

María Mencía

Creative Process: Interweaving Methods, Content and Technology

1 Introduction

This article has developed from a keynote presentation I gave about research-led teaching in the panel of “Teaching the Digital” at the *International Conference on Digital Media and Textuality*¹ hosted at Bremen University by Daniela Côrtes Maduro. It delves into teaching creative practice as research in a module titled *Creative Digital Environments* where students learn by doing and enquiring through practice-based research. It outlines the content of the module and focuses on one of the sessions where we discuss the integration of methods, content and technology in the production of practice through the analysis of works representative of this approach. It also comments on the merits of two different methods of module delivery.

I designed the module specifically for undergraduate students in their final year as part of a Media and Communications undergraduate program at Kingston University. It is a research-led module that engages students with a diversity of digital creativity in hybrid fields of electronic literature (e-lit), e-poetry and media arts and it could also be a relevant module in Art, Digital Cultures and Digital Humanities programs. The aim is to train students to be individual researchers by producing a practice-based research project, articulating goals, research enquires, as well as show them how to disseminate their outcomes. The Creativity and Cognition Studios at the University of Technology, Sydney, gives a definition of practice-based research with which I concur:

Practice-based Research is a form of research that aims to advance knowledge partly by means of practice. The type of research is an original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes the invention of ideas, images, performances and artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights.²

The content of the module reviews pioneering works of media art and their historical influences; change and hybridity in electronic literature (e-lit); interweaving methods, content and technology in the production of creative practice; integration of theory and practice in practice-based research; culture remix and digital creations; creative programming and collaboration; concepts of ap-

propriation, authorship, publishing and dissemination, and with this, the Creative Commons. Finally, it addresses media archaeology and methods to archive and preserve digital media works. As a consequence of the process of production of creative work, students also become aware of the nature of interdisciplinarity in practice-based research and the possibilities of collaboration. These are all current and relevant topics in e-literature and the wider fields of digital culture, humanities and media arts, which students need to be familiar with and to critically analyze in today's digital media society.

Students are able to explore the creative potential of digital technologies through their own practice-based research; that is, questioning through practice, as well as through the critical analysis of works created by practitioners/theorists using digital technologies. I emphasize both practice and theory because one of the aims is to encourage students to think critically about the production of their own practice and see practice as a way of enquiry and means to explore and discuss theoretical concepts. They are used to doing this through more traditional academic forms like essays but, in this module, students are able to interrogate what is traditionally understood as “academic work” and use practice-based research methodologies to push the boundaries of research practices in the humanities. Why should we still use the medium of print when we use digital technologies in every aspect of our lives? Nowadays, there are a whole set of tools, many of them open source, offering a range of writing, editing and publishing platforms which students can explore to break away from traditional ways of writing and thinking. In addition, exploring through making born-digital texts helps the student to compare the relationship of “conventional” academic research with practice-based research. Also, students as digital readers seem to relate more and more to the use of digital technologies to express themselves: writing poetry, designing websites, web-based works and videos in order to study humanistic concerns, bring up social and political issues, write personal stories and more. Electronic literature gives students this possibility. They can examine exciting and innovative ways of creating multimodal writing using image, sound, text, coding; addressing the role of the author/reader/writer/artist/scholar and using open-source software. Electronic literature provides media literacy beyond the regular use of emails or visiting websites which can enhance students understanding of contemporary mediated society. As Roberto Simanowski notes:

Such literacy not only consists of the ability to read, write, navigate, alter, download and ideally program web documents. . . . It also includes the ability to identify with the cursor, the avatar and with virtual space, to travel in spatially and temporally compressed units without physical motion, to carry our real-time activities, and to undertake

associative selection, sampling and reconfiguration resembling DJ and VJ culture. (231)

Furthermore, drawing from my experience as a practice-based researcher and a lecturer, I believe using practice-based methodologies to make cultural artifacts enhances students' understanding of concepts pertinent to digital media practice, social and cultural aspects of digital culture raised by these theories. In many art and design programs, students choose a topic and develop it through the final year as a practice-based model, informed by related theories often focusing on personal experience, practice and motivation so the learner is at center stage. In this module, students have a first opportunity to create practice as research within a field of study but the topics are wide enough to allow students to bring their own interests to bear, to extend and expand what is provided in the module. From my observations in teaching and learning approaches, I have noticed that when students are able to reference their own interests, it engages and enhances their learning experience.

2 Outline of the Module

The following are stages of the course in order of appearance.

1. New Media: Origins

This session maps out general themes, issues and topics to be explored over the next eleven weeks, and for this purpose, we start questioning how previous art influenced pioneering work in digital culture/media arts. That is, how avant-garde and dada influenced net.art, ASCII art; how concrete poetry, visual poetry influenced e-poetry; where do new media come from; what interdisciplinary landscape is new media rooted in; what are the historical, theoretical, technological contexts. Through exploring these topics, we encounter methods and approaches used by different movements to produce creative practice, which encourage students to think and reflect about their own creative process and approaches.

2. Change and Hybridity in Electronic Literature

This lecture introduces students to new forms of writing where art, literature, and new technologies meet to produce multimodal textualities (image-sound-text) in electronic literature. We study the process of refashioning media discussed by J. D. Bolter and R. Grusin in their seminal work *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (1998) through the exploration of examples of different media (paintings, websites, VR, film, games) but particularly in connection to

works of electronic literature. Notions explored cover: digital born (Hayles), immediacy, hypermediacy, text, engagement and experience of the work, as well as digital environments (web, virtual realities, augmented realities, apps) and the e-lit genres that generate from the use of these different technologies.

3. Creative Process: Interweaving Methods, Content and Technology

Following on from the previous session, in this lecture we explore the ideas and processes employed in the creative processes of different artists, including my own research practice in *Multimodal Textualities*, with a focus on how to integrate content and form. This method is used to discuss with students the processes used by different practitioners, to compare them and to bounce ideas off each other. I will expand on this session further in the paper by exploring exemplary creative practice.

4. Culture Remix-Digital Creations: Remix Creativity Ro/Rw Culture

The next three sessions address methods of remix culture. Lawrence Lessig writes about Remix creativity “remix is an essential act of Read Write (RW) creativity” (56). In this lecture, through Lawrence Lessig’s contrast of “read-write” (RW) and “read-only” (RO) cultures, we explore the paradigm shift that occurs in fundamental models of writing and creative practices. Since online technologies have facilitated and increased the production of creative and collaborative practices, it addresses the potential of the Internet as a creative palette (Andrejevic 127). Notions addressed: creativity, participation, user, producer, consumer, author, Creative Commons, new media literacies, practice and theory.

5. Culture Remix-Digital Creations: Appropriation-Uncreative Writing

This session focuses on the chapter “Why appropriation?” written by Kenneth Goldsmith in his book *Uncreative Writing* (109–124). It reflects on the approaches/methods Goldsmith discusses in the production of re-appropriating texts, raising questions on authorship, authorial curatorial decisions, process, style, design, creative/uncreative, reading experience, dissemination, distribution and the electronic medium. “All of the decisions we make while performing our remixes are part of what Duchamp calls The Creative Act” (Amerika).

6. Culture Remix-Digital Creations. From Dada to Java: Collaborative Practice

The title is taken from a short documentary featuring Nick Montfort, Darius Kazemi, Stephen McGregor, Paul Kneale, George Buckenham and Sandy Baldwin and it is the basis for this session. It was made at QMUL as part of the Digital Arts Documentary group.³ The introduction of free software has

created an Open Culture of sharing and DIY where anybody can be creative from their own home, or what Conrad Bodman calls “home-brew culture”(14). We will explore creative code, repurpose and remix as writing experiments for creative collaborative practice in humanities research.

A case study appropriating and remixing code, engaging in collaboration during the period of a week and exhibited as a site-specific installation, is the *UpsideDown Chandelier*. This is the outcome from a research project I led in Košice, Slovakia, as part of the Code Interactive #2 seminar workshop. It is a collaboration between artists, scholars and critics of e-lit, Christine Wilks, Jeneen Naji, Zuzana Husárová and myself. The project was developed as part of the exhibition I co-curated with Husárová, *Repurposing in Electronic Literature* at the new media DIG gallery, in response to the notion of repurposing. The site-specific installation references events relating to the history of Košice and its tobacco factory from 1851, which employed mostly women workers. In our research we found out that the women workers donated a candle chandelier to St. Elizabeth’s Cathedral when it was being renovated (Kolcun). The chandelier itself was repurposed twice—from the original candles to gas lighting and with the advent of electricity, was turned upside down. In the installation, images of the chandelier from the cathedral are randomly generated and projected onto a screen in a flux of forms. The code was repurposed from a generative work Wilks and Randy Adams remixed called *Notes Noir*, included in the collection of digital media works titled, *R3/\1x\/ORX (remixworx)*, a project initiated by Adams in 2006 and in which Wilks was one of the main collaborators. Simultaneously, the words connected with this story appear projected on the walls of the room, and phonetic sounds from Slovak, Hungarian and German languages are generatively re-mixed to create the multilingual soundscape of languages that were once spoken in the very same place by women workers. The factory room was transformed to become an immersive, contemplative and reflective space with a sense of historical reminiscence reflected on the walls, floor and windows.

7. Methods (Theory-Practice) in Practice-Based Research

After reflecting on the making process and the interconnection of content, method and technology, the next stage is to put into practice the process of *thinking through* the production of *practice*. Borgdorff writes: “we should not say: ‘here is a theory that sheds light on artistic practice,’ but ‘here is art that invites us to think’” (96). Students reflect on the theories covered in previous sessions—remediation, remixing, appropriation and coding—as methodologies to produce their creative practice and invite the reader to think.

8. Digital Humanities: “Data Visualisation Poetics”

What are the digital humanities? (Berry). Here, we focus on visualization in the DH as research methodology for data analysis and as a medium for creative practice. What is the difference between tools and medium? How can we use open data as raw material for creative practice? The notions explored in this stage are: visualization as translation, as universal language; interdisciplinarity in collaborative practices; “visualisation poetics.” Case study: *Gateway to the World* by María Mencía.⁴

9. Digital Humanities: Personal/Historical Research

The lecture brings up different case studies which are addressing issues of cultural heritage, migration heritages and historical memory through user generated content, online communities and ways of archiving content creatively. One of the case studies: *The Poem that Crossed the Atlantic* by María Mencía where personal and historical events come together in a poetic sea of interlaced stories.⁵

10. Media Archaeology and the Migration of Forms in E-Lit

Technology is constantly evolving. How do we preserve early e-lit works? The addressed issues here are archiving, recovering and migration of media forms which Grigar and Moulthrop study in their recent publication: *Traversals: The Use of Preservation for Early Electronic Writing* (2017).

As a sample, I would like to add detailed information about the third session, “Creative Process: Interweaving Methods, Content and Technology.” Creative practice in the hybrid and interdisciplinary field of electronic literature engages in a rich diversity of processes and methodologies. Practitioners stretch the possibilities of emerging technologies to create new literary artistic forms. Only the few examples selected already include multimodal, interactive, generative narratives, Augmented-Reality (AR) poetry, app novellas to address key concepts and concerns characteristic of electronic literature with the reader as the center of attention.

The following selected works are those I have discussed with students in my classes because they are representative examples where content, form and interactive elements are interlaced. Thus, when I talk about content in these works, I refer to the fusion of the concept, narrative theme or poetics with the interactive elements, which I see as an integral part of the content and vital in generating *meaning-production* while engaging the reader in the exploration of the work. Readers are invited to unravel the story and the different layers of meaning by taking active part and interacting with the piece. This reading requires a lot of dedication and “prying,” digging in, unraveling.⁶ These works cannot be

read through the lenses of traditional print literature, they are not about transferring from print to new media but about what that medium offers, about how the new writing tools create new ways of expression where there is space for the integration not only of film, text, augmented reality, photography in multimodal textualities, but the text is also traversed through clicking, pitching, stretching, caressing.

2.1 Examples of Practice

Fitting the Pattern (2008) published in the second volume of Electronic Literature Collection (2011)⁷ is an early work by Christine Wilks created with Adobe Flash, which she describes as an interactive, animated memoir where she explores aspects of her relationship with her dressmaker mother. Wilks has carefully thought about reflecting this personal story of her mother in the design of her work, by using sewing and cutting techniques in her digital visual and sound design, to fuse the narrative story and the form of the work. In her words:

The design of the user-interface repurposes sewing patterns and their instructional symbols to fuse the interactive process into the narrative world. The familiar mouse pointer is restyled as a series of digital dressmaking tools so the reader becomes actively involved in cutting through memories, pinning down facts, stitching fabrications, unpicking the past. (37)

Thus, the reader is invited to stitch this nonlinear narrative together, “the memoirs,” and fit them into a pattern with the different dressmaking tools such as pins, needles and scissors presented as mouse pointers in the dressmaking pattern interface—becoming in this way, the maker of the story or as she says: “the tailor who brings it all together to make the pattern fit the cloth of the narrative coherence” (37). In the Electronic Literature Collection, she writes:

Life’s mysteries are rarely uncovered by a logical, linear process of deduction. You arrive at answers, ideas, suspicions, intuitions, haphazardly in fragments. Over time you build the picture, piece by piece, shuffling and rearranging, until you start to see a pattern emerging.⁸

She has used this formative process of arriving at an answer, building a picture in time as the structure of the work by replicating the creative process of her dressmaker mother as her own new media form with sewing patterns embed-

ded in the text. Thus, the work integrates beautifully its short texts, design methods, form with the interactive elements to construct the narrative and to experience the work.

Connected Memories (2009) is an interactive work that I started researching and designing for a presentation at the panel in *Interactive Storytelling and Memory Building in Post-conflict Society* for the International Symposium of Electronic Arts (ISEA), celebrated in Belfast in 2009. Since then, it has been exhibited in the USA, Germany, Slovakia and Portugal; performed in Austria and Norway, and published in the *Anthology of European Electronic Literature* (2012).⁹ In the technical side of the project, I collaborated with José Carlos Silvestre using the open source programming language Processing. *Connected Memories* is a fluid interactive poetic generative narrative without a focused point, beginning or end, as opposed to systems founded upon ideas of center, margin, hierarchy and linearity. It consists of a series of interviews conducted with refugees living in London and it works as a digital platform to archive, interconnect, share and perform these stories.¹⁰

When I considered the aesthetics and poetics to integrate content and form, I designed the work so the readers would need to interact with the piece by clicking on the common keywords that link these real stories (color-activated hyperlinked words) with the aim of generating the fractured realities and the formations of connected memories. The chosen words are those that repeat themselves in the different narrations and highlight the key issues stemming from the interviews. The extracts are taken from a database and linked as in a hypertextual narrative. Based on the participants desire to keep memories alive or their preference to forget them and put them aside, the extracts in *Connected Memories* come and go as if forgotten, but can reappear, to be connected again to another extract. In *Repurposing in Electronic Literature*, I have stated the following:

It was my intention to blend two meanings together; one the literal part of the work, the narrative as a fundamental of human communication the reading of legible extracts. The other, the textual narratives in the form of generative visual poems, where simultaneously the eye and the brain are functioning to reveal the semantic meaning, as well as the visual abstraction of the text. As the participant explores and experiences the work by connecting the narratives appearing on the screen, the fortuitous position of extracts produces new relationships, and in the process, a constant current of meanings, connections and narratives; shifting from the semantic linguistic meaning to the visual, from the literal, the legible, the transparent to the abstract memory; and simultaneously creating a poetic space of readable and visual textualities, connecting memories, blending them and making them dis-

appear in turn to make the other memories appear. (Mencía, “Connected Memories” 34)

Visual and semantic meaning meet to invite the reader to “look at the text” (the surface, the materiality of the text), and to “look through the text” (the semantic meaning of language). This notion is an underlying principle in my *creative practice* including this work. The role of the reader/viewer is essential to generate the text and thus, for the text to exist.

Between Page and Screen (2012), by Amaranth Borsuk and Brad Bouse, is an influential work of electronic literature, produced in Adobe Flash. It has been exhibited internationally and most recently published in the Electronic Literature Collection, Vol. 3 (2016).¹¹ Borsuk explains that her work is at the intersection of print and digital media and she is questioning the place of books in an era where we are reading more and more on screens. According to Borsuk, *Between Page and Screen*: “merges the book art and e-poetry traditions, trespassing the boundary between print and digital, old and new media” (165).

These are issues clearly addressed in this work where content and form are perfectly integrated, interconnecting print and the screen through the augmented space and the interaction of the reader. In the works’ official website the authors state:

The pages of this artist’s book contain no text—only abstract geometric patterns and a web address leading to this site, where the book may be read using any browser and a webcam. The poems that appear, a series of letters written by two lovers struggling to map the boundaries of their relationship, do not exist on either page or screen, but in the augmented space between them opened up by the reader.¹²

The space *between* the book and the screen, as the title indicates, where the geometric patterns fuse with digital technology to create augmented reality poems that generate a dialogue between the page and the screen, is in itself facilitated by the reader’s interaction, interrogating in this way the role of the reader. The text materializes visually in the augmented space to conceptualize N. Katherine Hayles’ suggestion, quoted by Borsuk:

. . . that scholars of electronic literature have much to learn from those in print history, who have long known that “literature was never only words, never merely immaterial verbal constructions. Literary texts, like us, have bodies, an actuality necessitating that their materialities and meanings are deeply interwoven into each other. (165)

Borsuk and Brad Bouse have considered all the issues addressed: the book, the digital, the reader, the materiality of the text in their design and interaction with the work; this is what makes this work so successful: the content and form are perfectly interlaced. As Borsuk claims: “literature can never be read separately from the form of its reception” (167).

Another compelling work is *Weareangry.net* (2015),¹³ an interactive issue-based multimodal narrative produced by Digital Fables, a multimedia production house led by Lyndee Prickitt. I came across this piece when I was acting as one of the jurors for the New Media Writing Prize (NMWP) 2015, celebrated yearly at Bournemouth University in the United Kingdom. The work was not only the runner-up of this award but was also nominated for the Webby awards, and it was one of the winners of the digital book awards. In the “about” page we find Prickitt “is an American woman who has lived in India for ‘over’ nine years. As a woman, a mother of a daughter and a multimedia journalist, the message of *Weareangry.net* is as important as the medium, digital fiction.”¹⁴

The artist uses a journalistic approach where she mixes reality and fiction to create awareness about gang rape in New Delhi. The journalistic method is exemplified in the design style through video dramatizations, factual snippets, photos, vox pops, audio and hypertext notes. The story is interlaced with the style and presented online as a website for better dissemination. The reader is given two options: to read it in a remediated online book or to experience the work through its interactive multimedia textualities. As the artist writes in her introductory page to the website: “This is a free to view digital short story—a piece of multimedia fiction including photos, videos, audio and artwork, but is also bolstered by real reports, statistics and editorials. It can simply be read or you can experience a new wave in digital storytelling.”¹⁵ In her submission to the NMWP she wrote:

Weareangry.net is a born-digital short story that captures the swell of anger over India’s rape crisis. At its heart is a short written narrative from the point of view of a rape victim—a viewpoint woefully undervalued in patriarchal India. The fictional narrative is intermingled with different perspectives of a society grappling over the treatment of its women. It includes video dramatizations (like the “CCTV video” of the victim’s abduction), audio montages, vox pops, music, artwork, thought bubbles and hypertext footnotes (from definitions of Hindi swearwords to fact boxes about actual reported rapes referred to by the characters). As a piece of issue based fiction it is also—crucially—reinforced by real information, from curated editorials to interactive statistics.

This project uses technology in an exemplary way to present and narrate a strong and poignant issue on rape and misogynistic societies. It makes excellent use of digital media with multimodal options for optimal user experience. It is engaging, accessible, easy to navigate, innovative in its way of presenting the subject matter, has easy interaction and, as an online born-digital short story, can reach a wide audience.

Lastly, the most current piece is *PRY* (2015) produced by the art collective and studio Tender Claws (TC) funded by Danny Cannizzaro and Samantha Gorman, which has been the recipient of many awards. It is an app novella that re-imagines the form of the eBook. On the app Store website where the app can be downloaded, the reader is invited to: “Pry open a troubled mind and hold its thoughts in your hands. It tells us James returned from the first Gulf War six years ago and invites us to explore James’ mind as his vision fails and his past collides with his present.”¹⁶

Tender Claws use born-digital approaches specific to the use of the touch screen to explore the narrative and get into the mind of the protagonist experiencing it as a first person digital novella. The work stretches and explores the possibilities this platform offers as an e-book but, in contrast to the e-book, interactivity is part of the story. In order to discover detailed information and conflicting storylines, at the deepest level, the page itself rips apart with a fragment to show a video. Obsessive thought is represented as an infinite field of text that can be scrolled in any direction. The many layers of the characters consciousness are represented through text interaction, film, words and images. It engages the reader in an experience, not only with the text but also with the process of reading, putting the reader in the mind of the author as well as the main character. Interactive elements are there to serve the story, for instance: prying James’ eyes to get into his mind, “tactile caressing” or use of fingers over braille symbols to help James read, and many other touch screen gestures, as noted by TC, based on experience with interaction design, such as expand, touch, crunch, unfold, tear and reveal what readers can use to unravel the different layers of meaning. The story was produced to be read in a touchable device like this app, so that every element of design was considered as part of the story.

Tender Claws notes how different mediums are used to relate to different parts of the story and they use them seamlessly; text is used to immerse the reader into James’ internal world, as well as floating text, animations and video flashbacks; while video is used to reflect what is going on in the external world and the protagonist’s everyday experience. “Language seems to hold a privileged position when it comes to thought. We liked the idea of readers hearing their own internal reading voice, just as James would hear an internal voice of his thoughts.”¹⁷ They make use of many metaphors such as the interface of

each chapter being designed to evoke the associative and slippery aspects of thought and memory. Overall, to pry (or to dig into James' story) is a process of discovery.

This influential work shows a way forward in digital writing. The integration of film, text and interactivity is outstanding, making it a great example to study for its interweaving of the story and interactivity, its explorative reading methods and its use of technology to create the overall content.

These are only a handful of examples I draw upon in my classes but in the process of interweaving ideas and form, we engage with creative methodologies, programming languages and publishing platforms which generate enough curiosity in students to start questioning the interconnection of their own ideas with technology and initiate the process of research, pre-production and production of their work.

3 Approaches to Teaching the Module

In my teaching, I have used two different approaches to deliver this module. From *top-bottom*, where I had to lecture and run seminars every week for a semester, and as a research-led *Special Studies* module running through two semesters with classes every other week. In the latter, the lecturer acts as a facilitator helping students with their individual research projects. In both cases, students are expected to carry out independent study consisting of either practical work with a written reflective element or an essay. In both cases, the written element varies in length, depending on whether it is covering one or two semesters.

The *Special Studies* model releases the lecturer from having to present a lecture every week and students become independent researchers over the period of an academic year. The classes run every other week so students have time to read the allocated reading material and come to the class prepared to lead and present the specific topics the lecturer has outlined in the first two or three sessions. These usually establish the field of study and might cover main concepts and theories, research processes and methodologies, context, relationship of theory and practice in the production of practice-based research. Students can access all the material from our virtual learning environment to structure their learning and it is up to them how much reading they want to do, how many of the topics they want to explore and whether they wish to write a research paper or produce a practical piece.

Running the module as a rich content module provides all the material and lectures in the style of *top-bottom*, my aim being to keep students on their toes even if I was the one doing all the talking to start with. I had to be careful not

to let them be passive listeners and had to find ways of involving them in a kind of “community discussion and participation” within this *top-bottom* model where the lecturer is supposed to be the supreme source of knowledge. I was interested in unsettling them so they could find ways to understand the reasons why they were unsettled or even confused. As Richard Sennet writes: “The good teacher imparts a satisfying explanation, the great teacher... unsettles, bequeaths disquiet, invites argument” (6).

I used a kind of bombardment method of introducing ideas through the presentation of many different examples including the ones discussed in this paper. This was in itself a learning experience for me as I had to review the work of many of my peers; their research interests, processes, the different ways we all deal with the relationship between content, medium, form, aesthetics and production of work, and how these could help students with their own projects. We looked at many examples with strong social and political issues because the group attending the class was interested in issue-led work. The group of students was representative of Kingston University, a really diverse group, as most of them were going through real life struggles which I am glad to say, were all reflected in their creative projects.

My intention throughout the presentation of ideas, and introduction to creative projects, was to bring out their personal experiences so they got engaged in learning and, most importantly, exploring these experiences through their projects in a contextualized contemporary field of art, literature and new technologies. My projects tend to have this personal touch as well as exploring current social issues through the production of electronic literature works. I am involved in many international groups, so students can see there is a context for my work and, consequently, theirs. Brown et al. argue in their paper “Situated Cognition and the Culture of Learning” (1989), that understanding the culture of the community and how this community sees the world, is done through their tools and their beliefs. They state:

Unfortunately, students are too often asked to use the tools of a discipline without being able to adopt its culture. To learn to use tools as practitioners use them, a student, like an apprentice, must enter that community and its culture. Thus, in a significant way, learning is, we believe, a process of enculturation. (33)

Therefore introducing the context and the culture of the field of research was an important task. Undoubtedly, learning from professionals and their cultural research world, presents a great opportunity for students to better understand that world, and to see the relevance and impact their own work can have in the outside world.

It was exciting to see them involved in the class discussions. The rhythm was much faster than that seen on *Special Studies*; students had to read every week and did not have a week in-between classes. At the same time, this was challenging because from week five they also had to start thinking about the production of their own project or written assignment. For those carrying out practice (which was most of them) meant deciding which technology they were going to use. In some cases, they had to learn new software and even collaborate with programmers they found outside university.

From their mid-year feedback questionnaire and discussions in the class, we as a group decided that I would carry on delivering lectures until week nine and, from that point, they would concentrate on their projects. After that, we could look further at some of the main features of *communities of discovery* interested in collective learning, discussed by Coffield and Williamson in their chapter *From Exam Factories to Communities of Discovery: The Democratic Route* (2012), where “[e]ducators and learners are not ‘providers and consumers but partners in learning’” and “[l]earning will be mainly collaborative, based on dialogue” (49). I was gratified to learn that most students commented positively on the creative freedom experienced, and the enjoyment of being able to work on their own project instead of a predetermined one.

In conclusion, these are two very different approaches to teaching and learning, and both present different challenges for students and the lecturer. My thoughts, through discussions with students in both modules, is to merge both styles and have the module running for the whole academic year. I have written this paper because I am eager to share this module with other colleagues working in higher education so we can collaborate on further similar projects. Ironically, I cannot share this essay online for a period of time, due to legal publishing constraints, but it can be shared in academic contexts and I look forward to exchanging constructive ideas.

Notes

- 1 Cf. *E-Lit Practice and Pedagogy: Interweaving Methods, Content and Technology* <<https://digmediatextuality.wordpress.com/conference-schedule/>>.
- 2 The Creativity and Cognition Studios (CCS) at the University of Technology Sydney is an internationally recognized multidisciplinary environment for the advancement and understanding of practice in digital media and the arts. Cf. <<https://www.creativityandcognition.com/research/practice-based-research/>>.

- 3 Cf. FROM DADA TO JAVA: conversations about generative poetry & Twitter bots. <<https://vimeo.com/164973724>>.
- 4 Cf. María Mencía, *Gateway to the World* (2017) <<http://mariamencia.com/pages/gatewaytotheworld.html>>.
- 5 Cf. Mencía María, *The Poem that Crossed the Atlantic* (2017). Please visit: <<http://winnipeg.mariamencia.com/?lang=es>>.
- 6 Cf. Espen Aarseth's definition of ergodic as "a non-trivial effort" in *Cybertexts: A Theory of Ergodic Literature* (1997). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- 7 Cf. <http://collection.eliterature.org/2/works/wilks_fittingthepattern.html>.
- 8 Christine Wilks, ELC, volume 2 <http://collection.eliterature.org/2/works/wilks_fittingthepattern.html>.
- 9 Anthology of European Electronic Literature (2012), edited by Talan Memmott, Maria Engberg and David Prater. ELMCIP <<http://anthology.elmcip.net/works.html>>.
- 10 Cf. Mencía's website for *Connected Memories* <https://www.mariamencia.com/pages/connected_memories.html>.
- 11 Borsuk and Bouse <<http://collection.eliterature.org/3/work.html?work=between-page-and-screen>>.
- 12 Borsuk and Bouse, *Between Page and Screen*, official work website <<http://www.betweenpageandscreen.com/about>>.
- 13 Cf. *Weareangry.net* at <<http://www.weareangry.net>>.
- 14 *Weareangry.net*, "About" page <<http://www.weareangry.net/mobile/pages.php?page=23>>.
- 15 Lyndee Prickitt, introduction to *Weareangry.net* <<http://www.weareangry.net>>.
- 16 The app can be downloaded from Apple store <<http://prynovella.com>>.
- 17 Kevin Holmes' blog includes quote by Tender Claws <https://creators.vice.com/en_uk/article/go-inside-the-mind-of-a-gulf-war-vet-with-first-person-digital-novella-pry>.

Works Cited

Aarseth, Espen. *Cybertexts: A Theory of Ergodic Literature*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

- Adams, Randy, and Wilks Christine. *R3/\1x\/ORX*. 2006–2014. 18 May 2017 <<http://crissxross.net/remixworx/indexcxtrail.html>>.
- Amerika, Mark. *Remix:thebook*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
- Andrejevic, Mark. “Art in Cyberspace. The Digital Aesthetic.” *Web.Studies*, edited by Ross Horsley and David Gauntlett. London: Arnold, 2004, pp. 127–136.
- Berry, David M. *Understanding Digital Humanities*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Bodman, Conrad (co-curator). *Digital Revolution Catalogue Exhibition*, Barbican 2014, pp. 10–23.
- Bolter, Jay David, and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999.
- Borgdorff, Henk. “Artistic Research and Academia: an Uneasy Relationship.” 96. 2008. 18 May 2017 <<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/profile/show-work?work=129283>>.
- Borsuk, Amaranth. “*Between Page and Screen*.” #*WomenTechLit*, edited by María Mencía. Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2017, pp. 165–175.
- Borsuk, Amaranth, and Brad Bouse. “Between Page and Screen” [2012]. *Electronic Literature Collection*, vol. 3, edited by Stephanie Boluk, Leonardo Flores, Jacob Garbe and Anastasia Salter, 2016. 18 May 2017 <<http://collection.eliterature.org/3/work.html?work=between-page-and-screen>>.
- . *Between Page and Screen*. 2012. 18 May 2017 <<http://www.betweenpageandscreen.com/about>>.
- Brown, John Seely et al. “*Situated Cognition and the Culture of Learning*.” *Educational Researcher*, vol. 18, no. 1, Jan-Feb (1989): pp. 32–42.
- Cannizzaro, Danny, and Samantha Gorman (Tender Claws). *PRY*. 2015. 18 May 2017 <<http://samanthagorman.net/Pry>>.
- Hayles N. Katherine. “*Electronic Literature, What is It?*” *Doing Digital Humanities: Practice, Training, Research*, edited by Constance Crompton, Richard J. Lane and Ray Siemens. London and New York: Routledge, 2016, pp. 197–220.
- Goldsmith, Kenneth. *Uncreative Writing*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.
- Kolcun, Milan. “Dóm sv. Alžbety.” 2015. 18 May 2017 <<http://kosice-city.sk/dom-sv-alzbety>>.

- Lessig, Lawrence. *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*. London: Penguin Press, 2008.
- Mencía, María. “Connected Memories.” 2011. 18 May 2017 <http://www.mariamencia.com/pages/connected_memories.html>.
- . “Connected Memories.” *Anthology of European Electronic Literature*, ELMCIP, edited by Talan Memmott, María Engberg and David Prater, 2012. 18 May 2017 <<http://anthology.elmcip.net/works.html>>.
- . “UpsideDown Chandelier.” *Repurposing in Electronic Literature*, edited by María Mencía and Zuzana Husárová. *ENTER, dive buki*, no. 16 (2015): pp. 78–81.
- . “Connected Memories.” *Repurposing in Electronic Literature*, edited by María Mencía and Zuzana Husárová. *ENTER, dive buki*, no. 16 (2015): pp. 32–35.
- . *Gateway to the World*. 2017. 19 Apr. 2017 <<http://mariamencia.com/pages/gatewaytotheworld.html>>.
- . *The Poem that Crossed the Atlantic*. 2017. 21 May 2017 <<http://winnipeg.mariamencia.com/?lang=es>>.
- Montfort, Nick et al. *From Dada to Java: Conversations About Generative Poetry and Twitter Bots*. Vimeo, uploaded by Victor, 2016. 21 May 2017 <<https://vimeo.com/164973724>>.
- Moulthrop, Stuart, and Dene Grigar, editors. *Traversals: The Use of Preservation for Early Electronic Writing*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017.
- Prickitt, Lyndee. *Weareangry.net*. 2015. 18 May 2017 <<http://www.weareangry.net>>.
- Sennett, Richard. *The Craftsman*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Simanowski, Roberto. “Teaching Digital Literature.” *Reading Moving Letters*, edited by Roberto Simanowski, et al. Bielefeld: [transcript] Verlag, 2010, pp. 231–248.
- Wilks, Christine. “Fitting the Pattern” [2008]. *Electronic Literature Collection*, vol. 2, edited by Laura Borràs, Talan Memmott, Rita Raley and Brian Kim Stefans, 2011. 18 May 2017 <http://collection.eliterature.org/2/works/-wilks_fittingthepattern.html>.
- . “Fitting the Pattern.” *Repurposing in Electronic Literature*, edited by María Mencía and Zuzana Husárová. *ENTER, dive buki*, no. 16 (2015): pp. 36–41.

Wilks, Christine, Jennen Naji, Zuzana Husárová and María Mencía. *UpsideDown Chandelier*. 2013. 18 May 2017 <<https://www.mariamencia.com/pages/up-sidedown.html>>.