

# ‘Only Connect’: Social Symbolism, Cultural Capital and Textuality in the Literature Classroom

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## Introduction

E.M. Forster intended for his 1910 novel *Howards End* that it would force reconsiderations of the relationship between knowledge, culture, education and class; what Forster probably did not intend was for the novel to register a nexus of problematics regarding the teaching of literature. The novel’s famous injunction “only connect the prose and the passion and both will be exalted” (159) is Margaret Schlegel’s idealization of how human relations can be made to infuse all spheres of life. It is also apt both as a pedagogical principle and motivator for literary faculty: if, somehow, faculty can express their passion for their subject in the prose of its analytics and technicalities, students will, somehow, gain a measure of both in their learning. The idealized nature of this injunction, however, suggests its limits. Ironically, these limits are perhaps most apparent in the literature classroom. A teacher’s desire to ‘only connect’ idealizes literature as a privileged aesthetic form, foreclosing the potential for attention to how the ideological implications of literary texts and their study opens up possibilities rather than closes them off. Thus, in this essay what I want to do is provoke critical reappraisals of the social symbolism of literature itself, as well as the idea of teaching it. And while I preserve literature as a privileged discourse, I want to make it plain that an honest and candid pedagogy – and that is all I mean by ‘a literary meta-pedagogy’ – can only challenge and demystify that privilege.

Literature is a socially symbolic act, an ideology, and as such retains what Bourdieu calls cultural capital, and we read and appreciate it in the hopes that it will produce what Shelley in *A Defence of Poetry* calls the “unapprehended relations of things” (482). For Shelley, the power of a literary text comes “whenever two thoughts, two words, that had been kept separated come together,” and “something crazy and unexpected might just happen” (Jager 46). Wayne Booth articulates something similar when he advises literary faculty that “[we] are in the business of freeing ourselves into whatever was for us the next order of human awareness or

understanding, the next step forward in our ability to join other minds, through language, and to join them in . . . 'critical understanding' " (20-21). The latter term is Booth's shorthand; one that he admits "risks the oxymoronic in order to include both the thought and the passion" (21). But it's the goal, and teachers "should be trying at every point to increase the chances . . . that critical understanding will replace, on the one hand, sentimental and uncritical identifications that leave minds undisturbed and, on the other, hypercritical negations that freeze or alienate" (21). It would be a challenge to find a teacher who would disagree with wanting to have students read and understand something on a more analytically and philosophically and aesthetically sophisticated level. And yet, as Booth himself acknowledges, there is something vague about these goals. The very term 'critical understanding' is a placeholder. As he says, further definition of critical understanding is difficult because it is to a large degree personal. Thus, he advises us to "slot in . . . your own version of whatever central experience attracted you to this profession and keeps you here now" (21). But the point is that somehow connecting the prose and the passion is the goal of literary education.

As we all know all too well, perhaps because they escape firm definition, those moments of unapprehended relations of things are a rarity. Why they are can be explained by reflecting on what it is that that phrase 'only connect' means, and symbolizes, in *Howards End*. *Howards End* tells the story of the coming together of the Schlegel and Wilcox families, and how in their coming together the widely different set of values each family adheres to clash and force social negotiations, moral compromise, and emotional turmoil. The Schlegel family, consisting chiefly of sisters Margaret and Helen, represent the liberal intelligentsia of a rapidly expanding and changing London. With their partial German ancestry, their continental manners, philosophy and culture bespeak a cosmopolitanism that finds sympathy and sustenance in their social circle of artists, writers, critics and others of the urban chattering classes. The Wilcoxes, on the other hand, represent the newly rising bourgeois capitalists, who from their suburban houses focus their lives on work, business, and the advancement of the British Empire through material accumulation. Any marriage between the cultured Schlegels and the materialistic Wilcoxes would seem out of the question, but that is exactly what happens in the novel, when Margaret Schlegel resolves to fall in love with Henry Wilcox, the patriarch of that clan, and through marriage unite their culture with the useful, and for Margaret, wholly admirable utilitarianism of the Wilcoxes.

The improbable nature of their marriage makes this novel a poignant allegory of the problems literary faculty face. Margaret and Helen Schlegel prize human relationships above all other concerns, and key to the cultivation of human relationships is cultivation itself, or rather its cognate, culture. Through books, music, art, and conversation Margaret develops

a worldview that she encapsulates in the phrase 'only connect'. As the narrator tells us, it is "the whole of her sermon" (159); moreover, upon her marriage to Henry, it is what she wants to make him understand. Margaret muses that it would not be a difficult message to deliver; it could be sent by "quiet indications" that would "span their lives with beauty" (159). Alas, she fails. She realizes that Henry "simply did not notice things" (159), which Henry obliquely registers when he proudly tells Margaret that his motto is "'Concentrate'" (160).

Literature faculty can identify with Margaret Schlegel: she tries to teach Henry to connect, and he can't be bothered. The gap between them is never closed, and it is here that we who teach literature must absorb a vital lesson: connecting our literary passion with the prose of student concerns reveals the limits of passion, and the gaps between the pleasure of reading and the work of analysis. The novel adds yet more discouraging argument against bridging the gap. Leonard Bast, the poor young man who strives for 'culture' by reading everything he can, is killed by a falling bookcase after being struck by Henry Wilcox's sternly materialist son Charles. The symbolism is clear – some critics say it is a bit too clear, as clear as a bookcase falling on the head – poor Leonard Bast is killed both by the very thing he believes will redeem him, and by a class structure that will never admit him. The message is that reading by itself is no key to the good life, and you need leisure – I mean this is the Greek sense of the capacity to distance yourself from yourself – and for that, you need money.

This sounds hopeless, and indeed the novel spares no sympathy for Leonard Bast's cultural yearnings; his death is a cruelly ironic indictment of romantic notions of literature offering salvation and being more worthy than action in the world. For literature faculty, the message is that we cannot take for granted the value of what we do, and that only through constant and rigorous self-critique of the terms, values, and objectives of literary pedagogy can we hope to maintain our place in higher education.

### **Dismantling the Edifice of Literature in order to Teach It**

It may seem strange, but for English literature faculty the world over, what it is that we teach has never really been clarified. That verb phrase, teach literature, leaves a lot unexplained. It's no wonder that many of our students have a Wilcox-like resistance to literature. They're not sure what they're supposed to learn because we're not sure what we're supposed to teach. For those of us teaching as native-speakers here in Japan, we have to deal with the added complication of somehow weaving EFL concerns in with literary concerns. For those of us with specifically literary training and research agendas, EFL teaching objectives and strategies seem to counter or dilute the objectives and strategies of literary teaching – seem to, as of course, as I mentioned, we really don't have the clearest set of objectives and strategies.

Nevertheless, like the difference between erotica and pornography, we know literary pedagogy when we see it.

But again, what is it? How do we articulate to our students our goals and objectives when we're not even sure of them? Well, the short answer is we don't, or rather, we articulate the incommensurability of our endeavor – we come right out and tell them that the goal of reading and appreciating literature is the ultimate objective, but how students get there is ultimately up to them. This sounds like a cop-out, but as I hope to explain, it is actually a way to empower students.

To get to that explanation, I'll first have to dismantle and problematize certain assumptions. The first set of assumptions stems from the fact that many of our students have accepted the notion that a background in an English-speaking culture will be of aid in learning English. They have, perhaps reluctantly, accepted the notion that reading 'authentic' British or American literature – authentic meaning a text written by a canonical author, and not something written for an EFL textbook – will be helpful when they reach a certain level of proficiency. They might also believe that this literary exposure will also gain them more cultural knowledge, which will in turn reinforce their language abilities. In any case, literature courses are on the curriculum, so it will probably be impossible to avoid taking at least one. Yet they live in a world where literature has lost significant amounts of cultural capital; moreover, even the most enthusiastic students will have noticed that their progression in English has not required literature. In fact, most of their instructors will have been TEFL specialists, who will likely have steered well clear of literature. The most perceptive students will harbor legitimate doubts about the goals often articulated for literary study. One literary conference's call for papers claims that English literary education "fosters literacy and intercultural education as well as enabling imaginative and creative learning," and that it can help fight the trend towards commodified education, provide it with a soul, and equip the "new generation" with the ability to "display imagination and creativity unbounded by conventional wisdom and mainstream thinking." As our perceptive students might ask, is literary education really capable of doing these things? Aren't these just repetitions of tired old liberal humanist myths about the enlightening properties of literature?

After all, what do we really mean by imagination and creativity? Engineers and computer scientists can be as imaginative as writers and painters, and their imaginations seem to work just fine without having had a pronounced exposure to literature in their educations. The same can be said for all kinds of walks of life, all kinds of fields. Similarly, creativity seems a hollow notion. Again, engineers can create beauty, and computer scientists creatively construct codes, again without the 'help' of literature. For that matter, weapons manufacturers are imaginative and creative, as are torturers, murderers, warriors, sadists, and, perhaps the worst of all,

bankers.

Students could also question Louise Rosenblatt's claim, in her influential 1938 book *Literature as Exploration*, that teachers of literature "More directly than most teachers . . . foster general ideas or theories about human nature and conduct, definite moral attitudes, and habitual responses to people and situations" (4). She may be onto something when she argues, "In contrast to the analytic approach of the social sciences, the literary experience has immediacy and emotional persuasiveness" (7). There is some truth to this. However, the problem with this claim lies in its conflation of modes of discourse and modes of experience. No one encounters or experiences the social sciences outside of an academic context. Only trained social scientists – anthropologists, sociologists, linguists, etc. – 'experience' their subjects, and they do so within formal and conventional constraints. There are no 'amateur' social scientists. There are, however, plenty of 'amateur' readers, or if you will 'experiencers' of literature – and that is a good thing, and could be said to be the goal of literary education. And in order to experience literature with immediacy and emotional persuasiveness amateurs do not need the formal constraints of literary analytics or theories. In fact, some would argue that these expressly limit the pleasure of the literary experience. Rosenblatt herself makes this argument later in *Literature as Exploration*.

Students could also question literature's role in adding cultural knowledge. At the level of language, culture is transmitted in the acts of recitation – of gossip, the day's events, the stories one tells at parties, and so on – along with personal interpretations of another's stories and gossip. Neither analysis nor critical thinking are relevant to the transmission of culture: in Thomas Beebee's words, a "stories' purpose is to transmit the culture [it] form[s] a part of and analysis and critical thinking impede the act of transmission" (268). Traditional literary pedagogical practices, because they favor analysis, obstruct the experience of literature as an aspect of culture. Our teaching tools – lectures, discussions, exams, essays, etc. – "reify literature as an objective phenomenon to be passively recognized or analyzed rather than constructed, transmitted, or made use of" (Beebee 268). Our students therefore do not 'know' literature the way they know mathematics or a foreign language, as these involve being able "to do something with the material beyond naming it or describing it abstractly" (Beebee 268).

The other side of this coin is that literature is ordinarily understood as reflecting or representing life. In other words, literary texts are solidly mimetic, holding a mirror up to nature. Or, literature is seen as being expressive of an author's inner world – in this case a mirror reflecting the soul. Literature is also seen as didactic, teaching readers wisdom, knowledge and insight in a mix of the mimetic and expressive. The idea of literature being mimetic and didactic prevails even today, despite stiff challenges from the waves of theoretical

reappraisals of literature itself and the arts of interpretation. And thanks to two waves in particular, structuralism and poststructuralism, we now realize that literature and literary language does much more than simply mirroring and expressing and teaching. We can trace this through the last hundred years or so of the history of literary criticism and theory, starting with Louise Rosenblatt's characterization of a pre-critical encounter with literature in which "students' reactions [to a text] will inevitably be in terms of their own temperaments and backgrounds" (50). Rosenblatt explains that while these "will have had meaning for [the student]" this meaning will be strictly personal (50). But that is what the teacher has to work with: "Only on the basis of such direct emotional elements, immature though they may sometimes be, can he [sic] be helped to build any sounder understanding of the work" (50). Rosenblatt's work, despite its admirable claims to foster self-critical and personally meaningful encounters with literature within the aims of the Dewey-inspired progressive current in educational thinking of the time, unconsciously underwrites an Arnoldian or Leavisite belief in literature as secular scripture, key to a young person's moral, psychological, and cultural maturation.

Subsequent critics and theorists rejected this by turning to words themselves and the way they function in discourse. The Russian Formalists and the American New Critics each in their separate and varied ways opposed subjectivist theories born from Romanticism, theorizing instead in terms of structure and form. They thought of literature as autonomous, with literary language being functionally separate from regular language. Formalists such as Roman Jakobson saw literature as a verbal art, not as a reflection of reality or a poet's feelings. As such, literature distinguishes itself from other modes of discourse by calling attention to its 'literariness', its complex mix of style, formal devices, versification, and narrative structure, and how they deviate from established literary norms and conventions. New Critics shared many of these concerns, but saw literature as the artful convergence of 'organic' literary elements in a coherent and unified creation, separate from any and all non-literary elements, such as the author, reader, society, history and politics.

I mention these two older critical practices because they are still immensely influential. If literary pedagogy is anything, it is teaching methods of textual response in the form of literary criticism, and as Andrew DuBois maintains, perhaps the greatest "debate in twentieth-century literary criticism is a debate between formalist and nonformalist methods of response" (1). Formalist methods of response, New Critical close reading perhaps being dominant, are key, and even those from the nonformalist camp acknowledge the centrality of what is, after all, really just a term that means 'pay special attention to what you're reading'. Part of the reason for their persistence is that they took shape within the development of the research university,

and “literary criticism was struggling to become ‘professionalized’, acceptable as a respectable academic discipline” which could compete “with the hard sciences on their own terms, in a society where such science was the dominant criterion of knowledge” (Eagleton 43). As such, as Terry Eagleton explains, New Criticism “provided a convenient pedagogical method of coping with a growing student population. Distributing a brief poem for students to be perceptive about was less cumbersome than launching a Great Novels of the World course” (43). Moreover, removing the text from the world meant “committing yourself to nothing: all that poetry taught you was ‘disinterestedness’, a serene, speculative, impeccably even-handed rejection of anything in particular. . . . It was, in other words, a recipe for political inertia, and thus for submission to the political status quo” (Eagleton 43).

Nowadays, literature classrooms and literary critical analysis in the English-speaking world sustain this drive towards apolitical literary interpretation and analytical professionalism because literature remains anxious about its status as an academic discipline. And even after the interventions of theory, not to mention historical ruptures like the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights movement, decolonization, 9/11, the crash of 2007 to name but a few, there remains within the academy as a whole – and this is especially true of Japan – the sense of the university as finishing school for the middle class. English professors are likely to expose their first-year students to issues of class, gender imbalance, social inequality, and racial and ethnic discrimination, and students will dutifully repeat these things in their essays. However, the wider, empirical or social implications of this education will be forcefully diluted in institutional and social contexts which dictate that education should increasingly be oriented towards instrumental modes of inquiry and quantifiable educational outcomes.

But given that, it is perhaps surprising and not a little heartening that literature faculty have corrected for New Critical political inertia, though perhaps in certain cases to an extreme. Politics is everywhere, and to interpret a text is to take a political stand (but then again, it always was). If literature as an academic subject has made any progress it has been in the frank acknowledgement that the very acts of reading, interpretation and criticism – of being a literature student in the first place – are in themselves political acts. Literary faculty and students have become much more reflexive in acknowledging the moral and ethical conflicts both within texts and in their social roles as scholars. That reflexivity can be marshaled into the kind of meta-pedagogy I’m arguing for. It can even figure as the catalyst for the unapprehended relations of terms and ideas that Shelley promoted.

How? Once again, *Howards End* can shed some light. The novel’s concluding symbolic gesture is the birth of Leonard and Helen Schlegel’s baby, implying that England’s future lies in a coming together of the classes. But there is nothing planned or programmatic about

the birth. Readers are surprised that the impoverished Leonard and the wealthy cultured Helen have indeed slept together – it is not described in the novel, their coupling is not even hinted at. They share a moment of passion – passion that has been building but is obscured in the rhetoric and action of the novel. But then, in retrospect, their encounter had been coming all along. If we had been paying close attention, we might have seen its inevitability. In subsequent readings we see the signs, but they are not exactly loud and clear. We have to read and reread carefully, and when we do, even knowing what is to come, the surprise is only mildly diminished.

The surprise brings to mind Shelley's "unapprehended relations of things" (482). Leonard and Helen are the two words that had been kept separate, and which come together (so to speak). It is as though Shelley's unapprehended relations of things had served as Forster's prescription. Shelley's poetics becomes Forster's, which the latter makes into an ideological statement and narrative framework. Now, I want to make clear that despite my invocation of Shelley and the promise of something like literary enchantment suggested in the phrase "unapprehended relations of things", I do not mean that we copy the Romantics and, as Eagleton says, "bow low in reverent silence before the unfathomable mystery of the text" (42). What I mean to point out is that, like the development of the relationship between Helen and Leonard, arriving at the moment when unapprehended relations can be apprehended is a temporal process. New Criticism – and I must add, much of contemporary literary pedagogy – turns a text into a spatial figure, wrenched out of its social and historical contexts, both at the moments of production and reception. Forster in *Howards End* wants us to see that meaning reveals itself in the world like it does in the text, over time. But as we fail to perceive the coming together of Helen and Leonard in time – because we follow the free indirect narrative in real time, as it were – we also fail to see what's coming until it hits us. And when it hits us, what do we do? Apart from reflecting on the sensations and the excitements and savoring the tensions, paradoxes, and mysteries of the textual moment – these being positive legacies of New Criticism – we face the fact Forster deliberately withheld information from us, and that we have to recreate the scene in our imaginations.

The text itself offers readers over the course of its narration clues to constructing that moment in the form of each character's peculiar modes of expression and the underlying rhetoric of each character's motivations, desires, and actions. We follow the rise of Helen's sympathy for Leonard's economic and emotional deprivations. We can imagine her feeling pity for him, and her pity overpowering her reason, in tune with so many of her other flights of fancy. We have read of Leonard's growing affection for the sisters, complicated by his anger at their pity and his desire to be respected by them, all the while sharing his guilt over the waning



of his feelings for his wife Jacky. Armed with these textual clues we can imagine how Helen, with her disarming way of putting things and her talent for provoking people, might have tapped into Leonard's bottled passions. The rest, as they say, writes itself.

Textual analysis thus empowers the interpretive imagination. Through filling in the missing scene our interpretive imaginations have forced us to confront how our knowledge of the characters is shaped by diction and rhetoric, but that with those textual tools we achieve a deeper affective understanding of the text. Thus critical understanding can be produced from 'prosaic' textual work – the work of careful reading.

### **Textual Studies and a Future for Literature**

Robert Scholes argues that we must stop teaching literature and start studying texts. To do this, we must recognize the "rhetorical roots of English studies and [adopt] a modernized version of the medieval trivium – grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic – as the basis of an English discipline" (Scholes, "Fall" 230). Another way of saying this is that we should reorient ourselves to the study of poetics. With the help of Marjorie Perloff, let us review the four main ways of classifying poetics: as a branch of rhetoric, of philosophy, one of the arts, or of history. In more detail, as a branch of *rhetoric*, poetics concerns itself with what Aristotle called the art of persuasion. Cicero and Quintilian refined rhetoric into three tasks: *docere* (to teach), *delectare* (to delight), and *movere* (to move); and three faculties: *inventio* (the finding of arguments), *dispositio* (the arrangement into parts), and *elocutio* (style). Thus, essentially rhetoric is the study of how a piece of writing is put together, evolving from its early prescriptive character (the description of rhetorical traits necessary to delight or move a given audience) to the more empirical study of what figures and devices are actually used in literary and non-literary composition. As a branch of *philosophy*, in which Plato, Heidegger and Levinas are the important figures, poetics is the study of how a literary text conveys truth or knowledge. In this sense, genre takes a back seat to the 'message' of the text – whether it's written as a poem or a play or a novel matters much less than the content. As one of the *arts*, poetics names that use of language that is consciously and inherently different or distinguishable from everyday use. Its message and its rhetorical nature matter less than its figuration as an object of art. Finally, as a branch of the study of *history*, poetics means analysis of a text in terms of larger socio-cultural contexts, and as a representation and manifestation of a particular historical moment. A poem or novel or film is discussed, not for its intrinsic merits or as the expression of individual genius, nor for its expression of essential truths or its powers of persuasion, but for its political role, the "cultural work" it performs, or what it reveals about the state of a given society. Moreover, a poem or novel or film is no more worthy of analysis than a hockey game,

or a flower arrangement, or a menu.

Attention to poetics in all four senses of the term can provide the kind of methodological rigor that is perceived to be missing from literary education. I say 'perceived,' not because it is missing, but because poetics is overshadowed by the result of the application of one or more of the branches of poetics. Thus, to cut a long explanation somewhat short, when a student is asked what it is he or she does in a humanities class, the answer can be, We look at how, when, and why language makes meaning. You'll notice that is a long way from the usual, Oh we study novels and poems and stuff. What does it mean to 'study a novel?' For that matter, what do humanities faculty mean when they say, 'I'm going to teach *Great Expectations*,' or 'I'm going to teach *Guernica* to my modern art history class?'

Attention to all four branches of poetics also allow us to consider what benefits literature brings to language learning that cannot be gained from another non-fictional genre. Furthermore, orienting our focus to literature as rhetoric, what insights are there to be gained from applying to the literature classroom theories and strategies from language pedagogy? Conversely, can literary theory offer anything to EFL teachers? Rhetorical studies, or textual studies would equip students with the power of textuality, which includes attention to "textual knowledge and textual skills" in the "phases of reading, interpretation, and criticism," not only of novels but "to all kinds of texts in all sorts of media" (Scholes, "Fall" 231). Textual studies also aims to create a "judicious attitude" which is "scrupulous to understand, alert to probe for blind spots and hidden agendas, and finally [be] critical, questioning, skeptical" (Scholes, *Textual* 16). Wayne Booth explicitly uses the term rhetoric, or more specifically, "the whole art of improving our capacity to interpret and what other people say, to think about it, and then to say something worthwhile in return" (32).

Granting textual power to the students is the goal, and should structure our literary-pedagogical practices. In his book *Textual Power*, Scholes explains that the traditional literary forms, poetry, drama and novels, "embod[y] certain aspects of textual power: the power to select (and therefore repress), the power to shape and present certain aspects of human experience" (*Textual* 20). Traditional literary pedagogy, Scholes argues, has had professors as priests and priestesses presenting the literary text almost as an object of worship, a secular script, to our unenlightened students. In other words, literary pedagogy was a demonstration of the teacher's prowess in unlocking hidden meanings and his (usually his) storehouse of superior knowledge. Students were to show the extent of their learning by repeating to the professor his (again his) golden words. That ego-massaging exercise served generations of literary faculty very well, but then came advances in theory that shot down the notion of stable meanings, single, authoritative interpretation, and indeed, of the idea of author/authority

altogether. Now we can turn our attention to what we really should and could be helping our students with, and that is, as Scholes argues, “com[ing] into their own powers of textualization” (*Textual* 20). We do this by helping them see that every literary text is related to other literary and non-literary texts, including “verbal pre-texts and social sub-texts, and all manner of post-texts including their own responses, whether in speech, writing, or action. The response to a text is itself always a text” (*Textual* 20). Thus, he asserts, “expression, the making of new texts by students, must play a major role in the kind of course we are discussing” (*Textual* 20).

Reading and writing are therefore closed in a mutually enlightening loop. It is a loop moreover that relates theory and practice, and thus the abstract and imaginary with the everyday and mechanical. Scholes articulates this relationship as a three-step progression, with each level granting more textual power to the student. The first step is *reading*, in which the reader turns the marks on a page into meaningful utterances by a process of mobilizing codes such as language and narrative that allow him or her to fill in gaps, make inferences and temporal correlations. Reading, therefore, is as much a kind of knowledge as it is a skill.

The next step is *interpretation*, which comes into being when there are failures of reading. In other words, when there are things the reader cannot understand, or some non-obvious sense concealed by the text, in an active conscious process the reader must overlay or interpret the text in order to give it meaning. It is a move from “a summary of events to a discussion of the meaning or theme of a work” (*Textual* 22). Another way of illustrating this is to compare essays to stories: essays ‘say what they mean’, while stories do not, so the reader must supply the meaning.

Supplying meaning leads to the third step, *criticism*. Criticism once meant judging whether a work achieved some sort of level of success as a representative of its genre – taste would be another way of characterizing this mode of criticism. This mode can be seen in journalistic book reviews and in casual conversation among literary professors (who then turn around and write essays about how wrong it is to judge literature solely on the basis of taste). Nowadays, criticism is a more consequential intellectual activity that “involves a critique of the themes” of a text or of the codes “out of which a given text has been constructed” (*Textual* 23). Scholes illustrates this through the way feminists have critiqued the masculinist values that have constrained feminine expression and restricted interpretation in a way that reflects the male gaze. Criticism cannot, therefore, be on behalf of an individual – a category that can and has been subject to much criticism – but on behalf of any “group that has identified its interests as a class” which can then “mount a critical attack on a story’s codes and themes from the position of its own system of values” (*Textual* 23). This sounds like a way to make literary criticism aggressive and, paradoxically, personalized, but it is not. Rather, the recognition of

group status is itself a critical act, which can then be critiqued on the basis of its representation in the literary text. Moreover, it reverses the traditional subordination of ethical and political responses to a text “to some ideal of literary value”, and frees up students to criticize this notion of literary value, or any other value, “from some viewpoint beyond the merely personal – and the merely literary” (*Textual* 23).

These three aspects of literary study engender three textual activities: reading produces *text within text*; interpretation produces *text upon text*; and criticism produces *text against text*. Our job as teachers should be enabling students to produce these three modes of texts, not to copy them from us. We do this by showing them the “codes upon which all textual production depends, and to encourage their own textual practice” (*Textual* 25).

That is the theoretical framework, so now let’s consider some practicalities. Here is how I mobilize Scholes’s framework to get students involved in the literature they have been assigned to read. Usually I break my 90-minute classes into three parts: a short lecture in which I would model a reading, then model interpretation by setting out a theme, then spur their critical faculties by specifying a problem, or a question pertaining to that week’s reading. Then I give the students thirty minutes or so in pairs or groups of three to research the question(s) I would give them. In the final half-hour (or so) each pair or group presents their responses, which, if all goes well, travel up and down the scale from reading, to interpretation, to criticism. These class activities build towards two term assignments: a final essay and either a Study Guide or a Journal. These objectives are based on the idea that the best way to learn is to teach. Thus I present my literature courses as teacher-training exercises: students are going to spend the semester considering how they might teach the text to a group of students like themselves.

Let me give you a brief overview of how this works in more detail, using Chinua Achebe’s masterwork *Things Fall Apart*. Very briefly, this novel tells the story of the effects of British colonialism on a small Ibo village in what is now, as a result of colonialism, Nigeria. The novel centers on one of the village’s most esteemed and feared men, Okonkwo, and his inability to adapt to not only the changes brought about by colonial pressure, but also the changes engendered within his clan and village as a result of values that shift in response to myriad everyday circumstances. It is an extraordinarily powerful novel, justly famous and read extensively in colleges and universities all over the world.

Because this novel comes from, and tells the story of, a culture far different from both mine and that of the students, I focus the class on how we as readers would negotiate the cultural distances. In one class session I give a short lecture on gender relations in the novel, observing that while the clan seemed solidly patriarchal, there are significant moments of female influence, plus powerful female characters. I give a reading of a passage which is really

a summary, or a text within the text that simplifies and highlights. One passage I use describes a meeting of town elders who judge whether the conduct of two other characters has been in violation of village rules. I describe what is happening, who is involved, and explain the meanings of certain words, phrases, or sentences. Then I interpret it producing a text upon a text that explicates what the passage might mean. The meeting is preceded by a ceremonial men-only dance in which the men gesture aggressively in time to a heavy, repetitive drum beat. I center on the words and metaphors of dirt, dust, dryness, fire, and noise to describe the male-only dance, and suggest that these words are to be associated with the actions of the men, and that therefore this passage tells us something about gender dynamics. Then I propose a criticism: that by highlighting in his description physical discomfort and the one-dimensional aggression of the male authorities, Achebe intends a critique of the patriarchal structure. I then point out how in other passages we have read, the narrative contrasts male aggression with the more aesthetically and morally subtle story-telling of the female characters. If we have moved along in the novel, I point out the contrast with the poetry and melodic sweetness of the hymns sung by the Christian missionaries and their converts.

The students then apply this structure to their own textual investigation. In the next thirty minutes, they search for passages which seem to instance the theme of gender relations, then give a reading based on language and narrative events and outcomes, then, if all goes well interpret it as a moment of, say, when the patriarchal structure seems dominant. Then, if the sun is really shining, they offer a critical angle: say, that the patriarchal domination of the clan leaves it unfit for absorbing cultural change.

The writing assignments build on this. Over the course of the term they create, from their classroom presentation notes, a Study Guide. One portion of the Guide might focus on gender relations, developing their classroom presentations on gender. The final essay is also geared to the student-as-teacher dynamic, in that it is not the traditional close reading essay; rather, it is introduction to their Study Guide. Ideally, it will give a coherent overview of how, why and what they consider important and interesting for students like them to learn. They explain how, for example, they approach teaching gender relations, explaining what Japanese students need to understand, what they might miss when reading, and how to discover – that is, interpret – what the novel is saying about relations between men and women. Criticism, admittedly, is the hard part: I do not put too much emphasis on this, but I do urge the students to think about how they might use the novel to teach about, again to use the example of gender, what the novel critiques or supports and how this might be applied to the situation of contemporary Japan.

This is an idealized description: it does not always work so beautifully, but I must say I have generally been pleased with the work my students have done, and the feedback I get – as well

as the quality of the written work – tells me that the students really get something out of it. At the very least, it gives them a chance to get involved with the outcome of each class.

It also demonstrates to the student that writing is part of the process of reading, a necessary counterpart to meaning-making, governed by the assumption that all language acts require a third element, a referent perceived by someone – or heard, listened to, read, conversed with – without whom the relationship of signifier to signified rests incomplete. The circle of reading and writing takes us back to a key branch of poetics, which is rhetoric. While I instance poetics to underscore the fundamental difference between language and literary education, it is obvious that the two meet under the sign of rhetoric. Indeed, Booth believed that the teaching of 'English' and the teaching of rhetoric were essentially the same. As he says in his book *The Vocation of a Teacher*: "English departments [carry] the major responsibility for general education in the arts that classically were assigned to rhetoric: the arts of reading (or interpretation), of writing and speaking, and of thinking that is inseparable from good writing and speaking" (xvi). This inseparability of reading and writing should make for a unitary pedagogy in which literary (or other) texts are seen not as "repositories of 'content'" but as acts of writing (Bartholomae 268). Students can be assigned to "think about what they might *do* with these texts – what they had to add, where their own research and thinking came into play, and what they could learn, as writers, from their reading" (268) in order to encourage students to understand literary texts not solely as things to be consumed. Getting students involved builds on the 'old' idea of having students writing close readings of texts, plus summary and paraphrase, so that they both learn the language of the discipline and also "feel the pressure to speak on behalf of different, even competing interest groups: theorists of narrative, Faulkner scholars, the common reader, readers in school, their generation – and to do so with a sense that there is something at stake in all of this for the writer, personally as well as professionally" (Bartholomae 275).

But it is necessary to qualify what is meant by the personal nature of getting involved: earlier I criticized how personal responses can devolve into an anti-academic pre-critical exercise which leaves students uneducated and the texts unengaged (see page 8). When Bartholomae, Scholes and Booth invoke the personal stakes in textual studies they are in fact arguing that reading is fundamentally political. Worthwhile personal claims on textual meaning made by students emerge from debates they have had with ideas that represent groups and their power interests. Students learn that simply advocating a position is insufficient if it does not engage the text, either as a way of illuminating a position or as a way to articulate it.

This unitary pedagogical approach therefore grants the student a measure of textual power because it puts the student in the nexus of textual, social and cultural contexts, granting them

a meta-vision that allows them to see relationships, developments of ideas, circuits of influence, chains of cause and effect. Moreover, it is a mode of learning that gives the students *work* to do, rather than thinking. Of course, the line between the two activities is blurred, but I stress to them that what they have to produce will be the result of textual busy-work – digging through a passage or two, reading and re-reading it, talking it over with their partners, trying to get to the bottom of it. It shows them, or rather they discover that what we call thinking or academic work is really just a series of procedures in a larger process of knowledge-making or creative construction. It puts the focus on practical steps, and tells students that larger projects, like their graduation theses, are put together in a similar way. But the other great thing is that these procedures all entail discovery – though each step may be small, each discovery nothing great in itself, for the student it represents knowledge gained, and an immediate payoff for the effort.

Attention to textual power gives the students a large degree of responsibility in creating meaning, which in and of itself supplies students with the motivation to learn more. Granting textual power to the students can only come through a reorientation of the goals of literary education. One crucial reorientation involves teachers rearticulating our positions as authorities. The historically sedimented assumption that a professor is the sole authority will take time to shake. A second mode of authority that needs to be questioned concerns the cultural currency of the literature professor, a currency that, in Japan as elsewhere, intimidates students due to the professor subject's assumed mastery of the complexity, difficulty, and depth of any text under the sign of the literary. I have advanced Robert Scholes's arguments about textual power because they focus pedagogical attention on the nexus between a reader's response and the authorities invested in the text and the instructor. There have always been theoretical debates concerning to what degree the text is a fixed thing, and to what extent the reader has power over meaning. The authority of the text is negotiable, as Stanley Fish and Scholes argue. The authority of the instructor cannot be denied outright, yet resting pedagogical practice on it will only deprive our students of the pleasure of literary education.

As Elaine Showalter says in her book *Teaching Literature*, "Attention to pedagogy itself, and to learning theory, could offer a new direction for English studies for the new century. Whether or not we can offer a rigorous definition of 'literature,' we could make teaching it our common cause, and teaching it well our professional work" (24). Other thoughts on teaching range from Gerald Graff's injunction to reconceive our "research in ways that make it more teachable" (*Beyond* 123), to the opposite view, argued by Diana Laurillard, "to find an infrastructure that enables university teachers to be as professional in their teaching as they aspire to be in their research" (qtd. in Showalter 11). As Wilbert McKeachie argues, "the

objective of a course is not to cover a set of topics, but rather to facilitate student learning and thinking” (qtd. in Showalter 24). As Showalter writes, what this means is “coming at the subject from the point of view of the student, rather than the teacher” (25). And I think perhaps the best advice on the matter comes from Stuart Sherman, professor at Washington University, who says, “to prepare a text for teaching is to go back to beginnings, to imagine a student’s first encounter with a text, which of course in large measure means to remember one’s own” (qtd. in Showalter 45).

Unfortunately, too often literature classrooms are organized by a false division between content and form, or information and answer. Paul de Man said it best when he asserted that “literature is not a transparent message in which it can be taken for granted that the distinction between the message and the means of communication is clearly established” (36). The most deadly and dispiriting literature teachers impose readings on students because they cannot be trusted with the sacred work of constructing meaning from a text. From time to time a teacher has to supply some information on a historical context or the like, but otherwise it means force-feeding students readings and interpretations; in the final summation, it teaches students that literature is all about aping the teacher’s attitudes, and it is surely the best way to kill any chance of literary pleasure.

An additional target would be those classrooms organized along specifically theoretical-political lines, in which say, a list of novels is read in order to have the students understand that each text instances a particular hegemonic order, or gender oppression, or is incapable of meaning anything because it is made up of a system of signs which only refers in an endless difference to other signs. As I have already stated, I’m not against theoretical or political criticism. What I am against is a classroom where the teacher has supplied and settled the argument. Like the previous instance it belittles students; furthermore, it robs them of the chance to work through a process of reading, interpretation and criticism that might just reveal to them the unapprehended relations of things.

Textuality may also seem a mundane, ‘working’ approach, a kind of Weberian labor that supposedly frees the student from any dangerous or fruitless flights of imagination. In this view, textuality is a systematic, formalized disenchantment of the text which produces knowledge and skill *because* it prevents fruitless loitering or waiting for an idea to strike. That makes textual studies seem inimical to the goal of revealing the unapprehended relations of things. But this would be a mistaken view: textual studies does not equal dry formalism. Rather, textual studies transcends the formalism anti-formalism divide. It consciously mobilizes the four main traditional branches of the study of poetics.

In other words textual studies is the opening to theory, precisely because it forces readers



to account for the three key elements in the study of poetics, the writer, text, and reader; or if you prefer, sender, message, and receiver. Support for this proposition comes from our unlikely ally Paul de Man, who argues that “resistance to theory is in fact a resistance to reading” (qtd. in DuBois 33) and that there is a historical continuity between New Criticism and theory. As de Man elaborates, to read “is to respond to structures of language,” to “the structure of language prior to the meaning it produces” (33), meaning, in a sense, that at this level of reading all formalisms require theory to make them work. But de Man doesn't leave it at that: like all good theorists he historicizes, plotting theory's genesis at the moment when “the approach to literary texts is no longer based on nonlinguistic, that is to say, historical and aesthetic, considerations . . . [that is] when the object of discussion is no longer the meaning or value but the modalities of production and the reception of meaning and of value prior to their establishment” (33). So here we drift away from New Critical formalism into the possibility of the politics of textual representation, to how textual production and reception encode or register the values that determine meaning.

That is because the effective use of theory as an interpretive tool foregrounds the act of reading in line with the aims of Scholes and Booth's textuality or rhetoric. To paraphrase Terry Eagleton, it is a mode of reading and responding that addresses “the kinds of effects which discourses produce, and how they produce them” (179). Eagleton too prefers to characterize as rhetoric the operations performed under the sign of the plethora of unrelated and competing theories which deal with the indefinable but ideologically charged object called literature. Just like classical rhetoric, textual studies deals with discursive practices as a whole, and its ultimate end is in revealing how such practices are forms of power and performance – performances in language that utilize linguistic and literary devices in the interests of persuading, pleading, inciting, and so on – and performances to which actual listeners or readers responded in linguistic or material form. Discourses, therefore, are seen as embedded in social relations and are unintelligible outside them.

To conclude, it is literature as a social act that ‘only connect’ points to. Isolating literature as privileged aesthetic category does it, and our students, no favors, just as it got Leonard Bast killed. To turn one more time to *Howards End*, what really fires the imagination of Margaret and Helen is a late-night walk in the woods, taken by a bored and frustrated Leonard out of a desperate search for authentic experience. “ ‘You've pushed back the boundaries’ ” exclaims Helen, to which Margaret adds, “ ‘You've not been content to dream as we have – ’ ” (103). Leonard cannot fathom their excitement for what was for him an exhausting experience that leaves him tired, hungry and cold. To Helen and Margaret he seeks to interpret the experience in terms of the books he's read; they ignore his quasi-literary entreaties and applaud the

romance of his vaguely transgressive adventure, in a scene that is another of Forster's unapprehended relations of two things; in this case, reified literary analysis and misunderstood social action. Is Forster writing a literary critique of literary criticism? Leonard's purely aesthetic response to literature as literature stymies social life, and the Schlegel sisters' romanticizing of Leonard's desperate but banal walk blinds them to its meaninglessness. Perhaps he makes these characters talk past each other to make us see that 'only connect' means facing the limits of literary idealism.

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But overuse of cultural material in the language classrooms will constitute problems not for students but also for the teachers and decrease the motivation. McKay identifies three types of cultural materials: target culture materials, learners' own culture materials and international target culture materials. For her, the best one is international target language materials, which supposedly covers a variety of knowledge from different cultures all over the world using the target language (McKay, pp. 9-10). That will most probably increase the learners' interest rather than imposing o... Drama Theorist Emotional Capital Real Child Young Adult Literature Fictional Reality. These keywords were added by machine and not by the authors. This process is experimental and the keywords may be updated as the learning algorithm improves.Â Allison James and Alan Prout (eds), *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood* (London: The Falmer Press, 1990; second edition 1997);Google Scholar. Jane Pilcher and Stephen Wagg (eds), *Thatcher's Children? Politics, Childhood and Society in the 1980s and 1990s* (London: The Falmer Press, 1996).Google Scholar. 8. Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Symbolism is a literary device that uses symbols, be they words, people, marks, locations, or abstract ideas to represent something beyond the literal meaning. The concept of symbolism is not confined to works of literature: symbols inhabit every corner of our daily life. For instance, the colors red, white, and blue typically symbolize patriotism (in America at least), which is why they're the favored hues of political yard signs.Â In *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Hester's seemingly feral daughter Pearl symbolizes the sin that led to her conception. Her difficult demeanor represents the secret at the heart of her existence—that her father is the prominent reverend Arthur Dimmesdale.