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Abstract— “Posthuman” does not mean after human or beyond human. It is only a reconfiguration of what it means to be human in the rapidly changing technological scenario. Though the Enlightenment concept of the human as autonomous, as a rational creature who by the use of the faculty of reason, can give any shape to the self as s/he wishes, has been discredited by Darwin’s theory of evolution, Marx’s dialectical materialism, and Freud’s psychoanalysis, yet the biological and the technological world had not infringed upon the human, thereby reducing all claims of autonomy to sarcasm, as they do in the present era. The posthuman denotes, Cary Wolfe says, “the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being is not just its biological but also its technological world (Qtd Seldon et al 284). N. Katherine Hayles in *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics* (1999) contends that normal human beings become post-human by using prosthetic body parts adopting computer technologies. Donna Haraway has indeed conceived of the humans as cyborgs who are part human and part machine, the machine being a prosthetic extension of the human. In this age of Information Technology and social media, a natural corollary of the posthuman condition is *Digital Humanities: This essay explores how the post human condition and digital humanities impact the interactive composition and interpretation of the literary text.*

Keywords— *Posthuman, Enlightenment, Autonomous dialectical materialism, Prosthetic, Cyborg, Cybernetics, Informatics, Information Technology, Social media.*

The posthuman is a reconfiguration of the human. The doctrine that developed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Europe with the human at the centre was called Humanism. Humanism was based on human exceptionalism. The humans were believed to be the only creation of God blessed with a thinking mind, a reasoning intellect and a power to make sense of the world around them. The human was therefore considered superior to all other living and nonliving things. This hierarchy with the humans at the top (created as they are in God’s own image) and the rest of the animate and inanimate nature below, was not confined to the differences between the humans and the nonhumans. Among humans also there was a hierarchy on the basis of gender, race and colour. Women and the coloured people were not given full status as humans. Posthumanism is a reaction to this

exclusiveness of humanism and is born out of a realization that the human self does not live in isolation from or domination over the nonhuman lives and objects. Feminism, Ecocriticism, Animal Studies, New Materialism and Digital Humanism are all different forms of posthumanism that have variously made us reappraise the human subject.

High investment in the internet companies in the 1990s has brought about the digitalization of the world. Facebook and WhatsApp have made possible instant and wider communication. Google has made all kinds of information accessible to everyone. What is the impact of all these new developments in the study and teaching of the literary text? How best can the world wide web aid research and teaching of literature and what precautions be necessary for a literary scholar to be a humble votary of

literature, not a proud netizen dictating terms on the basis of information indiscriminately accessed through internet? The purpose of this article is to address these questions that the posthuman condition has hoisted upon us, reconfigured humans, cyborgs or otherwise.

Ecocriticism and Animal Studies have foregrounded the interdependence of humans, animals, and plants. Human activities in pursuit of money and power have caused deforestation, extinction of numerous species of plants and animals and poisoned the land, the water system, the air, in fact, the entire eco-system so irretrievably that the survival of the humans is in danger. New Materialism has taken clues from physics to prove that matter is not inert and static as it appears to the naked eye. A lot of commotion goes on within matter at the subatomic level. Posthumanism has, therefore, emphasized the need for humans to be humble and modest, to live in cooperation with the entire living and non-living world and to eschew the desire for domination and exploitation which humanism had fostered. All these developments have modified our views about what it means to be human.

Cary Wolfe points out that in the present times no definition of the humans is complete without recognition of their embeddedness in the technological world. The most important development in the technological world today is the rapidly advancing computer technology. Katherine N. Hayles has claimed that there is “no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals” (3). She has based this claim on Alan Turing’s “Imitation Game” proposed in a 1950 paper entitled “Computer Machinery and Intelligence.” Hayles describes the game:

You are alone in the room, except for two computer terminals flickering in the dim light. You use the terminals to communicate with two entities in another room, whom you cannot see. Relying solely on their responses to your questions, you must decide. . . which is the human, which machine.” (1)

As you can see only the on-screen responses, not the body. “‘intelligence’ becomes a property of the formal manipulation of symbols, rather than enaction in the human life-world.” If this game makes it impossible to distinguish between an intelligent machine and an intelligent human, then “machines can think” (3). Hayles, therefore, redefines the human subject as only another type of information system. The human body and consciousness are not purposefully designed by God for humans to dominate over nature. They are only accidental materialisation of certain informational codes. Computer

science even moots the possibility of a universal information code underlying all existing things. This reconfiguration of the human as just a kind of robotic intelligence is posthuman.

The ever-widening scope of computers has brought about digitization of all systems of knowledge production including those of literary studies. Digital Literary Studies come within the broader scope of Digital Humanities which are readily available through internet in personal computers, android phones, iPad etc. i.e., the machines which Katherine Hayles considers, prosthetic extensions of humans rendering them posthuman thereby Robert A. Busa, who is generally acknowledged as the founder of Digital Humanities, says

Humanities computing is precisely the automation of every possible analysis of human expression (therefore, it is exquisitely a ‘humanistic’ activity) in the widest sense of the word, from music to the theatre, from design and painting to phonetics, but whose nucleus remains the discourse of written texts. (1)

Busa’s automation is the outcome of computer-based Natural Language Processing. This ushered in a new concept of hermeneutics because the automatic processing of linguistic data was no longer based on purely subjective interpretation and it was, so to say, objective. What Busa called Humanities Computing later became Digital Humanities. It brought about a huge epistemological and cultural transformation through the transcription of the written text to an alphanumeric sequence. But the materiality of the written text i.e., their incredible linguistic and cultural diversity, their visual and pragmatic dimension do not accord well with the limited possibilities offered by information science. The basic assets of Digital Humanities for Literary Studies are broadly stated by Seldon et al.

These accrue especially to bibliographic study, the preparation of concordances and scholarly editions, archive searches, and statistical word or leitmotif searches through corpuses. The digitization of scattered, remote or out-of-print materials is an enormous boon. As is the scale and range of material, both written and visual, made accessible now at an unprecedented speed. Simultaneously literary scholars are brought to examine historical, geographical, social and economic records and to enter debates with researchers in other disciplines. (285)

The range and scale of available materials, the rapidity of access, the collaborative ethos across disciplines are the most tangible gains of digitization. But these clearly discernible advantages should not encourage us to turn a blind eye to the structural weaknesses of digitization. When a text is subjected to computational processing it has to conform to the codes of formal logic. How will computational processing do justice to the element of undecidability that informs the literary text? How would the complexity and ambiguity of such texts be represented in digital networks?

Johanna Drucker cautions: “If digital humanities were reduced to a single precept, it would be requirement to disambiguate knowledge representation so that it operates within the codes of computational processing” (5). In her opinion, the basic elements of digital humanities, namely, the statistical analysis of texts, creation of structured data and design of information architecture, are premised on a conviction that best solution to all hermeneutical puzzles is transparency or accuracy in the presentation of data. The so-called objectivity of computation culture overrules the supposed fuzziness of humanistic values based on subjective interpretation, is digital humanities. Drucker observes: Digital projects are usually defined in highly pragmatic terms: creating a searchable corpus, making primary materials for historical research available or linking such materials to an interactive map or timeline capable of displaying data selectively.” The “normalizing pressures of digitization” threatens to push to oblivion “the lessons of deconstruction end post-structuralism- the extensive critiques of reason and grand narratives, the recognition that presumptions of objectivity are merely cultural assertions of a particular historical formation” (7). The digital humanities community is also blind to “the rhetorical effects of design as a form of mediation” because of the “cultural authority of mathesis” in computational processing (6).

The fear that the objectivity required by digitization may spell the death of literature which is informed by complexity and ambiguity, that digitization cannot value the rhetorical effects of design as a form of mediation is proved to be unjustified in Roger Whitson and Jason Whittaker’s analysis of Blake’s poetry. They call Blake’s art “zoamorphosis”- an art that intentionally rouses its audience to participate in it. “Blake’s art is a net-worked form of creative collaboration” (4). Critics have observed that Blake’s artistic practice is marked by a radical commitment to create art that stirs the perceivers to transform their thinking and to achieve a higher form of consciousness. But Blake’s visionary goals are ironically circumscribed by the fact that his way of reproducing his

art by relief etching limited him to only a very few hand-made copies of each work in his own time. But today digital methods have enabled his work to rouse Digital Designers, Gamers and Tweeters. Whitson and Whittaker say that “folksonomies” and “mechonomies” i.e., collective and machine produced responses and systems of organization, respectively, are blurring the line between collective and individual reactions, humans and machines.

Blake’s works have not suffered under digital technologies. The authors have surveyed numerous nineteenth and twentieth century Blake editions to conclude that editors always took creative liberties with Blake’s work. To preserve Blake for future generations, editors liberally rewrote and edited arbitrarily selected works of Blake. While Blake’s works were originally composite forms of art – music, painting, and poetry working together-, editors reduced them to typography. These standard versions of Blake always diverged from the original handcoloured copper plate engravings. So, Blake has been appropriated by a typographical system that imposed its own norms on works which were especially designed to challenge and exceed the limits of typography. The print culture had been a hiatus to participatory and collaborative responses to works of art like Blake’s.

Whitson and Whittaker turn them to an analysis of Blake’s poem “The Tyger” to showcase the virtues of digitization and social networking in creative engagement with the poem. Readers have co-created the poem, by engaging in repetition through anthologies, critical debate, archiving and hermeneutics, rewriting, adaptations etc. (53-54). The ambiguity and rhetorical complexity of the poem, the irony of the tame tiger painted on the page and the fierce creature depicted in the poem has prompted endless hermeneutic debates. “The Tyger . . . zoamorph”, the authors assert, “extends through literature, drama, poetry, music, novels, visual culture and animation” (64). All attempts to impose a rigid conceptual system of meaning on the poem have failed. The text deliberately refuses to answer the question “Did he who made the lamb make thee?” (62). As a result, it has demanded endless readings. Mark Greenberg in his review of Whitson and Whittaker’s *William Blake and the Digital Humanities: Collaboration, Participation, and Social Media* observes “The instability and strangeness of Blake’s works engender equally strange, unstable responses, onward, outward without end”.

Who and what are William Blake and his works then? The answer lies in the reception to his works. Whitson and Whittaker point out “Blake is archived by billions of tiny acts of tagging, often by people and machines who don’t know Blake and could[n’t] care less

about his works . . . Blake survives because other actors invent new spaces for him by perceiving him differently” (159). Every new encounter creates a new Blake and the creative responses to his works are creatively recalled in the future expressions of all the perceivers. Our experience of a Blake plate or poem may be shaped by experience and the editors of his text, but it is energized by Blake’s ideas and aesthetics. Such countless and still continuing appropriations of Blake are necessary to spur the kind of imaginative response his work demands in essence.

Blake is reconstituted in a variety of new formats and situations in the online environment. Rich student engagement in archiving and preservation within the classroom and beyond is made possible through blogs and Twitter. Whitson and Whitaker advocate a new, networked, collaborative and transdisciplinary approaches to literary discourse. They conclude:

“literary studies should embrace the awareness of network culture and the elision of difference between human and non-human actors to engage in what Blake called *self-annihilation* . . . a literal dissolution of the self and the ego, driving a creative reorganization of past realities and developing a greater awareness of the networks that work together to engage the creative process” (172).

Blake’s survival is therefore not simply due to those who are inspired by him and respond, in accordance with Blake’s demand, with productions of their own, but also to his ideas and modes of expression as they play out across new modes of expression and transformation. The authors openly and boldly advocate death of the reading and teaching of literature in the traditional format and advance the birth of new, networked, collaborative and transdisciplinary approaches to literary discourse enabled by digital humanities. They exhort to literateurs:

“Let’s cast off the filthy garments of our areas and see what hybrid beasts emerge from the interinstitutional collaboration of hundreds of different specialists working together to distant read and topic model millions of texts. Let’s read all published books that still exist from the nineteenth century, and stop attempting to make broad sweeping historical arguments based upon six or seven novels. Let’s remix and transform literature into experimental multimedia installations . . . Let’s stop reading about the building of Golgonooza

in *Jerusalem* and start actually building it.” (174-175)

Mark Greenberg hopefully reviews the book:” the networked and collaborative communications being enacted every day on the Internet augur more changes, lending a sense of possibility to this cry for change.” In his opinion the book is emblematic of how thoughtful teachers and scholars are engaging twenty-first century students and colleagues in the ongoing conversation about the eternally fresh William Blake.

The writers find digitization enabling because interactive communication technologies may overcome typography and the stasis of the printed page. Since the whole lot of writers, readers, critics and bloggers cocreate a literary text in the process of reading, discussing and adapting it, the best way to represent its complexity is to leave it unresolved. The text will thus be witnessing a more public life of adaptation and resetting and freed from the vagaries of the printed page. The digital media, therefore, helps to amplify the complexity of the literary text. The classroom pedagogy has also become more fruitfully interactive through methods like power point presentations which enable pupils to take down the lessons displayed on the screen and teachers to be more circumspect as the lesson flashed on the screen is subject to public scrutiny. The students are also able to use social media, blogs and twitter, for interactive participation among themselves and with their instructors.

The tools of digitization have really helped to develop an interactive and collaborative ethos. The awareness of network culture has been found enabling as it has played down the personal element in reading and dynamically charged the stasis of the printed page. But a problem still remains. The digital material, so eminently accessible through the websites carry an aura of omniscience, objectivity and dependability all about them. This often encourages unimaginative downloading of data, and kills the power of introspection which is a basic requirement for creative and critical judgement of literary texts. The SpecLab projects need mention here as experimental and fledgling projects for assessing how best classroom pedagogy can be fruitfully interactive through imaginative employment of networking culture. Drucker conceived of the SpecLab as a space for assessing the role and nature of interpretation and knowledge production in new socially networked, digitally rich environments. Drucker collaborated with Jerome McGann at the University of Virginia from 2000 to develop the “Ivanhoe Game” after three years. The game aimed at the creation of a digital pedagogic environment in which players could accept roles and act within the virtual story space of

Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*. As described in the home page of the game the object of the game was: "to foster critical awareness of the methods and perspectives through which we understand and study humanities documents" (Quoted by Seldon et al. 286). The game was purposefully designed to develop a more imaginative form of critical methodology which is closer in spirit to original works of poetry and literature. The scope of the game was conceived in terms of the widest possible spectrum of interpretive activities: creative writing, critical analysis, scholarly gloss, visual response and representation in other media. McGann was happy to note that the game spurred his students on to acquire necessary historical and contextual knowledge to make their game more interesting and imaginative.

The planning of the *Ivanhoe* game is born from a double dissatisfaction of McGann and Drucker with the "confines of pre-digitized and an unimaginative digital literary study that fails to reckon in the structuring and restructuring creative role of interpretation." They aimed to go beyond, the early digital project of critical editing, corpus linguistics, translation and archive building. The new project will recover "the theorization of subjectivity and the critique of presence and objectivity introduced by post structuralism and deconstruct which were sacrificed to rationality and formal logic" (Selden et al. 289) demanded by computational method and assumptions. The *Ivanhoe* project is a practical application of Drucker's concept of "aesthesis" which refers to a theory of "partial, situated and subjective knowledge" (Quoted by Seldon et al.). The new developments in digital humanities conceive of a broad textual canvas across words and image, media and performance; it is therefore, a harbinger of the shape of things to come.

Johanna Drucker and Geoffrey Rockwell in *Introduction: Reflections on the Ivanhoe game* makes it clear from the beginning that *Ivanhoe* is both a game and a project to document discussion around play and literary criticism. They state:

The original impetus for *Ivanhoe*, as McGann points out in the opening section of his paper, was an exchange between Drucker and McGann in the spring of 2000 that posed a critical challenge: how might the rewriting of a literary text provide self-conscious insight into the literary work and into the processes of interpretation constituted by any and every act

of reading. Might we, literally, make that reading into a writing, an act of explicit reinterpretation? (vii)

Thus, the critical challenge the *Ivanhoe* project posed to itself was to provide "self-conscious insight into a literary work and into the processes of interpretation." Since every reading of a text is a recreation of the text, they wanted to remove the aura of privacy around reading and make it an act of "explicit reinterpretation" by recording it so that it is converted into writing.

The *Ivanhoe* project was intended to create a new approach to textual studies through the designing of an electronic instrument that would showcase the process of interpretation. The "newness" lay in part in its promotion of collaborative work, "use of distributed resources in virtual spaces" and new tools of analysis like visualizations based in computational capabilities (viii). Humanities studies have not fully explored collaboration for interpretive activities. Shared resources from geographically disparate centres create transformed conditions for editing and study. The *Ivanhoe* project would focalise developments from all these features to create an increased awareness of interpretation as a process. This is significant because "interpretation in its subjective and historical dimensions is the core activity of humanities" (viii).

Members of SpecLabi.e., Speculative Computer Laboratory such as Jerome McGann, Johana Drucker, Geoffrey Rockwell, Bethany Nowviskie, Nathan Piazza "played" *Ivanhoe* several times with separately constituted groups using specific literary works. They have played Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Emile Brontes' *Wuthering Heights* and Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* etc. the first "game" had only Drucker and McGann as players. They wrote down the outcome of Scott's *Ivanhoe* in a series of email exchanges. While reflecting on the project in the following months, they noticed the outlines of its hermeneutic significance. A "naïve game, played without rules or critical gloss, gave rise to a series of charged conversations." They created diagrams of the game's spaces as away to "conceptualize a theoretical model of interpretation" (viii).

Summer 2001 saw a more elaborate email game involving Steve Ramsay and Bethany Nowviskie in play with *Wuthering Heights*. A series of explosive discussions following the first and the second games expanded the project to a full-blown research project. From its inception as "a game of rework and rewriting executed without any explicit research agenda", the project soon found itself "infused with critical and theoretical investigations that proliferated on a burst of collective enthusiasm" (viii). As

a result, the SpecLab group had designed an interface, a theoretical and critical framework for the game as an investigation of literary studies and interpretation, and a set of rules by the end of summer, 2001.

Each new performance introduced many new developments in the Ivanhoe project. A search for funding led to considerations of the viability of Ivanhoe as a K-12 classroom tool in order to improve reading and writing skills. In late Spring 2002, a modified weblog (Blog) environment was designed by Bethany Nowvisky for use in playing the *Turn of the Screw* game. The new design made it possible to organise different activities considered to be essential. The blog environment also facilitated making moves in relation to a common source text, keeping a player journal and assessing each other's work. All these new developments only brought into sharp focus the overarching mission of the Ivanhoe project as a tool for interpretation.

The Ivanhoe project has completely overhauled study and teaching of literary texts. It has made it possible to convert reading into writing, so interpretation and rewriting of the text becomes collaborative. Instant communication within and outside the classroom with people across disciplines and varied geographical locations through blogs i.e., weblogs and evaluation of gamers while continuing their own games. This consciousness of networking involved in creation and interpretation of humanities documents marks a radical break in pedagogy and scholarship as far as literary texts are concerned.

It is possible to encourage such conflict-based collaboration among young men across disciplines in critical but creative engagements with literary texts because imaginative literature contains within themselves multiple versions of themselves, many lines of development that appear in latent or undeveloped forms. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, for example, had provoked widely divergent views from critics and creative writers. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* celebrate Jane as a proto-feminist heroine who succeeds in achieving self-determination in an otherwise patriarchal and oppressive world. But Gayatri Spivak in *Three Women's Texts and A Critique of Imperialism* observes that Jane's journey from subservience to female self-determination, economic security and marriage on her terms could not occur without the oppression of Bertha Mason, Rochester's Creole wife from Jamaica. Bertha is robbed of human selfhood; she has no voice in the novel other than the demoniac laughter and bestial noises Jane reports. Bertha's ambiguous bestiality; her wild and violent nature dovetail with her mixed Creole

lineage and Jamaican birthplace. Bertha's half-human Creole savagery was evident when she set fire to Thornfield Hall and jumps to her death in an act of suicide preventing Rochester to save her from the burning building. This act of Bertha is fundamental to Jane's movement from the position of misbegotten orphan to one of legitimacy, fortune and marriage. Jane's journey to self-fulfillment and her happy marriage is achieved at the cost of Bertha's human self-hood and ultimately, her life.

Jane Eyre can also be read as a subversive text, a critique of colonial assumptions. Ironically the possibility of subversion is located in Bertha Mason. Bertha is described as degenerate, half-animal; a figure whose behaviour reflects the tempestuous chaotic and fiery environs of the West Indies. John McLeod, has therefore, said:

If Bertha exists to make possible Jane's proto-feminist journey from orphanhood to money and marriage, perhaps in this crucial passage she threatens to bring Jane's fictional world to crisis by threatening to escape containment within its descriptive confines." (160)

Jean Rhys rewrites *Jane Eyre* in her novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*. While the reader only knows Rochester's version of Caribbean life, in *Jane Eyre*, Bertha is reduced to shrieks and shouts. Bertha Mason changes to Antoinette in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and critically challenges the views of Caribbean people and places offered by Mr Rochester in *Jane Eyre*. Antoinette is not like Bertha, the madwoman at the attic. She is a victim of Rochester's schemes. She is able to tell most of the story in the last part of the novel. She contrasts her memories of Caribbean life with the grey surroundings of her attic cell. Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is thus recreated from the point of view of the mad creole wife Bertha Mason in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

In a similar vein Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* is a deliberate rendering of *The Mahabharata* from the point of view of Panchali, the famous wife of the five Pandava brothers. *The Palace of Illusions* is a deliberate rendering of the Mahabharata from Panchaali's point of view. Divakaruni tells in the Author's Note that she wrote the book to "place the women in the forefront of the action". She would "uncover the story that lay invisible between the lines of the men's exploits". She would make Panchaali tell the story herself "with all her joys and doubts, her struggles and her triumphs, her heartbreaks, her achievements, the unique female way in which she sees her world and her place in it" (xv). Draupadi is conscious of sexual discrimination all through

her life. She has no name; she is only the daughter of Drupad. She is the “Girl Who Wasn’t Invited” (1). When her brother Dhri and she are first presented to Drupad, she realizes, “It was my brother he meant to raise up to show to his people. Only my brother that he wanted”. This initial rejection from her father remains lodged in her heart. She realizes that woman has a subordinate role in this society. Vyasa Rishi has only confirmed this when he tells her she will not be able to control anything in the future. She is married to five men against her will. She has to accept it in spite of the fear that “her unconventional polyandrous marriage bears the risk of being seen as an insatiable whore” (118). She says with a touch of bitterness, “I had no choice as to whom I slept with” (120). In the court of the Kauravas when Yudhishthir loses in the “games” Panchali realizes with a shock that she has been gambled away like a piece of property, “no less so than a cow or a slave”:

All the time I’d believed in my powers over my husbands. . . . But now I saw that though they did love me as much perhaps as any man can love - there are other things they loved more. Their notions of honour, of loyalty toward each other, of reputation were more important to them than my suffering. (190)

Women are subordinate to men and men have other values to prioritize than the sufferings of their wives. Panchaali, in this novel rebels against “the boundaries society has prescribed for women” (343).

John Updike flaunts two possible endings of the story in “Should Wizard Hit Mummy”. The father Jack tells his daughter Jo the story of Peter Skunk. Peter had a repulsive smell like all skunks. So, no children of his age would play with him. Peter was lonely and sad. He took the advice of the wise Owl and went to the wizard with a request to change his foul smell to that of the fragrance of rose. The Wizard obliged and Peter was happy because all children were now eager to play with him. But when Peter returned home his mummy scolded him for not smelling like a skunk at all. She went with Peter to the wizard and got Peter’s original offensive smell back. She told Peter that no one should change one’s identity simply because others do not like it. Jo was not happy with this end to Jack’s story. She felt Peter was right in changing his smell because he now had so many friends to play with. The Wizard should not have heeded Mummy. He should have hit Mummy. The title of the story “Should Wizard Hit Mummy?” suggests a possible change to the story, leaving the readers to interpret the story as they like with justifications of their own.

The posthuman condition has elided the difference between human and nonhuman actors. The computer has

become an inalienable part of humans today. What the computer presents, the users accept as unalterable fact. But this unimaginative acceptance would blunt their sensibilities and powers of judgement. Classroom pedagogy should take advantage of network culture to promote an interactive, collaborative and creative interpretation of literature taking into account the immense historical and contextual material accessible through the net. The example of Jean Rhys and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni suggests how critical reading of a text can take a creative turn. Updike’s story ends with a grumbling Jo listening to Jack’s justification of Mummy’s highhandedness. Properly handled in the network culture it can generate nice interpretations from various angles among students and teachers. *The Palace of Illusions* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* are chosen because they are literally rewritings of canonical texts. But the example of Whitson and Whittaker’s study of Blake and the example of the organization of various games involving literary texts have shown the new ways of learning using computer-based tools, but replacing the prioritization of objectivity in digitizing with subjective interpretation at the core of knowledge production.

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