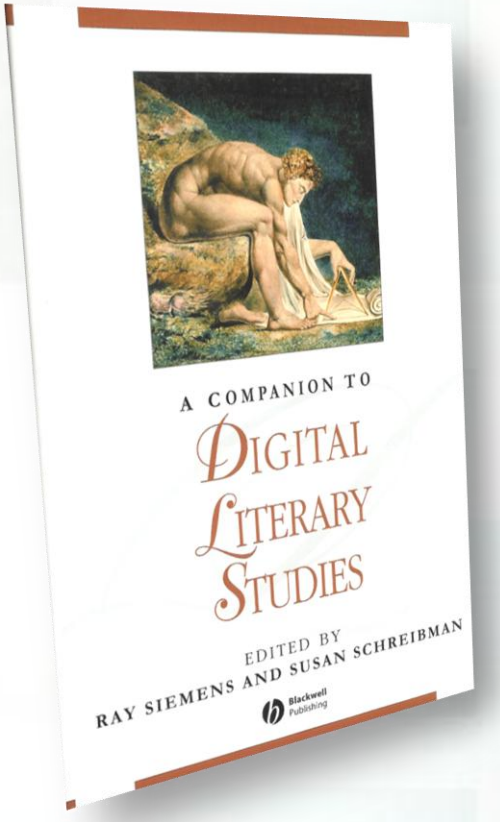
The New Media Encounter +

Alan Liu
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From A. Liu, “Imagining the New Media Encounter,”

Introduction to *A Companion to Digital Literary Studies, ed. Susan Schreibman and Ray Siemens (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007)*



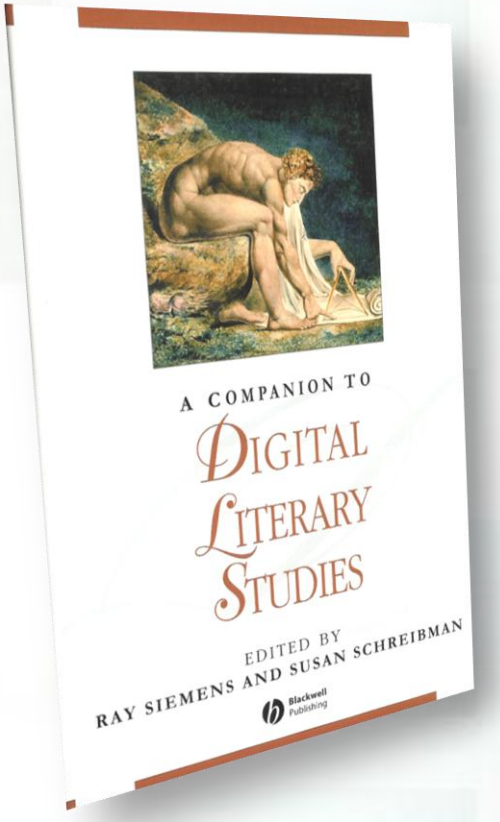
This volume in the Blackwell Companion series convenes scholars, theorists, and practitioners of humanities computing to report on contemporary "digital literary studies." Perhaps the best way to characterize their collective account is to say that it depicts a scene of encounter. *A Companion to Digital Literary Studies* is fundamentally a narrative of what may be called the scene of "new media encounter"--in this case, between the literary and the digital. The premise is that the boundary between codex-based literature and digital information has now been so breached by shared technological, communicational, and computational protocols that we might best think in terms of an encounter rather than a border. And "new media" is the concept that helps organize our understanding of how to negotiate--which is to say, mediate--the mixed protocols in the encounter zone.

But if the *Companion* is an account of new media encounter, then it also belongs to a long lineage of such "first contact" narratives in media history. New media, it turns out, is a very old tale.

To help define the goals of this volume, it will be useful to start by reviewing the generic features of this tale. . . .

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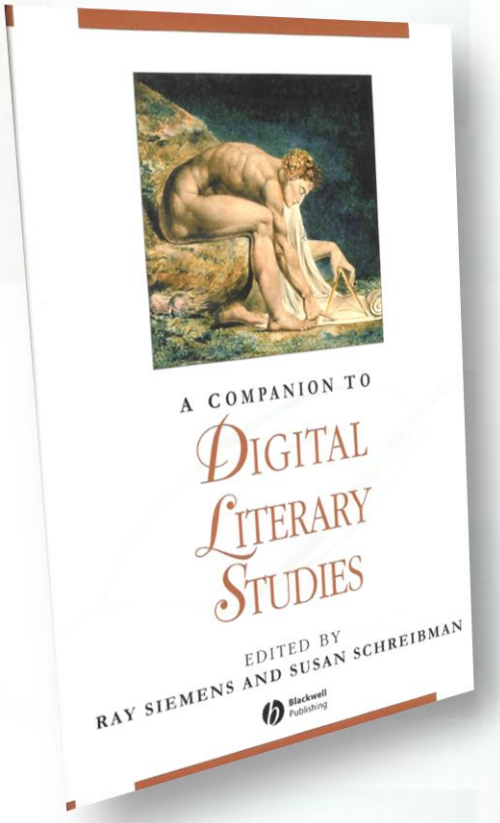
1. *Narratives of new media encounter are identity tales in which media at once projects and introjects "otherness."*
2. *Narratives of new media encounter emplot their identity tale as a life cycle of media change.*
   a) *Media enchantment/colonization*.
   b) *Media disenchantment*.
   c) *Media surmise*.
3. *The life story of the new media encounter plays out in the key registers of human significance*:
   a) *Historical*.
   b) *Socio-political*.
   c) *Subjective (cognitive, psychological, psychosomatic, phenomenological, "personal")*.
4. *When fully realized in their historical, socio-political, and personal entanglements, the identity tales created by narratives of new media encounter are unpredictable.*
   a+ *New media are old; and old media new.*
   b+ *The socio-politics of new media cut both ways.*
   c+ *The subjective experience of new media is profoundly reversible*. (example of “notation”)

Imagining the New Media Encounter

Writing	Encoding
Reading	Browsing
Publishing	Transmitting
Preservation	Migration
Absorption	Immersion
Mimesis	Modeling
Imagination	Simulation

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Narratives of new media encounter

- *Leonard Doob, in his report* Communication in Africa*, tells of one African who took great pains to listen each evening to the BBC news, even though he could understand nothing of it. Just to be in the presence of those sounds at 7 P.M. each day was important for him. His attitude to speech was like ours to melody--the resonant intonation was meaning enough. In the seventeenth century our ancestors still shared this native's attitude to the forms of media. . . .*

  --Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message“

- But when they came to letters, This, said Theuth, will make the Egyptians wiser and give them better memories

  --Plato, *Phaedrus*

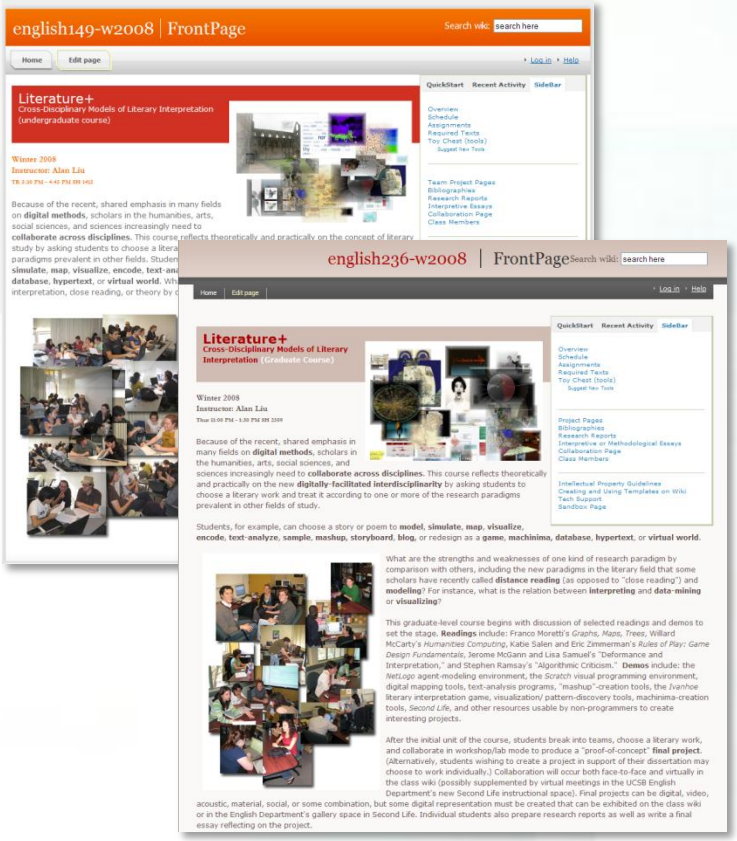
- I handed out sheets of paper and pencils. At first they did nothing with them, then one day I saw that they were all busy drawing wavy, horizontal lines.

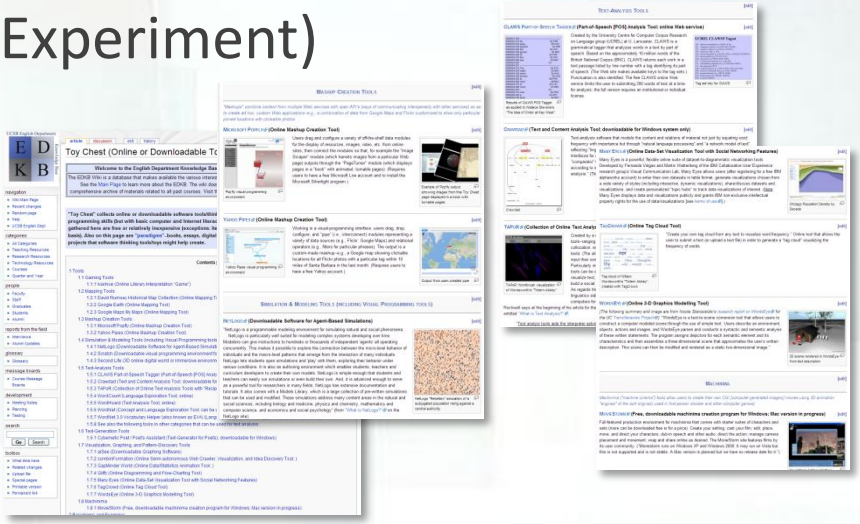
  --Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*

- “Showing seeing. . . . I ask the students to frame their presentations by assuming that they are ethnographers who come from, and are reporting back to, a society that has no concept of visual culture. . . . Visual culture is thus made to seem strange, exotic, and in need of explanation.”

  --W.J.T. Mitchell, "Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture”

“Literature +” (A Pedagogical Experiment)



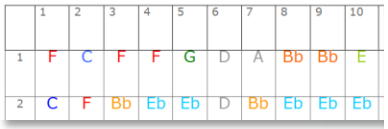


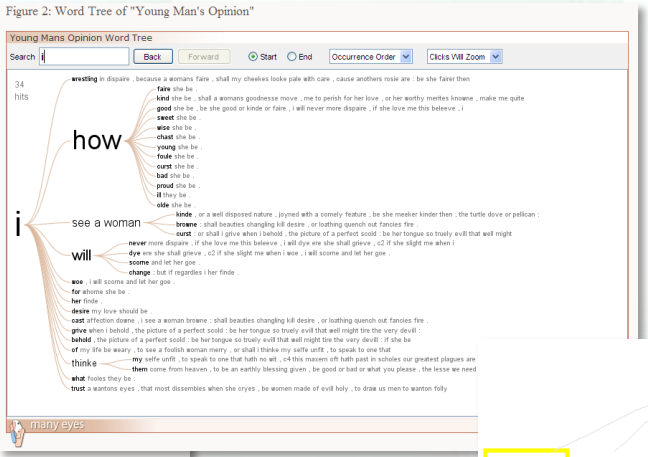
- Digital Technologies & “Transdisciplinarity”
- Readings in Franco Moretti, Willard McCarty, Lisa Samuels & Jerome McGann, Stephen Ramsay, etc.
- “Toy Chest”
- Assignment: choose a literary work and, using digital tech, do anything with it *other* than literary interpretation—e.g., text-analysis, visualization, mapping, modeling, simulation, gaming, social-networking, blogging, artistic uses of databases or spreadsheets, etc.

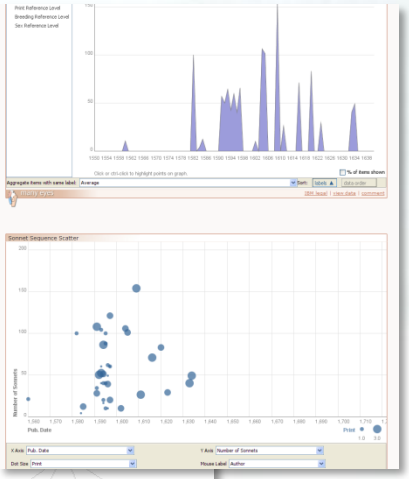
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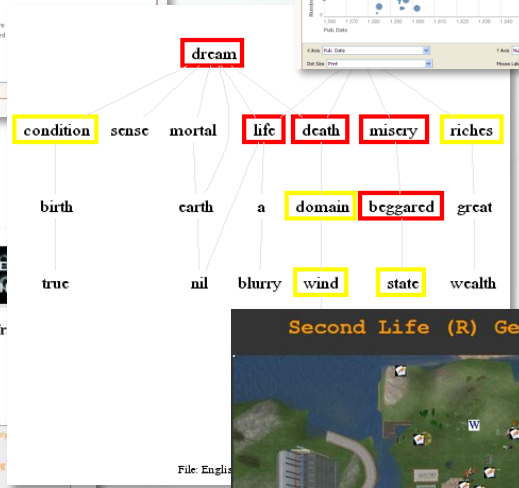
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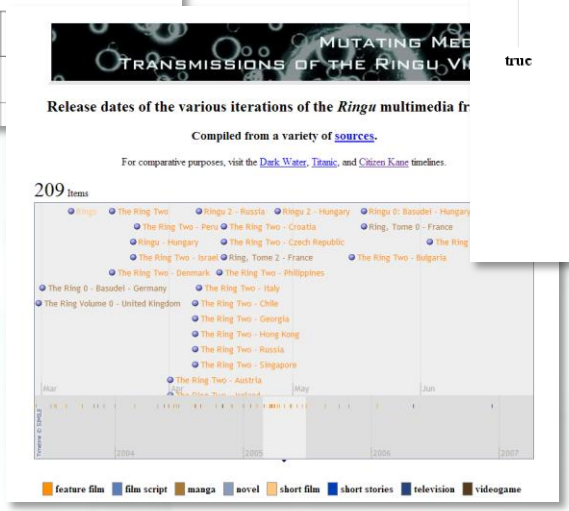














Student Team Projects