Living and Learning in Dissimilitude Without Dissonance

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Wording Otherness

Edited by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

WHAT'S LITERATURE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

MICHELLE GADPAILLE AND MOJCA KREVEL[1]

> "You're right. Not same." She adjusted her glasses. "Not different, either." (Ozeki 2013, 194)

The idea which eventually materialized as this book on how otherness is worded in both contemporary literature and in current writing about literature came to us when we—a Canadian and a Slovenian—were enjoying lunch in an Indian restaurant at the heart of the historical centre of Ljubljana. We were discussing the papers we had just finished and realized that despite focusing on divergent topics and employing very different theoretical approaches and methodologies to our subject matter, what we wrote about was essentially the same: how otherness is, can, and might be worded within contemporary economic, cultural, and social milieus. Musing on this coincidence, we concluded that within the present globalized and digitalized societies, the concept of otherness has become radically unstable. Otherness in all its nuances forms an inherent part of the everyday lives and experiences of contemporary individuals—the context of the lunch over which the conversation unfolded is here a convenient case in point. Our involvements with otherness in its traditional sense are, in fact, so acute that the established conceptualisation of the phenomenon hardly seems applicable: being other has become what we all have in common. Exploring otherness is therefore just as inevitable in terms of the proverbial act of *knowing ourselves*, as it is seemingly paradoxical.

The conclusions we reached are, obviously, by no means original or revolutionary; if anything, they are suggestive of the specific social and historical moment in which our conversation took place. Two female

[1] The authors acknowledge the financial support from the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (research programme Intercultural Literary Studies, research core funding No. P6-0265).

professors of humanities from different parts of the world discussing their academic work while enjoying Indian delicacies in the capital of a small Central European country is a scenario that is part and parcel of the socio-historical framework established by the economic processes instigated after the Second World War. These processes, which are inherent in the functioning of the postindustrial phase of capitalism, have prompted radical shifts in how individuals experience and comprehend their reality and corresponding identity. These changes indicate a broader paradigm shift, one charting the formation of a new ontological order marking the advent of the socio-historical epoch, thus far generally referred to as postmodernity. In this respect, the fundamental metaphysical tenets of postmodernity are inextricably intertwined with the globalizing tendencies of postindustrial capitalism, which were driven by the rapid growth of the advertising and media industries and facilitated by exponential development of information technology. The ubiquity of media and the ensuing saturation with information they generate do indeed lie at the core of theoretical treatments of the current socio-historical context. Jean Baudrillard's conceptual framework is perhaps most indicative of the entanglement of globalisation, digitalisation and the postmodern condition—his notion of hyperreality defines postmodern reality as a dynamic multiplicity of potential constellations of mediated data, which corroborates the fractal nature of the postmodern subject (cf. Krevel in this volume (29–30)). Such a subject, too, is a fluid multiplicity of identities creatable through the consumption of available data. As these are selected from a common fund and—given the digitalisation of all media—coded in the same way, respective identities comprise endless variations of one and the same subject. This means that the postmodern subject is, theoretically, a "subject without other" (Baudrillard 2011, 64).

Nevertheless, common perceptions of rampant and threatening otherness persist, fuelled by the quotidian media barrage about mass migration from areas devastated by war and climate change, the upsurge of the extreme right, and the paranoia resulting from COVID-19 lockdown, which conditioned us to perceive even our next-door neighbour as a deadly threat. At present, therefore, the theory could not be further from the practice. But. Gloomy as the prospects may seem, the new epoch has only just begun, and it is becoming increasingly clear that the paradigm of reality *is* conditioned by the media—for better or for worse. To those involved with literature, professionally and otherwise, the dependence of reality perception on media-generated information is likely for the better, as it is an opportunity to galvanize present practice in the direction of theory. Since literature is by definition bound to words, it seems to be the medium best

equipped for the broadening and modifying of the conceptual and semantic fields of postmodern realities, and thus provide a means to articulate—to *word*—a framework of thought, within which the Cartesian either/or is replaced by the Deleuzian "and … and … and" (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 242).

This volume is an attempt to do just that. In order to explore the impact of globalisation and digitalisation as the principal momenta of the current socio-historical context on the attitudes to, representations of and the very notions of Other and Otherness in literature, we invited experts from various fields of literary studies to contribute their insights on the matter. We were lucky in that respect, as the respondents to our call cover the better part of the spectrum of the established branches of literary scholarship: from literary theory and history, national and postcolonial literatures, imagology, genre studies and literary translation, to the ways in which literature is and might be taught to future generations. Moreover, regardless of the various topics explored and approaches employed, what all the investigations into otherness in literature compiled in this volume have in common is their fundamental interdisciplinarity. Apparently, wording otherness currently requires the grafting of the methodological tools and findings from a wide variety of *other*, non-literary, disciplines, to the traditional apparatus of literary scholarship. In our case, these range from queer and feminist studies to neurology, posthumanism and media studies; from philosophy and sociology to ecocriticism, system theory and studies of race; from COVID-19 to Zen. The underlying hybridity of this book thus not only complies with the idea that prompted it, but also attests to the book's embeddedness within the paradigm of *and…and…and*.

The opening chapter "This Is Not My Father's Literature Class: A Playbook for Change" by American scholar, Lisa Botshon, concretizes and personalizes this paradigm shift by tracing how the American literary canon has changed over two familial generations. By analysing the representation of otherness in teaching anthologies of American literature, Botshon documents an uneven arc of progress towards inclusivity. In early anthologies, otherness could entail simply being a female or a regional author, let alone being an indigenous creator, or a person of colour. Overall, Botshon sees opportunity in the newly digitized canon, which allows space for instructors to acknowledge diverse conditions of otherness and by teaching towards social justice, to direct students beyond conventional binary notions of otherness.

In Chapter 2, "Formatting Emptiness: Zen, Postmodernity and Metafiction in Ruth Ozeki's *The Book of Form and Emptiness*," Mojca Krevel lays the theoretical background for the implications of otherness in contemporary

literature. As a Japanese-American-Canadian, author Ruth Ozeki embodies the complex multiplication of otherness that, taken to the extreme in her latest novel, results in the un-making of the concept. Entangled in the webs of metafictional referentiality, literary realities and literary protagonists merge among themselves and with their non-literary counterparts, imploding into the all-embracing state of Zen Buddhist emptiness, where nothing is the same, but nothing is different, either.

Moving from the specificity of a single-author study, Chapter 3 broadens the focus to the act of reading itself in Igor Žunkovič's "Diversity in Reading." Taking a neurocognitive approach, this author explores how empathic connections result from reading literary fiction. Literary storytelling, according to Žunkovič, may be our society's best tool for building the kind of empathy that can deconstruct otherness. Far from being an elitist indulgence, fiction becomes a crucial ethical tool for fostering diversity.

In Chapter 4, the field of otherness embraces the planet as well as its inhabitants, in Michelle Gadpaille's analysis of a six-part pattern in recent climate change fiction. "Parables of Refuge in Otherness: The Eco-Novel in the 21st Century" demonstrates how fiction has been anticipating the new subjectivities and trans-human identities created as a side-effect of disastrous climate change.

Extending the science fiction contribution, Chapter 5, titled "Ken MacLeod's Science Fiction: Genre, Space and Leftist Ideation," studies the radical political involvement of one author's oeuvre against a specific late-20th-century background. Urška Vogrinc Javoršek maintains that Scots author Ken MacLeod hybridised the very genre of science fiction, creating dystopian works that not only offer a harsh critique of capitalism and other global systems, but also provide a means to imagine a world beyond the seeming finitude of these systems.

Chapter 6 "Is Nature the Other? Virus as an Ecopolitical Metaphor in Science Fiction Films" turns to film, as Melanija Larisa Fabčič considers the possibility that viruses are not essentially other to human beings or their world. A series of "outbreak films" is used to support the idea that in the Microbiocene age, we need to embrace rather than resist the blurring of the lines between nature and humanity.

The next four chapters examine various aspects of otherness in the context of national literatures. In "Transgender Issues in the Novels *Orlando* and *My Name Is Damian,*" Alojzija Zupan Sosič employs the approaches developed by queer and transgender studies to reveal the underlying conceptual parallels between two works from distinct spatio-temporal loci: late 1920s Britain and early 21st-century Slovenia. Despite the differences in the socio-historical conditions of the novels' creation, the

characterizations of Orlando and Damian in terms of their gender identity comply with the category of transgenderism—a concept that both novels predate.

Mateja Pezdirc Bartol's "Otherness and Identity in the Modern Slovene Picture Book" delves into the sensitive issue of the portrayal of otherness in children's literature in an environment that is still relatively conservative in that respect. Her chapter offers an overview of contemporary Slovenian picture books, as well as an examination of their ethical, cognitive, and aesthetic values. These, the author argues, should be monitored by both the publishers and the professionals in the field, since they are not automatically granted by the subject matter, but may affect children's comprehension of and attitudes to identity, otherness, cultural diversity, tolerance, and solidarity.

Critic Bernhard Winkler then turns our attention to German literature and to the erotic intertextuality in work by Botho Strauß. Erotic attraction and the gaze of love are situated within the otherness of surrounding crowds in the chapter "Erotic Otherness—The Love Gaze in Botho Strauß's Niemand Anderes."

Remaining with the German-speaking countries, Slovenian scholar Vesna Kondrič Horvat offers a comparison of the engagement with otherness of two Swiss writers: Hedi Wyss and Max Frisch. Both creative individualists, Wyss and Frisch set out to change the world through their unique perspectives in "Two Ways of Global thinking: Max Frisch and Hedi Wyss."

The volume then offers three chapters considering the role of literary translation in bridging islands of otherness in European literary space. Scholars Adriana Mezeg, Tanja Žigon and Julija Rozman apply a statistical approach to measuring the flow of translation activity from centre to periphery among European languages. As a minor language, Slovenian represents the other for most translation systems, but manages to penetrate the German translation market with some success.

By zeroing in on the translation of two European classics—Ibsen and Shakespeare—Marija Zlatnar Moe explores the journey of canonical literature to the cultural heart of Slovenia. "Centre and Margin in the Translation and Reception of Ibsen and Shakespeare in Slovenia" demonstrates that taste, policy, reception, and translator choice all influence the ways in which even canonical literature crosses language borders.

In "African Anglophone Feminist Writing in Slovene Translation," which concludes the translation section of the book, Nina Grahek Križnar takes the issue of otherness in contemporary Slovene translation a step further and extends the focus to include contemporary African female

writers. Her chapter first provides an overview of the most recognized African women authors writing in English and examines the topics they pursue in their fiction. In the second part, Grahek Križnar explores the dynamics of reception of African female writers in Slovenia in the last two decades, especially vis-à-vis the attention paid by Slovenian publishers to their male counterparts.

The pronounced interdisciplinarity of the studies in this volume rendered their organization into a sensible sequence quite a challenge. We ultimately decided to follow our instincts, which, after trying out different arrangements and weighing the pros and cons for each, proved just as good a criterion as any. Each sequence produced a slightly different book, even though the words were the same—a realisation that was, obviously, in line with the paradoxical nature of otherness we had set out to investigate in this volume. A realisation that, furthermore, rendered the selection of the closing chapter rather obvious. Hungarian scholar Judit Ágnes Kádár brings this book's explorations into how literature constructs otherness as a means of individuation in contemporary societies full circle. In "Beyond Otherness: Intersectionality, Ethnic Positioning and Fluid Identities in the Context of Postcolonial Blended Heritage," she meticulously charts the reconceptualization of the established notions of boundaries in the works of contemporary mixed heritage authors from the New Mexico Frontier. "Other" and "othered" in every conceivable way, these authors and their protagonists, Kádár shows, increasingly recognize that otherness empowers them with self-sameness, identity, and agency in the world. Thus, they facilitate the implosion of the very reasons for their objectification—or any objectification, for that matter—and emerge as subjects who are without an Other because they *are*, inherently, the Other.

To close, we would like to express our sincerest gratitude to all those who helped us with the realization of this project. Our idea would have hardly turned into this book without the help of Professor Tanja Žigon, the head of the research project group to which we belong, who has backed us at every step of the way and communicated our plans and requirements to our financier, the Slovenian Research Agency and Innovation Agency, to which we are also grateful for support. We would also like to acknowledge the efforts of all the reviewers, who invested their expertise and precious time to ensure that the chapters in this book comply with the highest academic standards. Furthermore, thank you so much to Matic Ačko for designing the cover, and to Professor Victor Kennedy who has helped out whenever and wherever help was needed, whether with suggestions and advice on the book's content, and the publication process, or with the inevitable formal technicalities. As time is always an issue when deadlines

approach, we really appreciate that Gal Gračanin took care of the final formatting with precision and speed in practically no time. Thank you also to Jana Zamuda, Bianca Thieme, Eva Vrtin, Mojca Kanduč, Noemi Čop and Nastja Prajnč Kacijan, on whom we can always count and who proved indispensable this time around as well. Finally, thank you to the contributors for recognizing the necessity to word the alternatives to the traditional notions of Otherness. Given the present state of affairs in the world, our efforts indeed seem to be less a matter of professional enquiry than one of moral responsibility.

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CHAPTER 1

THIS IS NOT MY FATHER'S LITERATURE CLASS: A PLAYBOOK FOR CHANGE

LISA BOTSHON

My father was born in New York City in 1935, narrowly avoided being drafted into the Korean War, and at the age of 20 found himself at the University of Kansas with an initial intent to study architecture. He was to remain at the University of Kansas for seven years, at the end of which he obtained a master's degree in English. Fortyish years later, when I began graduate work in comparative literature, my father and I compared notes on our studies. Unsurprisingly, the field had changed so radically that he was unfamiliar with most of the authors and texts in my American literature orals exam. Together, we pored through the pages of his American literature anthology from college, which documented the work of primarily men who were primarily white, most of whom were well resourced. My father found it difficult to conceive of the possibility that other important authors with other experiences and identities had been writing and publishing concomitant to this enduring group. If that had been so, he reasoned, why hadn't they ended up in his anthology?

The story of the literary canon and its transformation is hardly new to us. However, it is worth revisiting, especially as we reflect upon our own moment's contestation of established boundaries in relation to ideas of otherness. Anthologies, by their very nature, have historically attempted to fix an authoritative group of works in a particular era, both illuminating and helping to shape literary taste and consumption. This chapter considers the value and limitation of anthologies and similar materials with which we have organized, catalogued, written about and taught literature. In so doing, I will examine how digitalization has impacted these tools and processes as we continue to grapple with the idea of otherness. What I—what we—teach now is hardly my father's literature class, and digitalization holds a great

deal of promise for those of us in the field. However, as the wisest gurus tell us, even the most exciting tech inventions are insufficient to tackle all the economic, social, and political barriers that keep billions of global citizens from making the most of modern digital life.[1] Thus, for those of us who view teaching literature as a form of social justice, merely adapting our materials to the digital age is insufficient. As with all other aspects of our work, we must be thoughtful and transformative.

Most English programs in the United States include at least one American literature survey course. My department requires two, and we typically divide the survey into two semesters: the first semester begins with European contact and ends with the Civil War, and the second semester begins with Reconstruction and ends in the current day. These courses function in numerous ways: they are meant to help acquaint students with texts and traditions that have animated the American experience, but they are also meant to be exploratory, providing students with scope for future reading and thinking. When I build such a course, I consider questions like these: How have writers imagined the nation? How do we enlarge our cultural inheritance to make such endeavours meaningful to more of us? How do we enrich our collective memory and community? Moreover, I like my students to know why I've made the selections in a given semester, and how I have been influenced by multiple institutions like the academy and the publishing industry. Anthologies, especially in survey courses, have helped me to do that, but they are necessarily limited and intrinsically problematic.

Origin Stories

It is helpful to consider the beginnings of the anthology, which is a ubiquitous tool in American universities. The term "anthology" took its modern form in the 1600s. It's a word of multiple origins, including the Greek "anthos," meaning "flower," and "logia," meaning "gather" or "collect." In other words, an anthology literally means "a gathering/collection of flowers," but by the seventeenth century the term explicitly referred to published collections (anthology, n).

Book-length collections of American literature had been marketed for the general reading public as early as the mid-19th century, but colleges and universities were slower to adopt this format for teaching (Csicsila 2004, 2). John Seely Hart is often credited with offering the first college course in American literature at Princeton in 1872, and he published what may have

[1] See, for example, Ovide 2022.

been the first American literature anthology for college students, the *Manual of American Literature*, that same year. The earliest anthologies, including Hart's, were generally understood to be archival repositories of national culture. Nina Baym notes in a germinal article on the subject that these "attempted to configure American literature to serve the aims of American public education: forming character and ensuring patriotism" (1989, 459). Baym argues that the invented New England origins of American literature that my father read in the 1950s were very deliberate: "By originating American history in New England and proclaiming the carefully edited New England Puritan as the national type, [it was] hoped to create […] a commonalty, instilling in all citizens those traits […] thought necessary for the future: self-reliance, self-control, and acceptance of hierarchy" (1989, 450). Needless to say, such work was quite exclusionary in its scope, allowing but a very small percentage of writings and authors to be understood as literarily significant.

Many regions and writings were by and large omitted from these collections. What has been derisively termed sentimental fiction, for example, much of which was written by white women, was extremely popular among 19th-century readers, but it wasn't considered worthy of study by most anthologies by the time my father went to college. Work published in languages other than English was entirely eschewed. New York and Philadelphia, both centres of significant literary activity, were also marginalized, as was any literature that came out of the South or West. And writings of people of colour were by and large absent. This representational exclusion mirrored, of course, most other U.S. institutions.

This said, some early anthologies of American literature might surprise contemporary readers. For example, Fred Lewis Pattee's 1919 anthology, *Century Readings for a Course in American Literature*, was one of the most widely used anthologies of American literature into the 1920s and remained in print as late as 1965. Pattee's earliest editions included a fair number of white women writers who were understood to be able to convey national values, including Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Sarah Orne Jewett, Helen Hunt Jackson, and Emma Lazarus. In fact, some early 20th-century anthologists' efforts to provide extensive coverage of American authors meant that white women authors, especially those of the late 19th century, received significant attention.

In the forties, Black writer and educator Sterling Brown published several collections of Black writing, including a coedited anthology titled *The Negro Caravan* (1941), which was comprised of slave narratives,

abolitionist documents, and other nonfiction along with poetry and fiction.[2] A review of this volume in *College English*, a journal of the National Council of Teachers of English, exclaimed that Brown's collection "helps to demonstrate the fact that some of the best American writing has been and is being produced by Negroes" (Hintz 1943, 267). Similarly, Margot Astrov's volume *The Winged Serpent: An Anthology of American Indian Prose and Poetry*, which surveys mostly translated works from indigenous peoples throughout the Americas, was published in 1946. Few individual authors are credited, and most sources are from Euro-American anthropologists/translators, but the project underscores the importance of U.S. indigenous literature and demonstrates why it is worthy of study. Yet little of this work would be read by college students being taught with more standardized anthologies in the mid-century era.

Here lies a central question: with work such as Brown's and Astrov's in circulation, as well as the historical example of Pattee's elevation of women writers in a broader survey, why would my father's anthology from the 1950s have included zero writers of colour, and only two white women: Emily Dickinson and Edith Wharton? By the time the National Council of Teachers of English[3] reviewed college American literature syllabi in 1948, only three women (Willa Cather in addition to the two just cited) appeared in the ninety syllabi of survey courses studied. A 1952 study of twenty-seven American literature anthologies demonstrated that there were only six women among the seventy authors whose works were covered. White women represented, on average, about eight percent of the writers in total.[4] People of colour were even more invisible. "[B]y the end of the fifties," Paul Lauter has asserted, "one could study American literature and read no work by a black writer, few works by [white] women […], and no work about the lives or experiences of working-class people" (1983, 440). That was my father's experience.

It is helpful to remember that the proliferation of American anthologies in the early part of the 20th century was concomitant with the legitimization of the field of American literature in the academy, which began to flourish following WWI. American literature was added to the *Publications of the*

[2] Others were to follow, including an anthology of Black writers titled *Negro Voices in American Fiction* (1948) published by Hugh Gloster, who eventually would become the seventh president of Morehouse College.

[3] The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) was founded in 1911 to "increase the effectiveness of school and college work in English," and to remove barriers to college (National Council of Teachers of English).

[4] Paul Lauter cites both the NCTE survey and Ben Fuson's 1952 study, *Which Text Shall I Choose for American Literature?* (1983, 439).

Modern Language Association bibliography in 1923, and the first journal dedicated entirely to American literary studies, titled *American Literature*, debuted in 1930 (Csicsila 2004, 8). However, once the teaching of American literature was launched in the academy, it also became more specialized and standardized. Lauter contends, "What had been the function of individuals, of families, or of literary clubs and certain magazines—choosing books to be remembered and read, building culture and taste—became the purview of the classroom" (1983, 440–441). This meant that influence over reading materials shifted to academics, the great majority of whom were white and male, and many of whom were from financially resourced classes. In professionalizing the reading and study of American literature, they asserted their values on what had become a heterogeneous population of college students with the mid-20th century expansion of higher education. According to the US Census Bureau, in 1930, there were 122,000 undergraduate degrees awarded; by 1950, that number had almost quadrupled, thanks in part to the GI bill, which sent thousands of veterans to college (Bureau of the Census 1976). These were not the elite students that had populated campuses in the beginnings of higher education in the U.S.; they were the unruly masses, many of whom were working class and urban and the first in their families to attend college.

My father and some of his classmates at the University of Kansas were among them. In our family album there are a photo of my father during his college years, and one of his classmates, Wilt Chamberlain, widely regarded as one of the greatest basketball players in the sport's history.

My father was one of those first-generation, working-class, urban students, who was perceived as not quite white in Lawrence, Kansas. Wilt Chamberlain was also a first-generation, working-class, urban student, who was definitely not white. He was among the first Black recruits to the Kansas University basketball team.[5] Both of them had to leave the city of Lawrence, Kansas, to get their hair cut—as the barbers there would not cut *that* kind of hair—a material reminder of their otherness. In the 1950s, at a place like the University of Kansas, neither of them expected to read or learn about any authors who may have had experiences like themselves. And they did not. Had they been half a generation younger, however, their academic experience might have been different.

In her 1965 dissertation, which examined anthologies from 1781 to 1964, Evelyn Bibb concluded that "there appears to be a general acceptance

[5] According to Ajuan Mance, in 1952 LaVannes Squires was the first Black basketball player at KU. The first Black starter for the team was in 1954. The Black Faculty and Staff Council at the University of Kansas notes that a Black faculty member would not be hired until 1959 (Mance 2007).

of a canon of American literature consisting of a 'classic' eight": Poe, Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Whitman, Mark Twain, and Henry James (qtd. in Csicsila 2004, 18). However, by the time of Bibb's dissertation, a significant cultural shift was already underway; underrepresented groups increasingly sought empowerment through civil rights movements, and expanding the visibility of their contributions to the United States was a critical facet of that work. Consequentially, changes began to take place within both the academy and the publishing industry. It was in this next decade that the first ethnic studies and women's studies programs were created in American universities, the result of nationwide sit-ins and protests. Scholars began recovery projects to reprint important forgotten or undervalued writers. To support these programs' curricula, dozens of new ethnic-, racial-, and gender-specific anthologies were published. 1972, for example, saw the debut of *The Way: An Anthology of American Indian Literature*, co-edited by Shirley Hill Witt, an Akwesasne woman who was one of the first indigenous women in the U.S. to earn a PhD. Similarly, in 1974, Frank Chin et al. published *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*, which was instrumental in defining the field of Asian-American literature, and which was so influential that it was reprinted as late as 2019. While these anthologies had issues of their own—*Aiiieeeee!*, for example, has been criticized for its masculinist heteronormative vision, among other things—they were essential in terms of providing direction and material for the next generation.[6]

New Directions

By the time I was in graduate school in the 1990s, the landscape of American literature anthologies had changed mightily. And while I was never assigned to read an anthology as a PhD student, I did have to select one when I *taught*. I still have a copy of my 1993 syllabus for my first semester of teaching the American survey, and my anthology of choice—the one that astounded my father—was the *Heath Anthology of American Literature*. At the time, the *Heath* was still new and considered somewhat unconventional. The more well-known text had been published by W. W. Norton, a company dating back to the twenties that had been in the anthology business for decades; it had issued its first anthology of American

[6] See, for example, scholar Tara Fickle's January 15, 2020, blog post for the *Paris Review*, which notes both the 21st-century criticism of *Aiiieeeee!* as well as its continued relevance. This piece was extracted from her foreword to the third edition of *Aiiieeeee!,* published in 2019.

literature in 1979 (Pope 2019). Norton guards its sales figures and course adoption statistics closely, but, as of 2016, it was estimated that roughly 12 million students had procured some iteration or another of *The Norton Anthology of American* Literature, which demonstrates a certain command of what had been a very competitive market (Pope 2019).[7]

In their 1979 Preface, the *Norton* editors state that the collection reflects a "major responsibility… to redress the long neglect of women writers in America" and "to do justice to the contributions of black writers to American literature and culture" (Gottesman et al. 1979, xxv). The impact of the rise in race and ethnic studies is seen in the presence of Black authors such as W. E. B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, and Gwendolyn Brooks, and white women authors such as Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary Wilkins Freeman, although together they make up a small percentage of pages overall, and there is not a single Native American, Latinx, or Asian American author featured in the volume covering 1865 to the contemporary era. In other words, despite their statement to the contrary, the editors' so-called investment in underrepresented writers was paltry at best.

Enter the *Heath Anthology of American Literature*, which was first published in 1990. This project had been spearheaded in the early eighties by Paul Lauter who, with a sizable editorial board comprised of a majority of women scholars, many of whom were at the beginning of their careers, sought to produce a new kind of collection that would expand the canon and curriculum of American literature with particular investment in the activism and scholarship of feminists and people of colour. Lauter argued that, among other things, the *Heath* would add "to students' capacities to 'read' the world in its multiplicity and contradiction—the point […] of liberal education" (1993, 330). But the project's ambition was not to merely assimilate long-forgotten authors into existing categories; rather, it was meant to reconstruct the way we thought about the intersections of literature, history, and national culture altogether.

The *Heath* opened with an entire section of Native American oral literatures, excerpted Spanish conquistadors that I had never heard of before, and touched on the role of Jesuit missionaries before moving to the Puritans. Suddenly, whole regions, communities, and languages (in translation) were available to read, absorb, and teach. The volume that focused on the early 20th century included not only the usual modernist poets like Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, but featured an entire section on political poetry and another on the Harlem Renaissance. There were also selections by Native Americans, working class white authors, and nearly ten pages of

[7] It is unclear if this figure includes resale/used copies.

poetry by Chinese immigrants that had been carved on the walls of Angel Island in California, which had contained the detention barracks of a west coast immigration station. As Paula Bennett remarked in the *Women's Review of Books* in 1991, this anthology was "the first sustained effort on the part of America's scholarly community to come to terms with the vast wealth of our multi-racial, multi-ethnic literary inheritance" (1991, 15). The *Heath* helped spark debates about what Americanists should teach and what sorts of resources we needed to do so. Soon other anthologies, including the *Norton*, were following the direction of the *Heath*. And our syllabi changed accordingly.

My own department provides what I imagine is a story that played out in other universities as my generation shifted into place. In the fall of 1991, Terry Plunkett, beloved poet and professor of American literature at the University of Maine at Augusta (UMA), taught a survey of American literature that cleaved to an older model of canonicity. He relied on an early edition of the *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, and focused on seven key authors similar to the "classic eight" cited by Evelyn Bibb in 1965: Emerson, Thoreau, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, and Dickinson. There are few details extant for this course—the entire syllabus is but a half a page of typewritten text—but we can see the direction that he takes quite clearly, and it heavily relies on the students procuring unmarked copies of the *Norton Anthology of American Literature*. "Assignments," he writes, "will be given orally by the instructor in class. Major readings should be marked in the Table of Contents on the first class meeting."[8] Plunkett's colleague at UMA, Jack Schumacher, used an even more canonical anthology, one edited and introduced by author/scholars Robert Penn Warren, Cleanth Brooks, and R. W. B. Lewis, the former two of whom were intrinsic to the development of New Criticism in the 20th century, and who fostered mostly white modernist writers in the pages of their journal *The Southern Review*. In addition to the anthology, Schumacher assigned students to read works such as *The Last of the Mohicans* and *Moby Dick*.[9] These classes taught at the University of Maine at Augusta in the late 20th century greatly resembled the one my father had taken at the University of Kansas nearly forty years before.

[8] Terry Plunkett's Fall 1991 ENG 250 American Literature syllabus, procured from the University of Maine at Augusta's College of Arts and Sciences office July 27, 2022.

[9] Jack Schumacher's Fall 1989 ENG 250 American Literature syllabus, procured from the University of Maine at Augusta's College of Arts and Sciences files July 27, 2022.

Fast forward to 1997, when I was hired to replace both Terry Plunkett and Jack Schumacher, both of whom had retired (That I was one person hired to replace two people is another facet of a parallel story in the academy at this time). As I was initially responsible for all courses in American literature, including the survey, I immediately rolled up my sleeves and began updating with the *Heath* anthology. My syllabus differed from my predecessors' in many ways, including in the amount of supporting material with which I provided my students. However, the schedule of readings provided the most telling set of changes. I began with the Yuchi tribe's "Creation of the Whites" and Handsome Lake's "How America was Discovered," which imparted a very different direction to a class that had previously begun with Puritan John Winthrop. Over the course of the first few weeks of the semester, my students would also explore the Spanish imperial explorer Cabeza de Vaca (in translation), Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative, and the travel journals of Sarah Kemble Knight. I suspect the American literature survey that I taught in 1997 greatly resembled those of my graduate school colleagues, marking us just as much a product of our moment as Terry Plunkett, Jack Schumacher, and their colleagues had been of theirs.

However, I am struck by data concerning representation and early American anthologies published by Timothy Decelle and Abram Van Engen in 2021. They aptly note, "Anthologies are snapshots. They offer a picture of an academic field, frozen in a given moment, and give us a sense of how it was organized, whom it considered important, and what it understood as the 'canon' at one particular moment in time" (2021, 845). These scholars built a digital tool to determine which ten authors received the most page numbers in any given edition and discovered, among other things, that Benjamin Franklin was the first ranked author *in every single edition of **both** the Norton **and** the Heath anthologies from 1979 to the present* (Decelle and Van Engen 2021, 849). They also catalogued percentages of pages based on authors' racial identity. The *Norton* anthology packed its largest number of pages devoted to writers of colour into its fifth and sixth editions, published in 1998 and 2003, respectively. This era dovetails with my own launch as an assistant professor and helps illuminate my generation's optimism regarding inclusivity. Nevertheless, even during this halcyon era, the total volume of pages written by people of colour is insubstantial, only adding up to about 20 percent. And the last edition surveyed by these scholars, in 2017, had many fewer pages focused on "Hispanic" writers than did the volume published in 2003. While I'm not surprised that the *Norton* appears to be ambivalent about including writers of colour in its anthology, I am intrigued that the *Heath*'s overall percentage

of writers of colour is not as large as it was in my imagination. According to this data, the *Heath*'s total pages devoted to writers of colour peaks at 30 percent. When I do the calculations with my own 1997 syllabus, I find the same percentage. I have not taught the American literature survey in about 15 years, but it is worth asking how I might think through things differently now.

Before I turn to how digitalization may be changing what and how we teach, I would like to touch upon one other problematic aspect of the traditional anthology, and that is its materiality. Print anthologies both cost and weigh a great deal. A two-volume anthology of American literature might cost upwards of 200 euros to buy, albeit half that to rent, and weigh over two kilos, although one would likely use only one volume at a time.[10] I was surprised to discover, as I sleuthed our online campus bookstore, that one of my colleagues had ordered a literature anthology for the fall of 2022 that weighs 3.26 kilos![11] If a student is taking multiple classes at once, as is typically the case, a semester's worth of books can easily run upwards of 500 euros, and carrying several textbooks together might add up to acute back pain, if nothing more serious. Thus digitalization, with its promise of accessibility on multiple fronts, has the potential to be liberating for students, especially those experiencing financial precarity and/or who might have difficulty toting massive tomes.

Digitizing American Literature

I would like to return to the promise of Paul Lauter et al.'s original idea behind the *Heath Anthology of American Literature*. As mentioned, while this project has perhaps not been as expansive as it might have been, it began with a transformative idea for reading, teaching, and studying American literature, and it did help change the ways in which we understood American literature as a diverse body of work representative of a multitude of voices and experiences. Where might we go from here? And how might digitization expand our opportunities to make the teaching of American literature a more "disobedient discipline" (Lauter 2001, 505), something other than what Janice Radway once argued could become merely "an additive intellectual politics, a politics of inclusion, a move that [leaves] intact the assumed privilege of territorial paradigms and the priority of the

[10] According to the Amazon page for the 2022 10th edition of the *Norton Anthology of American Literature,* package I, which only goes to 1865, this two-part text weighs in at 4.78 pounds, or about 2.17 kilos.

[11] The *Longman Anthology of British Literature*, Volume 1. In the fall of 2022, it could be bought new for $120, used for $86, or rented for $63 from our ebookstore.

nationalist community" (1999, 9)? Indeed, the explosion of the Internet along with the surge in digital tools in the 1990s gave rise to the belief that the expansion of access to materials on the web could be leveraged to change the way we read, teach, and research excluded groups, and that it might help eliminate the very idea of the canon.

Much of the early work in the digital humanities was dedicated to what Amy Earhart calls "small-scale recovery projects" (2012, 312), and a fair number of these focused on literature written by people of colour. Such projects have become more prolific and accessible over the last two decades, and the digitization of texts such as early African-American pamphlets and newspapers has expanded pedagogical possibilities. In the fall of 2021, for example, when I was assigned to teach a 19th-century American literature class, a field in which I have only passing expertise, I was able to smoothly incorporate, among other works, online iterations of the following:

1. a set of 19th-century Black American newspapers that, among other things, provided opinions on the US occupation of the Philippines;
2. a gothic short story from 1819 titled "The Black Vampyre; A Legend of St. Domingo" that (obliquely) probes the issue of slavery and the Haitian revolution;
3. as well as letters between Emily Dickinson and her beloved sister-in-law, Susan Gilbert Dickinson, as part of a discussion of queer writing.

These texts are exemplary of how through the digitization of recovered materials, we are better able to reposition marginalized works, voices, and perspectives toward the centre of our collective inquiry. However, there are other digital projects that, like the 1979 *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, may not fulfil the same promise.

Those teaching the American literature survey might employ one of many, many open access anthologies now available online. These exist with varying agendas and with varying amounts of organizing and supporting material. The Open Textbook Library provides links to scores of open access textbooks on its website, most of which have been peer reviewed, and all of which are discoverable through WorldCat as well as online searches.[12] The goal behind such projects is to build sustainable open education resources and facilitate democratic access to information. Because these books are free—and weightless!—it is thought they can be

[12] But there are many, many others as well, including one created by a faculty member at the University of Florida, one from a group in the University System of Georgia, and another from Plymouth State University.

helpful in student retention, especially by those universities educating students with limited financial resources. Moreover, in part because they are free and digital, they can also feel liberating to the instructor, providing the sense that there is a limitless array of works from which to construct one's courses.

Free, unfettered access should be an unalloyed triumph in education, but these anthologies come with attendant burdens. One of the most relevant ones for my purposes is the curious fact that these open access anthologies replicate the problems of printed anthologies more generally. They are no longer necessarily produced by elite institutions, nor do they provide profit for large publishing houses, and, moreover, they are more inclusive in terms of content and conception, but they remain political tools that reproduce the apparatuses of orthodoxy and authority that such collections have always carried. We may say that we are no longer interested in the canon, but here is Benjamin Franklin winking at us again from a digital environment. Here are the "classic eight." I don't mean to suggest that these authors are unworthy of study—and of course, one can teach them with liberationist pedagogy—but rather that digitalization in this arena has perhaps not moved the dial as much as we thought it would. From most of these anthologies, one can still easily teach the course in American literature that my father took, that my predecessors at UMA taught. Generally speaking, digital anthologies do not sufficiently question issues related to identity and power in the production of knowledge. Moreover, returning to the materiality of these works, it is important to stress that "free" does not mean accessible to all: reading these materials online requires access to resources such as high bandwidth and laptops or fancy phones, which not all students—including those at my university—can easily procure.

Over the last half a dozen years, however, scholars of feminist digital humanities have demonstrated how we might employ intersectional strategies to work with digital tools in the production of knowledge. First, we must acknowledge that the very tools we use for digital resources can replicate the same issues as the print anthologies I referenced earlier. HathiTrust, for example, is an online database that contains *millions* of books; it was founded in 2008 and its own website notes that it is "the largest set of digitized books managed by academic and research libraries—under the aims of scholarly, not corporate interests" (Hathitrust 2008). However, even with its lofty goals, HathiTrust has been rightly called out by a collective called Black Women Big Data for holding a relatively miniscule number of texts written by African American authors (Brown et al. 2016, 116). Black Women Big Data also criticizes the HathiTrust for its U.S. bias and calls for a more internationalist focus that would allow, for example,

African American women's work to be in conversation with diasporic feminists. Similarly, Wikipedia, a digital resource about which professors are often ambivalent, but which provides much content to our students, is known for, among other things, its biases against women, people of colour, and the LGBTQ community, which exist even at the level of its evaluative mechanisms.[13]

Nevertheless, digital work *should* enable people in the academy to engage in the very "disobedient" work called for by Paul Lauter and others many decades ago. Jessica Marie Johnson, an associate professor of history at Johns Hopkins University who works on Black Code Studies, asserts that critical engagement in the digital humanities should be a call to action, and if done correctly, will take seriously the humanities' larger purpose as a "social justice actor for diverse communities." She contends,

> [T]here needs to be a conversation about equity within the academy, not just about digital things, but about how folks who are people of color or queer people of color are organizing and creating knowledge in the 21st century, and how the academy can support them in that regard. […] [I]t means changing the way we teach, the kinds of things we put on our syllabi… [I]t means appreciating things that are not considered digital tools as digital tools, like social media as a literacy, as also scholarly production, protecting and compensating intellectual work before it migrates from Tumblr and into our classrooms. […] [I]t means making the university accountable for making sure that people have access to digital tools. (qtd. in Dinsman 2016)

If we are to follow Johnson's mandate, we should look for and support scholarship and teaching that spills over from conventional, analogue modes into digital tools that include social media, which provide larger and more nimble platforms as well as additional learning opportunities for ourselves and our students. Twitter,[14] Instagram, and Tumblr have all been essential tools with which to engage liberationist ideas and materials outside of the marginalizing power dynamics often encoded into the academy. #BlkTwitterstorians, for example, an offshoot of the Black Twitter movement, was founded by scholar Joshua L. Crutchfield in 2015 to help connect and support the work of Black academics. Pedagogical projects inspired by the possibilities of the digital landscape include courses like Carmen Kynard's "Black Girl Magic," which comes complete with a playlist and a syllabus in fanzine form. Kynard, a professor of rhetoric and

[13] See, for example, Francesca Tripodi's work on gender and LGBTQ inequality in Wikipedia (Tripodi 2021).
[14] Pre-Elon Musk-Twitter, that is.

composition at Texas Christian University, regularly incorporates online databases, videos, music, and digital archives into her classes, and she makes much of her pedagogical work public in part to "help other critical educators imagine classroom spaces that move towards radical, liberatory pedagogies" (Kynard).

Work like Kynard's provides us with fresh paradigms for teaching and research that more deftly centre marginalized experiences. To do this, we need to bolster digital archival work that illuminates the underrepresented, consider genres such as social media as worthy of teaching and research, and ensure that our universities provide widespread digital access to our communities. Ultimately, I think we need to leave all forms of the anthology behind and ready ourselves to create something new. Literature—however we define it—should be able to, among other things, map oppression and create practices for imagining our communities to flourish. Only with sustained efforts to teach literature in this way will we produce the American literature class with the full sensitivity to "otherness" with which this essay collection is concerned. And I think my father would be pleased.

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