

The Future of Narrative Discourse: Internet Constructs of Literacy and Identity

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Anyway, the guys try to be cool. They just lie there and groove, but after a while they start hearing—you won't believe this—they hear chamber music. They hear violins and shit. They hear this terrific mama-san soprano. Then after a while they hear [Viet-Cong] opera and a glee club and the Haiphong Boys Choir and a barber-shop quartet and all kinds of weird chanting and Buddha-Buddha stuff. The whole time, in the background, there's still that cocktail party going on. *All these different voices.* (from Tim O'Brien's "How to Tell a True War Story," 81, emphasis added)

In a place where people from anywhere in the world can meet and use words and images to create story, to recognize and cross boundaries of every sort, we might begin to imagine and tell ourselves anew. (from Carolyn Guyer's "Into the Next Room," 333)

The Internet is reshaping the stories we tell, individually, communally, and institutionally, becoming the technological, multi-voiced embodiment of what Mikhail Bakhtin called heteroglossia. With this multi-vocality comes a need to rework pedagogical, cultural, and institutional parameters. Traditionally, the academy's conception of literacy is one of privilege with constraints placed upon the form and content of writing. Encapsulating this view, David Bartholomae explains that students entering institutions of higher education must, "learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of *our* community" (134, emphasis added). Bartholomae suggests

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that academic literacy is exclusionary. Lisa Delpit concurs, stating, "There are codes or rules for participating in power; that is, there is a 'culture of power.' The codes or rules I'm speaking of relate to linguistic forms, communicative strategies, and presentation of self; that is, ways of talking, ways of writing, ways of dressing, and ways of interacting" (568).

Unlike the small culture of power within the academy, the Internet is a vast sea of different voices where power is fluid. Within this sea, each individual must construct her or his voice and identity in relation to others. This is Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia: "As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is always half someone else's" (293). The interactive nature of the Internet implores social construction, inviting readers into dialogue with writers and making narration fluid as multiple voices engage with each other. As writing and writers are both transformed in this socially constructed space, we must ask: What is the future of narrative discourse?

This volume of essays is an effort to unpack this question. But to understand the necessity of answering this question, we must first begin with our own narrative.

A Starting Point

It was the summer of 1996, and over plates of pasta, the two of us, Gian Pagnucci and Nick Mauriello, began talking about how to teach an online composition course. The Internet was no longer the private territory of the technically gifted, and teachers everywhere were looking for ways to bring it into their classrooms. Our idea was to use the Internet as a vehicle for exchanging student papers. We would post our students' writing on a Web site and then ask students at other universities to read the papers and send responses. That fall Nick took up the idea in earnest and eventually created the College Writing Peer Response Project (Mauriello).

In the early days of the project, students at Indiana University of Pennsylvania traded academic papers with students in Kansas, Minnesota, and Alaska. These were traditional argumentative essays, which the students wrote about current political or social issues. The students received a lot of feedback, and seemed to enjoy having readers from other states. On the other hand, the students often complained that the papers weren't that interesting due to their lack of personal voice and detail.

Slowly our project grew and students from Florida and New York City began contributing writing to the peer response project. At the same time, our university was expanding its technological resources, and we found ourselves now able to offer Usenet discussions and chat rooms to the students in the project. These technologies encouraged dialogue among our students, who began asking each other questions about what it was like to grow up in different parts of the country. Seeing what was happening, we encouraged our students to write more complete personal narratives which would hopefully further open this cultural exchange. We began posting these stories at the Web site in the spring of 1998. Our students wrote about winning sports events, losing friends in drunk driving accidents, struggling to lose weight, falling in love, and all the other topics which were impacting their personal lives as the next millennium approached.

The students argued about their experiences, wrote notes of encouragement, and asked each other for help. What we saw develop was a writing community, but one that broke down geographic limitations. Our students' stories of driving on snow-covered Pennsylvania roads were new experiences to the students in sun drenched Florida. Similarly, the students who wrote about moving to the United States from Puerto Rico explained that New York City was a place of hope, not the crime-filled world portrayed in media accounts. In short, trading stories online became a real education in diversity, and our students told us they were learning new cultural perspectives. From this Internet project, we saw a community built through Web narratives.

But there were also problems. Our students showed us that there were a range of issues connected with Web-based narratives. Three of the major issues were online literacy, hypertextual narrative properties, and cyberspace identity.

The College Writing Peer Response Project encouraged our students to spend large amounts of time on the Internet. As our students became experts at surfing the Web, they also learned the most common genre schemes (Smith) of online literacy. Unfortunately, Web-based writing often seems to run counter to the type of literacy traditionally valued by the academy. As Hesse explains, Internet-style writing is generally "terse, mostly single-draft, often composed in immediate response and not repose, dependent on pathos and humor to a much greater extent than usually sanctioned by essayist literacy" (34). Thus even as we were encouraging our students to write for the Web, we were also finding ourselves concerned about the type of writing they were plac-

ing in this very public venue, a venue where parents, colleagues, and administrators have access to the writing and may judge it as academically illiterate. What emerged was a conflict over writing style, with traditional academic notions of literacy on the one hand and what Faigley and Romano say students now demand on the other, a literacy which is “relevant to the twenty-first century and not the nineteenth” (57).

Along with the problem of online literacy, as students posted their writing on the Internet, they also began giving it hypertextual narrative properties. Our students embedded their stories with pictures, sound clips, and hypertext links. Bolter comments that “such multimedia texts are by no means the death of writing. A hypermedia display is still a text, a weaving together of elements treated symbolically. Hypermedia simply extends the principles of electronic writing into the domain of sound and image” (27). However, this definition of text becomes problematic when viewed through the lens of traditional academic literacy. For instance, on the Internet it is easy for a reader to click on an embedded hyperlink and begin reading some other writers’ words, never returning to the original author’s story. This lack of closure runs counter to conventional understandings of the structure of a strong argument or story. As J. Yellowlees Douglas explains, “It is no coincidence that critics such as [Peter] Brooks, Frank Kermode, and Walter Benjamin insist on closure as an essential component—perhaps *the* essential component—in narrative poetics. Contemporary concepts of ending and closure derive some of their authority from the earliest written example of poetics, Aristotle’s simple definition of story as an aggregate of beginning, middle, and ending” (160). In other words, hypertexts work against established views of writing and reading. They also require writing instructors to begin making both aesthetic and technical assessments of their students’ works. Can or should an essay which relies heavily on pictures for its argument be graded in the same manner as an entirely text-based essay? Likewise, do instructors downgrade an essay which contains a malfunctioning sound clip or a broken hyperlink? And how much class time should a writing instructor devote to such technology-based problems, especially if this means displacing other writing activities (Mauriello, Pagnucci, and Winner)?

Clearly, our students’ stories weren’t like any other kinds of writing we’d received in the past. Within the diverse writing community we had created among students at different campuses, many students revealed intimate portraits of their lives. In fact some seemed to welcome an opportunity to unburden themselves.

Some students wrote tragic stories about being victims of abuse, and were glad to find kindred souls who offered support and resource suggestions. One of our students, though, wrote and posted a story about her problems with her ex-husband, then later she asked us to remove the story from the Internet because she was afraid it might be used against her in a custody battle for her daughter. Still other students told us they were altering facts in their stories because they were frightened by media accounts of Internet stalkers.

Given the very personal and private nature of many of our students' stories, we decided it might be important to allow students the option to conceal their identities via pseudonyms. In fact, Romano reports that pseudonyms help create gender equity online. In a study at the University of Texas, she had observed that:

When gender became topical in [online discussion] sessions conducted under 'real' social identities, the subjects placed under severe interrogation usually were women. Male students frequently antagonized female students by essentializing their behaviors, and it would become incumbent upon women to accept, refuse or ignore the category 'women,' or to challenge the undesirable characteristics assigned to the category before speaking from within it. (255)

In the face of these problems, Romano found that using pseudonyms created a more equitable environment online. However, using pseudonyms can lead to other problems and distortions of identity. When our students chose pseudonyms like Jewel and Hey, Beer Man!, their new identities often distorted how their papers were read (Pagnucci and Mauriello). Nakamura adds to this concern, describing how in some online environments, people choosing Asian, African American, or Latino identities are received with hostility (183). Finally, Hawisher and Sullivan caution us about the gender problems associated with online identity choice. They claim that because the Web and the physical world are both filled with stereotyped imagery of women, when women go online, "old identities like those of the 'pin-up girl' or academic talking head are reproduced, and traditional narratives are re-created with new technologies" (288). Inherent in this mix of research is uncertainty over online identities. The problem for educators in cyberspace is how to accommodate identities, both virtual and real, while resisting the traditional imbalances of race, gender, and class.

A Very Large Question

For us, posting stories on the Internet was the key to successfully building a diverse community of learners. However, it was also fraught with dangers, uncertainties, and unbroken ground. Online narratives intersect literacy, technology, and identity, highlighting possibilities and problematics. This leaves us with a very large question: **What is the future of narrative discourse?**

The Problem

But how do we begin to answer this question? Certainly it was too complex for us to handle on our own. The problem, though, we soon discovered, was that the question was also too complex for our academic structures. When we turned to narrative theorists, like Bruner, Paley, Schank, and Trimmer, we found a body of research on the nature of narrative ways of knowing. These scholars help explain why storytelling had been such a meaningful act for our students. But these scholars have little to say about technology.

Other scholars were busily studying online writing. While the work of Selfe and Hilligoss, Lanham, Hawisher and LeBlanc, Landow, and others tries to unpack what happens when students write electronically, they rarely focus on narrative writing.

And though the political and cultural concerns of literacy scholars such as Brandt, Heath, Gee, and Shannon are just as problematic in an online community, these scholars have generally not considered technology's impact on literacy.

The future of narrative discourse is so complex a question that it seems beyond the scope of individual areas of traditional research. Our academic disciplines, structured as they are around principles of dissection (Dewey), help us only to atomize the problem, not to view it holistically. To fully understand our question, we needed to integrate the work of seemingly diverse groups of scholars. We needed to find the intersection of narration, technology, and literacy. We had to create an academic heteroglossia where voices from multiple disciplines could meet, blend, and construct new understandings.

Academic Heteroglossia

The academy is structured to keep us isolated. We work in separate departments, go to separate conferences, publish in different

journals. We seldom work together and everyone competes for limited resources. In *Invention as a Social Act*, Karen Burke LeFevre argues that Platonic views of writing teach us to prize individual genius over socially created knowledge. She says this view of invention has become a central belief in Western modes of thought. Brodkey, Lunsford and Ede, and Dale also discuss the way collaborative work, particularly collaborative writing, is viewed negatively within the academy. They say our institutional value systems, embodied in systems of promotion and tenure, but also visible in teachers' practices, force us apart. In other words, we learn not to work together.

The school of social constructionism has argued against this isolationist value system. Vygotsky, for instance, in his research on learning and the zone of proximal development, argued that "With assistance, every [person] can do more than he can by himself" (187). Bruffee, likewise, tells us that "to think well as individuals we must learn to think well collectively—that is, we must learn to converse well. The first steps to learning better, therefore, are learning to converse better and learning to establish and maintain the sorts of social context, the sorts of community life, that foster the sorts of conversation members of the community value" (640). Unfortunately, anti-collaborative forces continue to be entrenched within the academy.

To resist this problem, scholars have begun calling for a rethinking and reworking of the academy's disciplinary structures. In the *University in Ruins*, Bill Readings says, "I propose an abandonment of disciplinary grounding but an abandonment that retains as structurally essential the *question of the disciplinary form that can be given to knowledges*. This is why the University should not exchange the rigid and outmoded disciplines for a simply amorphous interdisciplinary space in the humanities" (177).

Readings' proposal seems particularly relevant when studying the future of narrative discourse. As Riessman tells us, "The study of narrative does not fit neatly within the boundaries of any single scholarly field. [It is] inherently interdisciplinary" (1). Phelan and Rabinowitz also argue that for narrative scholarship to move forward, it has had to resist current boundaries: "*Fiction* has been expanding its borders, invading the space formerly controlled by other signifiers. Indeed, the borders have been changing in at least two ways at once. First, border-crossings have become bolder and more frequent . . . Second, the location of the borders has also changed" (3). Pagnucci makes a similar claim for technology studies, "We must also try to foster the breaking down of traditional

academic barriers. Technology encourages us to integrate knowledge rather than isolating it" (52).

In the face of these calls to rethink disciplinary structures, we turned to Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia as a way of re-seeing the academy:

Heteroglossia is a situation, the situation of a subject surrounded by the myriad responses he or she might make at any particular point, but any one of which must be framed in a specific discourse selected from the teeming thousands available. Heteroglossia is a way of conceiving the world as made up of a roiling mass of languages. (Holquist 69)

Bakhtin views the world as a swirling sea of voices. He cautions us against those authoritarian forces which seek to limit the voices we can hear, and instead advocates allowing all voices to speak. It is only in dialogue with other voices that we can create understanding: "Dialogism is the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood, as a part of a greater whole" (426).

Our own idea, then, for rethinking disciplinary boundaries was to bring the voices of many different scholars together in a kind of academic heteroglossia. By providing an opportunity for narrative theorists, technology scholars, and literacy researchers to enter into dialogue, we hoped to create new understandings of the future of narrative discourse. Rather than having these scholars remain in their isolated academic areas, we hoped to create an interdisciplinary community where we could collaboratively explore our research question.

The Project UNLOC Story

In the summer of 1998, we set about building this new academic heteroglossia. We began contacting scholars in the areas of narrative theory, technology studies, and literacy. While no scholar's work can be placed into a single category, we could identify individuals who were making substantial contributions to our three areas of interest. As we talked to people about our idea, we faced two challenges. First, we had to explain how the question of the future of narrative discourse required an interdisciplinary research approach. Second, we had to convince people that it was possible to tackle this problem through a collaborative process. Of course,

we also faced the more mundane problems of making contact with busy scholars and convincing them to take on another project.

In most of our conversations, the difficulty of integration was evident. Some people told us, "well, of course I've looked at a lot of technology theory, but I really haven't studied narrative much," while other scholars worried that they wouldn't know enough about technology to fit into the conversation, lamenting that they were not up to speed with the latest developments. One of the things we had to stress was our goal to create a dialogue among new groups of people. For instance, at the *Computers and Writing Conference*, one finds mainly technology scholars, but our goal was to put these scholars into a conversation with the kind of people who might attend Joseph Trimmer's NCTE *Narration as Knowledge Conference*. Conference organizers naturally specialize to attract an audience, but this has the unfortunate result of also eliminating important groups of people from the discussion. In the end, most people reacted with enthusiasm to our idea, even if it took some persuading, and many scholars not only accepted our invitation to the project but suggested other colleagues who might also want to join.

Beyond the work of explaining to people how they might contribute to our project, we were also trying to reshape our academic working style. We created a long-range plan for researching the future of narrative discourse that was designed to break us out of our isolated work spaces and encourage collaboration. A simple outline of our plan looked like this:

- * Fall of 1998—Hold a working symposium to raise initial questions and issues concerning the future of narrative discourse. The chief goals of this symposium were to encourage collaboration and community building.
- * Winter of 1998-1999—Hold online discussions of the key issues raised at our opening symposium. To do this, we planned to use new online discussion software called CITE created by David Stephens.
- * Spring of 1999—Hold a closing symposium where people would report on the research for our project and help us consider the design and organization of our *Works and Days* journal issue.
- * Spring of 2000—Publish an edited collection about the future of narrative discourse.

People reacted in a variety of ways to our collaborative approach. While some thought this was a fantastic way to encour-

age connections among the final essays, others were quite skeptical. One person said, "Sounds like an awful lot of work to go through just to put out a journal issue."

To further encourage this mixing of academic voices, we took some deliberately collaborative steps in carrying out our project. Rather than asking people to present formal papers at our opening symposium, we asked people to create what we called 'design sketches' which raised general issues and questions about the future of narrative discourse. While we encouraged people to bring their own scholarly work to the table, we also wanted to keep everyone's thinking open. We also scheduled large and small group discussion time for our symposium, rather than formal presentations. Again, we hoped this would lead to a collaborative opening of our central research question.

We found that this unconventional approach was quite unsettling to people because it changed the nature of our working relationships with each other. Rather than staying on safe and familiar scholarly ground, we were asking everyone to engage in an open dialogue. This was unwieldy at times, with people arguing, asking each other questions, and trying to get the floor. It was, in other words, the academic heteroglossia we had sought, a place where voices could mix and new ideas could emerge.

Because we were working to break down many of the traditional barriers to academic research, we eventually nicknamed our effort Project UNLOC: Understanding Narratives, Literacy, and Ourselves in Cyberspace. The name emphasized the intersection of our three central concerns, but also spoke to the need to open ourselves to new possibilities for conducting scholarly work.

While Project UNLOC has led to the physical volume you hold in your hands, we also hope our project will be a model for other people desiring to rethink how scholarly work is conducted. We hope others will take up our call to make research a more collaborative effort, one that crosses disciplines and mixes voices.

The Future of Narrative Discourse

This issue of *Works and Days* is an exploration of the Future of Narrative Discourse. As an attempt to survey the terrain of that future, our authors have identified six potential paths, drawing patterns of narrative and visual, pedagogy and possibility. Together we've come to understand that predicting the future of narrative is uncertain, but as David Schaafsma tells us in the forward to this volume, "It seems to me that in the end, [my son] Sam's story can

serve as a small example of what it may be crucially important for us to tell and hear, in our homes and as we meet in bars and restaurants to share our lives, but also in academia, stories with consequences, stories where facts are but the tip of an iceberg, stories that nudge us to go deeper." It is this sentient condition, the human narrative, which binds us together, and so even in the digital age we must continue to investigate the place of narrative within the academy.

We begin this issue with **Tales of the Digital Self**. By telling stories we define ourselves. This struggle to understand who and what we are is even more amplified on the Web where identity is almost liquid. As Sibylle Gruber tells us, "online presentation and offline life are closely intertwined, creating symbiotic relationships that help construct virtuality and reality." Gruber takes us through an analysis of one woman's Web site, exploring the discourse this woman uses to resist traditional representations of female identity. What is at issue is the ownership of identity—because the Internet allows so many to tell their own stories, this digital landscape is constructed through the struggle for identity. Or, as Lisa Gerrard notes, "For this reason feminist Web sites subvert oppressive visual depictions of women. The story they tell is the opposite of passive submission to the gaze of others; it's about the power to define oneself and to appreciate oneself and other women." For these authors, the future of narrative discourse is thus a conflict over self-definition, a battle to resist definition and control by others. Ellen Barton and Radhika Gajjala likewise explore this narrative struggle for identity, examining how the Internet figures into the resistance narratives of those labeled as disabled or third-world.

The authors of our second section, **Mosaics of Narrative Optometry**, picture how stories will be told in the future. We have grouped these articles under the theme optometry not only because many of these future narratives look so radically different from those of the past but also because visual elements—form, image, movement—heavily influence the nature of storytelling in a digital world. Myka Vielstimmig directly explores this issue of visual/artful composing, looking at the history of her/his own publications, the composition fields' acceptance of such visual work, and the struggle to design meaning and re-present nonlinear and collaborative composing processes. Vielstimmig's essay challenges the reader and the academy, both in terms of content and form. But while we may have the possibility to change the forms of our narratives, not everyone is capable, yet, of understanding those changes. Susan Katz and Lee Odell take up this problem, offering

a guide to the bewildered teacher trying to “assess the strange documents students are now producing.” They offer a number of established rhetorical strategies for analyzing digital narratives, reminding us that “we have some common ground to stand on as we not only foster innovation, but also teach students to use these new [technological] tools carefully and gracefully.” The other two essays in this section, one by Mary Hocks and another by Michael Blitz and Louise Krasniewicz further sharpen our view of these new narrative forms. Hocks calls upon us to rethink our understandings of literacy and narrative as we move further and further into a culture dominated by electronic visual imagery. Blitz and Krasniewicz explore the boundaries between human and machine, thought and dream. Discussing an extensive Web site they created about Arnold Schwarzenegger, Blitz and Krasniewicz explain that because hypertext narratives radically decenter and fragment the point of view in a story, “the challenge for artists in the new media is to create ever-more imaginative navigational structures that allow—encourage—those who engage these media-works to discover—and make—new and wondrous revisions to their own categories of thought.” Taken together, these articles pursue the potentials and consequences for technology to make storytelling a re-visioning process. The future of narrative discourse for these writers, then, is one of changing our sight, an optometric task of looking at the age-old art of storytelling from new vantage points.

In **Pixels of Heroes and Heroines**, we re-connect the future of narrative discourse to its literary roots, specifically with considerations of the writers Charlotte Bronte and James Joyce. The tradition of literary research and criticism is rich and deep. While this terrain is also highly politicized and rightfully contested, of specific interest to us is placing the future of narrative discourse on a continuum which includes the literary past. This is just what our authors Myron Tuman and Todd Rohman and Deborah Holdstein do. Tuman attempts to map the change in our understanding of time. He contrasts the slow, deliberate love-letter-based romance of the Bronte heroine Lucy Snowe with the frantic-paced weekend lovers in Milan Kundera’s novel *Slowness*. For Tuman, the central issue is the impact of technology on narrative and “what happens to storytelling in a world of infinite presents, a world where planning and memory, anticipation and regret, all seem unnecessary.” Tuman laments our ability to tolerate, let alone enjoy, delay, the very basis of Lucy Snowe’s love affair. He illustrates how we have entered “a new world order . . . not of readers but of viewers, each with an index finger poised on fast-forward.” While for Tuman the

digital age marks a change in our understanding of time, Rohman and Holdstein claim that the digital age “signals an epistemological fracture in the way we and future generations track down information, communicate, and assemble meaning.” They ground their discussion of this change in an examination of the body of criticism built up around Joyce’s *Ulysses*, noting that the “textual wanderings, narrative fragmentation, and uncertainty” of this work mirror the Internet and make the novel a natural for translation to hypertext. Rohman and Holdstein discuss a course where students studied *Ulysses* online and note several benefits to this computer-based pedagogical approach. At the same time, they use *Ulysses* to teach students that the Internet is not a complete revolution in human thought: “well before the development of the Internet, *Ulysses* was regarded critically as an anti-narrative, a text integrated into a multilingual, multinational pool of metanarrative, simultaneously exploring the life of one day, but comprehensively addressing virtually every aspect of human society.” The authors in this section urge us to consider why we may remember, preserve, and continue to take meaning from particular stories while others disappear into the dust of our past.

There was a time when we might have said the future of narrative discourse was obvious: it was hypertext. But that claim has slowly been challenged. In the section **Texts of Hyper-Possibility**, we offer a series of articles which seek to deepen our understanding of the narrative dimensions of hypertext. James Phelan and Edward Maloney, for instance, explore narrative progression in Stuart Moulthrop’s hypertext *Victory Garden*, showing that in many ways hypertext is no different from sophisticated print narratives. And Richard Higgason discusses the ways hypertexts control readers, running contrary to the claims for hypertext’s liberation of the reader. Higgason demonstrates how hypertext authors continue to maintain control of their texts, at times due to the constraints of hypertext authoring software but also through authors’ uses of hidden spaces within these hypertexts. In discussing Michael Joyce’s story “Twelve Blue,” Higgason shows how the reader of this hypertext is “not completely free to wander. Instead, we find that while the author has opened the gates to the garden, he has also laid out pathways, complete with ‘Keep Off the Grass’ signs.” Higgason claims the hypertext reader’s sense of freedom is really a myth, that “there may be multiple pathways, but the access is still ultimately controlled by the author.” Higgason tells us this means a reader can never truly ‘finish’ reading a hypertext, an idea Johndan Johnson-Eilola picks up on as he describes his repeatedly failing

efforts to complete his reading of Michael Joyce's hypertext *Twilight: A Symphony*. Johnson-Eilola takes us through his own hypertext reading experience, unpacking the struggles and confusions of that process and showing us how, ultimately, he not only learns to make meaning from the hypertext, but also achieves a new understanding about the function of narrative and the value of multiple meanings and open-endedness.

With these authors raising so many different challenges, questions, and arguments about hypertext, we are perhaps fortunate that our final essay in this section is co-written by two of the pioneer hypertext scholars, Michael Joyce and Jay David Bolter. Since their seminal works on hypertext from over a decade ago were so pivotal for creating academic interest in this writing medium, it seems appropriate that these two scholars should return, together, to a reconsideration of hypertext scholarship. In their essay, Bolter and Joyce not only reflect on their early research into hypertext but also describe their current work helping filmmakers in Germany create 'interactive spaces.' Their article lays out "a three-part taxonomy of interactive spaces, installation, exhibition, and presentment . . . [and suggests] that three planes of interaction sit over them like layers, the plane of potentiality or the script, the plane of participation or the interface, and the plane of presentation or the viewer's experience." For Bolter and Joyce, interactive spaces are 'post-narrative' and 'post-hypertextual,' sites where the real world and the fictional world directly impact each other. In considering the impact of hypertext on the future of narrative discourse, then, a central concern remains the ability for writers and readers to connect with each other, for words to somehow bring us into each others' worlds, each others' stories. Hypertext remains an intriguing technology for connecting the readers and writers of narratives.

While it is important to consider the forms narratives will take in the future, it is equally important to consider how these stories will be taught. This is the issue our authors take up in **Stories from Wired Desktops**. Shaun Murphy and Jean Clandinin explore how administrative policies about educational technology impact the landscapes of a rural primary school near Alberta, Canada. As Murphy and Clandinin tell and then re-tell stories of teaching with technology, they slowly unpack a wide range of beliefs and attitudes about technology, showing how teachers shape and reshape both themselves and the policies created to direct their educational efforts. Their narratives show the often unexpected and uncertain results that occur as technology policies are implemented by hard-working teachers. Patricia Webb Peterson is also concerned

about how the narratives we tell about technology shape us. She explains “the idea of technology, that is, the narratives of technology, has a crucial impact on our conceptions of ourselves, whether or not we are actively using a particular technology at that time.” Webb Peterson worries that we are overly impacted by such stories because of the expressivist approaches often used to teach students about narrative writing. She therefore offers some alternative approaches for teaching students about narrative through online techniques. Finally, Stephen Gance and Samantha Caughlan give us the direct stories of two classrooms, analyzing the discourse of students participating in two semesters of an online graduate education seminar. Gance and Caughlan unpack the cultural assumptions imbedded in the dialogue students engage in online, the metaphors they use when speaking there, and the stories they tell about themselves in cyberspace. Of particular interest is the tension they find online between academic and personal/narrative discourse styles. Gance and Caughlan increase our awareness of how cultural attitudes, such as those that devalue narrative ways of knowing, maintain dominance online. The kinds of stories teachers and students tell, the ways they tell these narratives, and the kinds of classrooms and schools in which these stories are told and studied all have a direct impact on the future of narrative discourse. These forces all shape what we understand narratives to be and how and why we use them. Issues of pedagogy thus remain central to understanding narrative’s future.

We move into the realm of the political in **Views of Technology and Virtual Spaces**. Technology offers the potential to retell our stories, to stake out new ground and new identities. But as one of our articles asks, “Why do some stories, people, and places make it into cyberspace, and why don’t others?” This question raises the issues of power and privilege connected to our use of the Internet. Who does the Internet empower and who does it disempower? Whose cultures are celebrated in cyberspace and whose are silenced? Our authors ask these broad questions and then crystallize them in narratives of the displaced and the disowned. Whether it is South American rebels using the Internet to resist oppression or homeless people in Chicago eeking out a few dollars by desktop publishing an underground newspaper, the collective challenge our authors set for us is to consider ways to make technology responsive to the many social and cultural inequities which surround us. As one of the articles here tells us, our challenge is “to hear the suppressed narratives, to document the experiences of students, community literacy center patrons, tutors and

teachers who seek both face-to-face contact as well as measured promises about technology.” This is a difficult task and if our authors offer any real solution, perhaps it is just this: we need to work together. Collaboration seems a key to wrestling with these complex concerns which explains why this section of our issue includes not one but three lengthy, collaboratively written essays. The two individually authored essays in this section are likewise concerned with the Internet’s potential for bringing people together in a public sphere or, as one of the essays states, the “quality of stabilizing and sustaining human life through public disclosure” on the Web. All of these essays seem to be saying that collectively we might find solutions to problems which baffle us individually. This is very much the spirit with which Project UNLOC was conceived, and the essays here simply amplify our belief that the future of narrative discourse lies in academic heteroglossia.

We conclude our issue with **Critical Reflections on Project UNLOC**, an attempt to examine the success and failure of our work to create an academic heteroglossia. To this end, Gerardo Contreras has contributed a comprehensive, interdisciplinary bibliography bringing together the voices of scholars in narrative, technology, and literacy. We hope that our project can serve as a model for other groups of scholars, but for that to be true, we need to share not only our dreams and theories about this effort but also our mistakes. As Christina Haas and Kathryn Weiss point out in an analysis of data collected during the Project UNLOC symposia and online discussions, “‘People do what they know’—and what they know has a powerful, conserving effect on how—and even whether—academic work can be refigured in the 21st century.” Haas and Weiss’ analysis highlights the limits and often frustrations of academic collaborations. By interviewing project participants, they help us to understand the very real problems involved with creating a scholarly community. Yet for all these difficulties, this volume of *Works and Days* stands as a first step in creating academic heteroglossia and as a road-map to the future of narrative discourse.

Works Cited

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I

Tales of the Digital Self

*Intersections of Narrative,
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