

Judith Summerfield
Cheryl C. Smith
Editors

Explorations of Educational Purpose 11

Making Teaching and Learning Matter

Transformative
Spaces in Higher
Education

 Springer

Judith Summerfield

Cheryl C. Smith

Editors

Making Teaching and Learning Matter

Transformative Spaces in Higher Education

This volume captures the spirit of collaboration and innovation that its authors bring into the classroom, as well as to groundbreaking undergraduate programs and initiatives. Coming from diverse points of view and twenty different disciplines, the contributors illuminate the often perplexing debates about what matters most in higher education today. Each chapter tells a unique story about creating vital pedagogical arenas that have the potential to transform teaching and learning for both faculty and students. These exploratory spaces include courses under construction, cross-college and interdisciplinary collaborations, general education reform initiatives, and fresh perspectives on student support services, faculty development, freshman learning communities, writing across the curriculum, on-line degree initiatives, and teaching and learning centers.

All these spaces lend shape to an over-arching, system-wide project bringing together the often disconnected silos of undergraduate education at The City University of New York (CUNY), America's largest urban public university system. Since 2003, the University's Office of Undergraduate Education has sponsored coordinated efforts to study and improve teaching and learning for the system's 260,000 undergraduates enrolled at 18 distinct colleges. The contributors to this volume present a broad spectrum of administrative and faculty perspectives that have informed the process of transforming the undergraduate experience. Combined, the voices in these chapters create a much-needed exploratory space for the interplay of ideas about how teaching and learning need to matter in evolving notions of higher education in the twenty-first century. In addition, the text has wider social relevance as an in-depth exploration of change and reform in a large public institution.

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EXPLORATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE

Volume 11

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In today's dominant modes of pedagogy, questions about issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, colonialism, religion, and other social dynamics are rarely asked. Questions about the social spaces where pedagogy takes place – in schools, media, and corporate think tanks – are not raised. And they need to be.

The *Explorations of Educational Purpose* book series can help establish a renewed interest in such questions and their centrality in the larger study of education and the preparation of teachers and other educational professionals. The editors of this series feel that education matters and that the world is in need of a rethinking of education and educational purpose.

Coming from a critical pedagogical orientation, *Explorations of Educational Purpose* aims to have the study of education transcend the trivialization that often degrades it. Rather than be content with the frivolous, scholarly lax forms of teacher education and weak teaching prevailing in the world today, we should work towards education that truly takes the unattained potential of human beings as its starting point. The series will present studies of all dimensions of education and offer alternatives. The ultimate aim of the series is to create new possibilities for people around the world who suffer under the current design of socio-political and educational institutions.

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Erratum to: Tempo and Reading Well

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p. 219:

Epigraph 1 author citation details that reads

–*R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge University Press, 1982); Preface §5*
is incorrect.

the correct version should read

–*Nietzsche, Daybreak, Preface §5*

Epigraph 2 author citation details that reads

–*Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale*
in On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo
(New York: Vintage Books, 1967); Preface §8
is incorrect.

the correct version should read

–*Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, Preface §8*

p. 220:

Epigraph 3 author citation details that reads

–*Michael Henry Heim,*
(New York: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 51
is incorrect.

the correct version should read

–*Milan Kundera, The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

p. 223:

Last line appeared as part of email which reads

The response came:

“Indeed, but it is summer; you’ll probably have to wait.”

I did. And it was well worth it.

is incorrect.

The correct appearance of the last line should be

The response came:

“Indeed, but it is summer; you’ll probably have to wait.”

I did. And it was well worth it.

In footnote note 9, the last row which reads

... time rather than extends it. There is even further concern that our.

is incorrect.

the correct version should read

... time rather than extends it.

p. 233

The first row of final paragraph which reads

In subsequent semester, when the assignment ...

is incorrect.

the correct version should read

In a subsequent semester, when the assignment ...

p. 235

In footnote note 31, the first two rows which reads

³¹There is an internal reference to this note. If the notation is added for the initial epigraphs, the internal ref. to note 30 will need to be modified. A development that might potentially change the ...

is incorrect.

the correct version should read

³¹A development that might potentially change the ...

Chapter 12

Tempo and Reading Well

Christa Davis Acampora

It is not for nothing that I have been a philologist, perhaps I am a philologist still, that is to say, a teacher of slow reading:—in the end I also write slowly. . . . For philology is that venerable art which demands of its votaries one thing above all: to go aside, to take time, to become still, to become slow—it is a goldsmith’s art and connoisseurship of the word which has nothing but delicate, cautious work to do and achieves nothing if it does not achieve it lento. . . . this art does not so easily get anything done, it teaches to read well, that is to say, to read slowly, deeply, looking cautiously before and aft, with reservations, with doors left open, with delicate eyes and fingers . . . My patient friends, this book desires for itself only perfect readers and philologists: learn to read me well!

—R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge University Press, 1982); Preface §5

An aphorism, properly stamped and molded, has not been “deciphered” when it has simply been read; rather, one has then to begin its exegesis, for which is required an art of exegesis.

—Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale
in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*
(New York: Vintage Books, 1967); Preface §8

Our day-to-day life is bombarded with fortuities or, to be more precise, with the accidental meetings of people and events we call coincidences. “Co-incident” means that two events unexpectedly happen at the same time, they meet: Tomas appears in the hotel restaurant at the same time the radio is playing Beethoven. We do not even notice the great majority of such coincidences. If the seat Tomas occupied had been occupied instead by the local butcher, Tereza never would have noticed that the radio was playing Beethoven (though the meeting of Beethoven and the butcher would also have been an interesting coincidence). But her nascent love inflamed her sense of beauty, and she would never forget that music.

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Whenever she heard it, she would be touched. Everything going on around her at that moment would be haloed by the music and take on its beauty. [...] human lives are composed [...] like music. Guided by his sense of beauty, an individual transforms a fortuitous occurrence (Beethoven's music, death under a train) into a motif, which then assumes a permanent place in the composition of the individual's life.

—Michael Henry Heim,
(New York: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 51

The shoving and bumping begins as the train speeds into the station. Thick knots of bodies amass at doors. Pools of other bodies swell outside. The moment the doors crack open, the two groups merge in a swarm. And as soon as those leaving the train break free, they begin to run. Fast. It's a scramble down the shallow steps, swing around the corner, and then drop into the sea of bodies churning on the platform. "Is that the 'R' or the 'N'?" "Hold it! Hold it!" Slam.

When I moved to New York City to take up my job in the philosophy department at Hunter College, one phenomenon struck me as especially curious: When transferring from one subway train to another on an entirely different platform, people would run even though they couldn't possibly know whether their train was coming into the station; there's no set schedule to follow. They run *just in case* there's a train to catch, just in case there is an opportunity to be missed. And this characterizes much of the activity in New York City. Hurry hurry wait.

Students in my classes experience this daily—sometimes three, four, or even five times each day if they are also working, caring for children or other family members, or traveling significant distances to reach the skyscraper "campus" of Hunter on New York's upper east side. And once inside, the rhythm slows to an increasingly frustrating pace as tens of thousands of students and faculty attempt to race from one class to the next only to be thwarted by broken escalators and elevators that mysteriously never seem to return to the ground floor. It is this sense of pace, tempo, expectation, and anticipation that students bring to our classroom and to their academic experiences more generally.

As a specialist in Nietzsche's philosophy, I have the good fortune of teaching materials that many students are already inclined to *want* to read. And, at least at the beginning of the semester, almost all of them seem to complete the reading assignments. This desire to read Nietzsche does not always translate into actually reading him very well, of course, and so I see it as one of my primary tasks to teach precisely *this* over the course of the semester—*reading well*. The development and enhancement of this very capability is why *I* read Nietzsche—reading his works challenges me to become a better reader of all sorts of other texts, a more careful, more critical thinker, and occasionally a better writer.

But the rub is this: While Nietzsche himself is a superb writer, and while reading nearly anything he writes can be a genuine pleasure and even a delight, such joy at times is confined to the sentence or the aphorism rather than his whole texts. It is much easier to race away from his works ready to quip one of his brilliant barbs or recount one of his devastating critiques that condemn whole systems of thought than it is to do the work he describes in *Daybreak* in the epigraph above. It is a trite observation but nonetheless true to say that the *lento* pace he emphasizes is

simply out of joint with much of modern life, and this is even truer for us than it was for Nietzsche. Most planning efforts, especially for my students in New York City, are organized around realizing *speed*—figuring out how to do *more* in the *fastest possible way*. We have all sorts of gadgets to assist us with this, including tools that ironically take more time to operate than their potential efficiency savings (consider the inordinate waste of time that can be spent arranging a lunch meeting with a colleague via e-mail as compared with simply stepping next door or calling on the phone to make the appointment when you can both simultaneously consult your calendars and reach agreement).

Who among us has the time, patience, or wherewithal to follow the other part of Nietzsche's injunction to proceed "cautiously"? What he suggests seems rather dissatisfying: "looking . . . before and aft." *What? You really expect me to re-read this? Maybe even three or four times?*¹ And "with reservations, with doors left open. . ." *Won't you please just tell me what it all means? "[W]ith delicate eyes and fingers. . ." Do you have to make such a big deal out of everything?* Modern demands for speed, ease, and efficiency are inconsistent with Nietzsche's expectations.

Some have recently suggested that new technologies that have emerged in response to these demands not only short-circuit opportunities for more deliberative reflection of the sort Nietzsche cheers, but actually "rewire" our brains, in effect making us "stupid."² *Is screen-reading really reading? Aren't all of those pop-up windows and hyperlinks just distractions? Doesn't the ease of accessing information encourage students to "settle" for whatever they find first?* But for this class, I have developed an assignment that requires students to practice *reading well* while creating hypertext media to be shared with and engaged by future generations of students. The goals include exploiting the interactive features electronic media offer to extend and transform the boundaries of space and time that ordinarily define the classroom, their roles as students now and in the future, and the texts they read and engage.³ The assignment asks students to identify and isolate the "gems" they find in Nietzsche and then to connect them to others through hyperlinks and extensive commentary. In this case, I have found the speed and immediacy of the Internet to be absolutely essential to the execution of the assignment, though it has mixed results, as I elaborate below. The remainder of this chapter largely focuses on reflections on tempo in reading and learning in the transformative space of the Internet-enhanced classroom.

¹I also give more "old fashioned" assignments, including recitation in which I ask students to read sections of Nietzsche's texts aloud. One student found this activity so helpful and stimulating that she recorded these sessions on her iPod and would listen to them on her long subway rides each day.

²Nicholas Carr, "Is Google making us stupid?" *The Atlantic Monthly* July/August 2008: <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200807/google> (Accessed July 15, 2008). Similar views, focused on children and youth, are expressed by Mark Bauerlein in his *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future (Or, Don't Trust Anyone Under 30)* (New York: Tarcher, 2008).

³On the interactive possibilities of electronic media in education, particularly the potentially transformative nature of hypertext, see John McEneaney, "Agent-Based Literacy Theory," *Reading Research Quarterly* 41:3 (2006): 352–371.

Worries abound that the increasing popularity and use of electronic media of all sorts, including games as well as news and entertainment sources available on the Internet, are ruining the habits of reading required to truly understand a text as well as wrecking havoc on the attention spans of readers and researchers of all ages. This debate has reached a peak in recent years with national reports abounding. For example, the National Endowment for the Arts released a study that concluded that reading is significantly in decline as people replace reading literature with engaging various electronic media.⁴ But others point out that the increased use of electronic media has resulted in people, particularly children and young adults, reading *more* rather than less; it is simply that what they are reading and how have changed.⁵ Preliminary reports on the shifts in the sites of reading on the development of reading comprehension capabilities tend toward the negative. And worries go beyond whatever it is that school children are (or aren't) doing. Some have focused on how electronic media are changing the nature of academic research and writing, claiming that on the whole users are "promiscuous, diverse and volatile" in their information gathering habits.⁶

A significant problem with this whole debate is that we don't actually know the effects of "screen-reading"; that is, whether the sheer circumstance of reading on a screen rather than reading a bound book makes a difference in reading comprehension, because few have bothered to study it rather than merely speculate about it.⁷ The fact of the matter at this point is that some *assume* links, popping windows, and talking pictures distract a reader, but we do not know whether this is necessarily true or whether intelligently designed and integrated electronic media, much like their quality counterparts in bound volumes, *enhance* thinking and learning through enriching engagement.⁸

⁴*To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence*, Research Report #47 (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Arts, 2007).

⁵James Gee, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*, revised and updated edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

⁶"Information Behaviour of the Researcher of the Future," Centre for Information Behaviour and the Evaluation of Research (CIBER) team, University College London, January 16, 2008, p. 9. Such "gathering habits" are also examined by Bill McKibben in *The Age of Missing Information* Expanded edition (New York: Random House, 2006) in which the author reviews more than 1,700 h of programming available on cable television, comparing it with "unmediated" experiences in nature.

⁷Thus, I doubt the hunch implied by of the authors of the NEA study on reading, *To Read Or Not to Read*, that "screen reading" might not only follow different "consumption" patterns but also effect "the development of young minds and young readers" (*To Read Or Not to Read*, p. 53). The authors acknowledge: "there is a shortage of scientific research on the effects of screen reading." Their 'hunch' is conveyed in how they designate the potential area of research. Only parenthetically do they comment that, "A good research question is whether the hyperlinks, pop-up windows, and other extra-textual features of screen reading can sharpen a child's ability to perform sustained reading, or whether they impose unhelpful distractions" (*ibid.*).

⁸One dimension of this debate hinges upon whether or not such media are actually *integrated*. Studies demonstrating the negative effects of multi-tasking on cognitive efficiency (not to mention vehicular safety!) have gained much attention in popular as well as academic texts.

Although it is unstated in the literature, I suspect the prejudice against speed is at least partially linked with a misplaced association of effort and value. There is concern about the value of information acquired with ease as though there was value in the actual labor of brick-and-mortar research. Of course, it is the case that judgments formed on the basis of weighing a variety of evidence are more substantial and authoritative, but one could hardly claim that a scholar's work is any less valuable because she accessed all of her materials through JSTOR and annotated them with a PDF overlay that she then exported in writing up her results rather than digging through the library archives to locate, photocopy, and mark up the same, later typing her notes in a word processor. Again, I am merely pointing to this implicit bias against speed and ease, not reducing all complaints to it.⁹

A common concern reverberates throughout what I have called the "alarmist" studies and opinion pieces: A significant culprit in any real or possible deficit that comes from reading and researching in cyberspace lies in the *tempo* of it all—the premium on *speed*, many think (and Nietzsche would have likely agreed), is simply ruinous.¹⁰ The case study that forms the basis of this chapter makes a simple suggestion that challenges this assumption: Speed is not necessarily problematic; moreover, the capability of modulating speed is inherently necessary for achieving temporal *variability* (thus, not simply replacing what might require slow deliberation). I suggest this capacity for flexibility more than ponderously plodding, potentially enhances rather than diminishes comprehension and creative and critical thinking.

As a young assistant professor of philosophy in a huge institution, craving community and eager to get to know my colleagues outside my department, I dashed off a quick e-mail one summer to the chairperson of the music department. I was getting ready to teach an undergraduate seminar in my area of specialty for the first time and I wanted to give students a little more background.

Do you have anyone in the department who has research interests in opera, especially Wagner? I'm teaching a seminar on Nietzsche, and I would like to help the students gain some appreciation for what the young Nietzsche saw in Wagner when Nietzsche wrote his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*.

The response came:

"Indeed, but it is summer; you'll probably have to wait."

I did. And it was well worth it.

⁹This bias is evident in the otherwise interesting work of Maryanne Wolf in *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007). Wolf emphasizes that the development of literacy provided opportunities for reflection and innovation (both neuronal and cultural)—it allowed human beings to "think about thinking," providing a "secret gift of time to think" (p. 221). Wolf curiously locates the *space* of thinking and reflection on the physical printed page as the *place* for such extension of thought to occur as she repeatedly and baldly asserts that screen-reading somehow "inhibits going beyond the text" (p. 225). Part of this seems to be linked with "relatively effortless internet access," which she inexplicably thinks *robs* (reflective) time rather than extends it. There is even further concern that our

¹⁰See for example, "Information Behaviour of the Researcher of the Future," Centre for Information Behaviour and the Evaluation of Research (CIBER) team, University College London, January 16, 2008.

My colleague at Hunter College, Richard Burke, graciously agreed to meet with me, learn about my course, and become acquainted with its goals. Burke generously offered to rearrange his hectic schedule of teaching, rehearsals, and auditions so he could meet my class during one of our regular sessions. We went to his space, a well-equipped music room with virtually every imaginable form of media at his fingertips in the media panel. Richard introduced a simple but grand idea: Wagner changed the way people thought about and experienced music. In opera, he made *music itself a character* rather than just an accompaniment, and this is part of what the young Nietzsche recognized in him.

Richard organized the entire class to illustrate this idea. He played various pieces of music, treating us to a fascinating microhistory of modern European music and an overview of the development of opera. His examples were very well chosen. With extraordinary clarity and precision he helped us all understand the musical innovations Wagner achieved, the way in which they changed how people thought about music as such (and not just opera), and how this intrigued the young Nietzsche, who was similarly grappling concerns about the limits of language and how other expressive forms such as music might be relevant. Wagner's major innovation (at least in his use on a large scale) is, as previously mentioned, the way in which he created what was specifically *musical* drama by turning music itself into a character. In this way, music could realize as well as challenge certain narrative structures of meaning that had been the province of language. His chief way of doing this is through his use of an elaborate and extensive repertoire of *Leitmotive*.¹¹

Wagner (1813–1883) did not *invent* the *Leitmotiv*—Beethoven (1770–1827) experimented with it and likely suffered criticism for it¹²—and others had used related techniques of theme and variation. Berlioz (1803–1869) had envisioned and explored its possibilities before Wagner.¹³ What was distinctive in Wagner's work was the incredibly rich tapestry he created through weaving a dizzying number of *Leitmotive* together. Arguably, what Wagner “invented” was the distinctive *musical structure* that conveyed meaning through the use of all those *Leitmotive*¹⁴ to the point that one could credibly assert that it is such complex webs themselves that are *what* Wagner's opera are about and not the particular details of any of the stories.

Thus, we have an abundance of scholarship and critical aides for listening to Wagner that take the form of detailed catalogs of *Leitmotive*. Such tools can be helpful for identifying some of the elements of Wagner's work and thus direct listeners' attention in ways that might be helpful for understanding the nature and goals of the

¹¹“Leitmotiv” is a German word, which is why it is italicized here. It sometimes appears in English-language texts as Leitmotif. The plural form of the German is *Leitmotive*, which is how I state it here.

¹²On criticism, see R. T. Llewellyn, “Parallel Attitudes to Form in Late Beethoven and Late Goethe: Throwing Aside the Appearance of Art,” *The Modern Language Review*, 63, No. 2 (Apr., 1968), pp. 407–416.

¹³Munro Davison, “The Earliest Use of Leitmotif,” *The Musical Times*, February 1, 1928, p. 159.

¹⁴Carl Dahlhaus and Mary Whittall, “Wagner's ‘A Communication to My Friends’: Reminiscence and Adaptation,” *The Musical Times* Vol. 124, No. 1680 (1983): 89–92.

composition, but the risk of reducing the work to a catalog of its elements is certainly there, and it ought to be resisted. What Wagner achieved was the combination and blends of these elements into a *moving* and complex whole, something to be experienced *as a whole*, and not merely a vast composite or pastiche.

The students and I were awestruck by Richard's lecture. Before our meeting with him, we had been lumbering along through Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. It is a tough sell, since students typically have little knowledge or experience of ancient tragedy or modern opera, and they might have little familiarity with music other than popular music. But they were thoroughly animated about their course materials after Richard's impressive performance—he had made both the music and the core idea come to life. He helped us all to grasp, effortlessly it seemed, how Wagner moved music from program to protagonist. We could suddenly see how Wagner drew on the vitality, the liveliness of music itself to advance the ideas of his works. In just one short hour, we could all *see* and *feel*, rather than just notionally consider, how this was an exciting development in music that was rich with possibilities for further reflection and experience.

Weeks after Richard spoke with us, the class was discussing Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*. It was the second text on our syllabus. Students took delight in its pithy aphorisms and one-liners, but they were finding it more challenging than the *Birth of Tragedy* insofar as there seemed to be less of an argumentative line or coherent narrative that brought all of those aphorisms together. Our class discussions were halting and difficult for me to handle; students were all over the place in their comments. Sometimes I wondered whether we were discussing the same thing at all—students weren't engaging in much discussion *with* each other; each had her or his own "favorite" to share, almost always just *with me*. Over the years, I have noticed that even those who read Nietzsche carefully and thoughtfully can have difficulty articulating their ideas for others in class discussions. It is almost as though Nietzsche has addressed them in so personal a way that they struggle to find a way to communicate it. I labored to get students to connect their ideas with those of their classmates, then suddenly a hand shot up.

"Oh!! I've got it!" Rachel exclaimed.

"Yes?" I replied, weary but hopeful. "What?"

"This book . . . Nietzsche. It's the *Leitmotiv*! Nietzsche's writing this book as if it were music, as if it were something like Wagner's music."

Instantly, I could share Rachel's insight. It had just never occurred to me to approach the text in quite this way. Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1871), while full of praise for Wagner, in no way resembles Wagner's music, and by the time Nietzsche wrote *The Gay Science* (1882, expanded in 1886), he had broken off his relationship with Wagner and publicly renounced him. It is not just the aphoristic style that motivates the comparison with the *Leitmotiv*—Nietzsche had published volumes of aphorisms before writing *The Gay Science*—this book is distinctive in the way in which it returns to ideas, forges unexpected links between aphorisms, and then draws on these connections to deepen meaning.

Rachel's insight was both original (I have yet to encounter any discussion of this in the mountains of scholarship on Nietzsche) and rich with possibilities. Most

importantly, Rachel's intuition was one that the class could immediately share. She went on to show how various themes were recurring, developing, getting situated in different contexts, and seemingly disappearing only to reemerge in a new way. Suddenly, the book took on a whole new meaning for all of us—it was transformed and so were we as a class, since we now had a common agenda. More importantly, I think it transformed our senses of ourselves as readers, teachers, and learners of these texts as we were drawn into the text's composition and realized our new orientation.

The first change that was evident was the shift in the class dynamic. Moved by Rachel's spark every student was suddenly interested to make the kinds of connections she suggested were there to be made. They changed from readers passively waiting for me to put it altogether to seekers and composers of interesting blends of ideas. The tempo and rhythm of our class changed from plodding and at times chaotic to energetic, engaged, and genuinely interactive. I felt similarly transformed, no longer the ringmaster of 20 individual performers but rather more of a matchmaker of ideas, who could occasionally stand back and admire the offspring of these couplings. Our classroom became a place where *things happened*. I arrived, as did the students, with the expectation that *something new* would occur during our time together—not simply a transmission or transaction but a creative production for which we might share responsibility.

Significantly, it bears repeating, these transformations occurred in an instant (*ein Augenblick*). It was not a gradual and arduous metamorphosis. Quickly and easily we grasped Rachel's idea and understood we had more potential as readers of this text. And we were eager, hungry for more.

The beam of Rachel's bright idea about the *Leitmotive* radiated through at least a few more class meetings. A newfound spirit of responsibility and opportunity animated our discussions. I was eager to capitalize on this interest and did not want to see it fade when we turned to the next book on our reading list, which had a very different organization, Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–1885). It was in that context that I formulated an assignment called "Reading Well," which had the main goal of furthering that sense of learning in the form of composition.

The main goals of my Nietzsche seminar—and in my view, any of the seminars offered by my department at that level—are to teach advanced reading, thinking and writing skills and strategies. Rachel's "'ah ha!' moment" was born of thought that enhanced our reading, and which I wanted to put into practice in writing. To facilitate students' appreciation for the *Leitmotive* in Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*, realizing Rachel's remarkable insight, and to allow them to incrementally build on each other's work, I decided to create a hypertext document, calling it "HyperNietzsche."¹⁵ Here is how I reformulated the assignment:

Assignment: As we move beyond reading Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*, I shall assign particular sections of that book and others that follow to each of you to develop an extensive reading to share with the class. To facilitate sharing, each student is asked to create a

¹⁵Simultaneously, a different "HyperNietzsche" was forming in cyberspace: <http://www.hypernietzsche.org>. See note 30 below.

hypertext document that includes extensive commentary, links to relevant pictures and other documents of interest, and which highlights how the passage resonates with other parts of Nietzsche's work. Collaboration is key: at least one of your links should be generated cooperatively with another student in the course. This work will form the basis of class discussion, so get started right away and strive to make continuous work in progress. Think of your hypertext constellations as webs of connections that you are able to draw. The more you think and learn about Nietzsche, the more your web will grow. It might also take on a different shape altogether, so you do not have to think of it as simply amassing more and more "facts" or details. Your goal is to think of it organically and in relation to our class discussions and the web creations of your colleagues.

Be sure to follow Nietzsche's advice about reading well—carefully consider how passages are related to what precedes and what comes after them, how they are related to other ideas in Nietzsche's works and those of other philosophers, and the questions they aim to address.

I thought a hypertext would be a good way to build on the *Leitmotive* insights of the class, because it would allow students to identify a theme, elaborate it, and link to various places in the main text and others in which it appeared. One way of regarding the hypertext might be as a sculpture, insofar as it is a creation that has a certain kind of depth as well as extension. Depth can be achieved through the kind of layering of texts possible with a hypertext. As students gather resources—other works by Nietzsche and other contemporaneous documents—they are able to discover, excavate, and perhaps even reinforce the foundations of what they are reading and trying to understand. They can also work to extend these ideas by connecting them to those of others in the scholarly commentary as well as among their peers. (I also note that I experimented with archiving work of the class, with student permission, and allowed subsequent generations to build on this work, further extending the opportunities for discussion and peer engagement.) Thus, a hypertext facilitates the creation and articulation of thought that operates on multiple levels and registers, and while good traditional "hard copy" papers can do the same, they are nevertheless bound by different limitations of space and time that make it difficult to achieve on the same *scale* what the hypertext web gathers and potentially organizes.

I pause to take note of my own writing here—when talking about the use of hypertext and prospective applications of online social networking for course-related writing, I emphasize the *potential* use of this tool. Critics and those particularly vexed by the rise of information technologies point out that the sparse evidence we have on Internet usage and educational outcomes suggests that while students *might* engage in the kinds of activities I imagine, by and large they *do not*.¹⁶

¹⁶A survey of current literature on this topic is offered in Terry Anderson, "Towards a Theory of Online Learning," in T. Anderson (ed.) *Theory and Practice of Online Learning* 2nd Ed. (Edmonton Athabasca University Press, 2008) pp. 45–74 (accessed through Google Books, November 2, 2008). However, the Pew studies suggest that high school students, at least, do make frequent use of the Internet for academic purposes, but that their usage differs significantly from what they do when supervised by a teacher. See the Pew Internet & American Life Project (<http://www.pewinternet.org/>). They published the first national study of teen use of the electronic media in relation to civic engagement. See "Teens, Video Games, and Civics," Amanda Lenhart,

It does not necessarily follow, however, that the fault here lies on the technologies or its users. Just as students require elaborate and repeated guidance in the use of brick-and-mortar library resources, they need guidance about the use, digestion, and presentation of knowledge they acquire through electronic resources;¹⁷ it is the job of educators and educational institutions to show students how this is so and to provide the necessary resources, particularly for the sort of assignment I created. So encouraging bad habits is not a design flaw in my assignment, but a serious problem does lurk there. Further reflection on the *Leitmotive* brings this to light.

My earlier analogy between the hypertext and sculpture was problematic. If we consider what was supposed to be Wagner's achievement in his use of *Leitmotive*, we recognize that the *Leitmotive* realized their dramatic qualities, at least in part, as the engines of *temporal movement* in the compositions—their developments took on dramatic qualities, and that is how the music could become a character (or multiple characters) itself. The vitality of this movement is crucial since otherwise *Leitmotive* could be reduced to the catalogues of instances or appearances, which is a popular way to approach Wagner's music.

The webs of Wagner's *Leitmotive* are not sets of coordinates; they are inherently *temporal* rather than primarily *spatial*. A *Leitmotiv* does not occur in any particular place or at any precise point or set of points in the musical work. Rather, its location is temporally relative, and it pervades the music and defines and directs the *movement* of the piece—it *lives* and comes to life *in time*. This is precisely what Richard Burke's lecture had conveyed and made palpable by his brilliant examples. Isolating or atomizing the *Leitmotiv* kills it and entirely diminishes its power. By asking students to identify *Leitmotive* in Nietzsche's works and link them throughout the text, I courted the danger of reducing the text to these connecting points extracted from their context. The commentaries that students were assigned to write were supposed to mitigate this threat and help them see that there was *more* rather than less to these *Motive*. Part of that surplus, what superseded merely the names of the *Motive*, is the way in which the *Leitmotive* contribute to the overall flow of the music. Recent work in philosophical aesthetics, metaphor theory, and cognitive science links this very quality to the meaning of music in contrast with musical theory modeled on theories of language.

Mark Johnson argues that it is music's ability to powerfully move us that gives it a felt sense of meaning, one that need not rely on a text for its meaning. What

Joseph Kahne, Ellen Middaugh, et. al. (Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project, September 16, 2008) 76p. Document no: 202-415-4500.

¹⁷ But the alarmists worry about this as well. The digestion of a five-year study of "ubiquitous" use of search engines in research, which analyzed "the digital evidence that millions of scholars leave behind them when they search e-journal databases, e-book collections and research gateways" worries that librarians are at risk: "there is a real danger that the library professional will swept aside by history, as relevant to twenty-first century Britain as the hot metal typesetter" ("Information Behaviour of the Researcher of the Future," p. 9). I worry that in simply analyzing digital trails, these researchers are blind to what subjects actually collected and how they comprehended it along the way. Thus, I'm skeptical about their conclusion.

accounts for this movement is the way in which “music orders our experience using tone quality, pitch, meter, rhythm, and other processes that we feel in our bodies.”¹⁸ Against the “music as language” conception, Johnson argues that “music is meaningful because it presents the flow of human experience, feeling, and thinking in concrete forms—and this is meaning in its deepest sense.”¹⁹

This view of music as experience of a flow in which the *qualities of the connections* facilitate the meanings reaches further in its explanatory power than the conception of music as language, in which the meaning of language is derived from its referential power. But music does not refer in the same way, to the same degree, and with the same kind of complexity of which language is capable. And yet, our own experiences with music, regardless of whether they are of opera, classical music, or pop, are that music can be extraordinarily powerful and deeply meaningful. How should this be possible if music is seemingly impoverished in its referential capabilities? Johnson continues, “The meaning in and of the music is not verbal or linguistic, but rather bodily and felt. We understand the meaning of longing, desire, expectation for better things to come, and so on. We cannot convey it verbally but it is nonetheless meaningful, and it is enacted via our engagement with the music.”²⁰

It is this *engaging* that I think accounts for the transformative power of music and its potency for transforming learning spaces and the space of reading and interpreting texts when we come to appreciate their musical qualities. Of course, our classrooms, like all of our experiences, have temporal rhythms, and literature and reading surely share in the same. So, I am not necessarily suggesting that we *add* music to our classes in order to add this dimension of meaning-making to classroom learning; rather, I am suggesting that bringing forward the temporal-musical dimensions of what is already there, making these explicit, and perhaps consciously experimenting with alternatives could enhance opportunities for learning and student engagement.

More precisely, what occurs in this engagement is a blending and weaving of images that can be conceived as “patterns by which the contours of our understanding take shape and undergo transformation.”²¹ According to Johnson—who develops research he has done with his colleague George Lakoff, distilling convergent evidence from a great variety of disciplines²²—these draw on primary, basic “source” metaphorical structures that emerge from our physical experience in the

¹⁸Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007) p. 236.

¹⁹Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*, p. 236.

²⁰Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*, p. 242.

²¹Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*, p. 243. This idea is similar to John Dewey’s conception of experience and learning and what he calls “consummatory experiences”. See his *Art as Experience in the Later Works of John Dewey*, Volume 10, 1925–1953: 1934, *Art as Experience* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008).

²²See G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) and G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

world, including dominant spatial and temporal experiences.²³ The combinations that music can achieve in this process are what account for the distinctive ways in which music can be meaningful. This is quite clear in the case of *Leitmotive* in which it is precisely the development, expansion, and association of ideas, their *blends* and their occurrence within the blend of the whole that are their substance. And this conception of musical meaning bears out intuitions we find in Wagner's music and Nietzsche's philosophy, namely that music somehow conveys ideas beyond what is expressible in language, that it *enhances* understanding rather than falls short of it in its failure to be meaningful in the same way that language is.²⁴ Music facilitates the coincidence of otherwise seemingly disparate elements, and the result is an expansion and enhancement of meaning.

Recent research in human development as evident in the archeological record and psycholinguistics suggests that conceptual blending might very well be one of the most important developments in human capabilities and accounts for the explosion of creative activity and cultural development in the past 50,000 years (an astonishing pace in evolutionary terms).²⁵ If conceptual blending is one of our distinctively human characteristics and intrinsically linked with our creative and cognitive capacities, and if music is particularly facile in its blending capabilities, which is suggested by its relative freedom from the specificity of reference found in language, then music is an extremely powerful medium for human expression and exploration. By explicitly adding *music* to text and word, we potentially tap this power. That, I believe, is what Nietzsche endeavored to do, and thus *tempo* was exceptionally important to him.

Nietzsche was trained as a classical philologist, and thus he had a deep interest in history and culture as well as language and philosophy. His early philological work focused on dating texts and examining them for spurious passages, work much like that of his colleagues, but he came to see the task of vital scholarship as contributing to *interpreting* these texts, rather than merely documenting them, and situating them in their cultural and psychological contexts. The art and science of philology, he felt, had not prepared him for that, and developing a more suitable approach became one of his lifelong projects. So Nietzsche was preoccupied with the kind of reading that would amplify possible meanings of texts. He was interested both in

²³As he elaborates the "primary" and "source" metaphors that are essential to music, Johnson draws on extensive research in metaphor theory and cognitive linguistics. "Temporal motion" is the basis of "Musical Motion" as Johnson charts it. Research on the metaphoric character of thought in various forms, including mathematics, has been led by George Lakoff and a host of others. For example, see G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); G. Lakoff and R. Nunez, *Where Mathematics Comes From: How the Embodied Mind Brings Mathematics into Being*. (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

²⁴Of course, poetry seeks to achieve this aim, too, insofar as it strives to enhance possibilities for meaning by drawing on the musicality of language.

²⁵See G. Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

what texts might mean to and for their authors (though this was less his concern) and in their value for those who read them. And since he was writing at a time (the second quarter of the nineteenth century) when various technological devices were speeding up much of modern life and scholarship (Nietzsche marveled at the typewriter and owned a “writing ball” briefly before he gave it up since he apparently could not figure out how to use it²⁶), he was concerned with the *tempo*, among other things, that reading well entailed. Certainly, those who have watched the changes in information technology that have occurred during the last quarter of the twentieth century can sympathize with Nietzsche’s concern.

In addition to speed, Nietzsche was apprehensive about ease, accessibility, and certainty or finality. The decision to endeavor to read well certainly negatively impacts productivity conceived in terms of quantity, which is another way in which it can be at odds with the preferences we cultivate in our modern technosphere. It is also hard to get the hang of it and to do it alone. We do not all come at it equally up to the challenge; it is an art. And it requires a certain curious admixture of skepticism and confidence: “looking cautiously before and aft, with reservations” all the while maintaining a willingness for “doors left open.” Finally, it is worth underscoring that Nietzsche describes himself as “a teacher of slow reading”. His works have a propaedeutic feature of *teaching readers how to read, transforming them* into those who can exercise this art. And this is at least as important if not more so than the other *Lehren* or “teachings” it offers readers.

In devising the “Reading well” assignment for my Nietzsche class, I was particularly concerned to create opportunities for students to acquire appreciation of these features of his work and actually to try to practice them. It is somewhat ironic, then, that the assignment turned out to be possible only because of developments in information technology and electronic communications media that allow for a certain transformation of the spatial and temporal boundaries that are part of the traditional course.²⁷

The “timely” dimensions of the assignment are considerable. Theoretically, the activity I am describing could take place in the “real time” of the class: Students could write up briefs of their research; someone could make copies for everyone in the class; students and I could make comments on these reports and return them

²⁶See Christian J. Emden, *Nietzsche on Language, Consciousness, and the Body* (University of Illinois Press, 2005), pp. 27–29; and Dieter Eberwein *Nietzsches Schreibkugel* (Berlin: Typoskript Verlag, date unknown). For some more extended discussion of the relation between writing technologies and thinking, see Darren Wershler-Henry, *The Iron Whim, A Fragmented History of the Typewriter* (Cornell University Press, 2007). Had Mr. Carr (“Is Google making us stupid?” above) done a bit more research, all of which could have been accomplished on the Internet, he would have easily realized that claims of others upon which he relies in asserting that Nietzsche changed his writing style considerably (from essay to aphorism) when he briefly used the typewriter are simply false.

²⁷On the effects of speed and immediacy of information on our ability to *read* and process what we see, consult Maryanne Wolf, *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007).

to their authors the next week; and then the authors could revise in light of the comments so that they could submit another draft, and copies of these could be distributed to all members of the class for further review. The process I've described would unfold over the course of 3 weeks, and it should be emphasized that that is under ideal circumstances. Students would receive feedback on what they wrote even as the class continued to make progress. But ideas can become "stale" over such periods; student interests and foci can change. There is value in the immediacy of electronic media. It can be a powerful means of communicating *where* a reader/student wishes and *when* a reader/student wishes.²⁸ Assistance and feedback can be provided precisely when students need it: as they are developing their problems and concerns, and not when they have moved on to the next topic or set of considerations. The assignment also facilitates what might be called "bridging the gap" in student preparation, which theoretically also makes it appropriate for both the graduate and undergraduate audiences, since students learn not only with but also from each other, and potentially across generations when the source materials and commentaries are archived and recycled.

That conceptual blending of the sort I have described might be amplified by the creation of hypertext webs might seem reasonable, but what about the temporal dimensions? Doesn't my assignment undermine precisely what Nietzsche thought was essential, namely the *lento* character of thinking? I do not think this is necessarily so; moreover, I think that it is a hasty and unwarranted assumption to believe that all productive thinking must necessarily proceed at a snail's pace (or slower).²⁹ If there can be a musicality to thinking that can also be evident in texts, then we would expect temporal variation to be significant, which would include both the *lento* and the *allegro*. Hypertexts do not necessarily but *can* do both—they can quickly transport readers from one idea to another, from one place in the text to another; and they can force us to slow down, drill deep, and examine ideas with exquisite attention to detail. Thus, I think they can be a powerful means to tap the transformative powers inherent in music and words. That this might not often be evident in what we find on the web or what we learn of teenagers' habits merely suggests that we do not yet have maestros of this medium.

²⁸This is compatible with the "just in time and on demand" model of service delivery that emerged in the corporate world and has been applied to learning or "knowledge on demand." But in the case of the latter, one need not think consider the concept solely in terms of accessibility, speed, and ease of access (although these, too, might have widespread social implications). Adaptation of this expression for education links exploiting the capabilities of electronic media to facilitate more personalized and individualized learning, allowing a student to easily acquire information, of the sort that is needed just as and right when it can be most useful. The science of learning suggests that this, in fact, is how we learn best. See James P. Gee, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*, pp. 138f, 211.

²⁹If this were a paper on Nietzsche, I would also show how Nietzsche himself acknowledges the superiority of temporal variability in thinking, which is not reflected in the epigraph I have used for my text. As just one example, consider Nietzsche's discussion of tempo in *Beyond Good and Evil* section 28.

When this assignment was working at its best it was doing at least two things: (1) serving as an engine for class discussion, transforming students from consumers to producers of knowledge and extending the boundaries of the classroom beyond the space and time of the scheduled course and (2) providing a platform for student research allowing students to go deeper into the text than what is usually expected while providing them an anchor (of the hypertext variety) or persistent point of reference that allowed them to make connections and draw out other ideas they found in the text.

Moreover, I discovered, quite by coincidence and the good fortune of having proximity to one of world's leading experts on Wagner, that interdisciplinary inquiry can be transformative of one's own disciplinary perspectives, not just because it adds to one's store of knowledge, as one would expect it would, but also because it brings different tools and different guiding questions. I'm sure I already had a sense this was true just based on experiences of discussing ideas with other academics. It is certainly clear to me, though, that there was nothing in the literature of my area of expertise that would have led me to the insights my colleague helped me and my students achieve. He gave us a whole new set of ideas and approaches to blend with those we had been pursuing in our class. The result was not simply *knowing more*; it transformed our whole perspective on what we were reading and how we could better interpret it.

The collaborative dimension of this project also changed the position of the student as learner in the classroom. This was true not only in the sense that students became more animated and engaged but also because their responsibilities shifted significantly. The ongoing class project that students were continuously writing, reading, and commenting on made students responsible *for producing the course materials*; they played a role in actually creating the content for the course. This made for a lively pace in class and online discussions.

Another positive feature of the assignment was the opportunity it afforded us to slip past, perhaps only a little as the project was executed, the artificial barriers of academic time, which is marked by class periods, weeks in a semester, and exam hours. Conceived as an activity that would be engaged continuously and repeatedly, students worked closely with the primary materials at the same time that they were oriented around explaining them and responding to a peer audience. The fact that the assignment was construed as a multigenerational project that could be advanced by future students also meant that we could somewhat transcend the cruel barrier of time that brings the semester to an end. In this respect, the tempo of this work stretched out in the future in ways that might be thought of as allowing the ideas to generate even more slowly than what our ordinary courses allow.

In subsequent semester, when the assignment did not work, our failures were attributable to at least two causes: inadequate technical skills and tools and well as a lack of understanding of the assignment and its goals (my own uncertainty contributed to the latter!). In early trials, students and I spent too much time worrying about how to perform the technical tasks, which distracted us from our philosophical challenges.

Uncertainty about the purpose of the assignment was palpable at times. This stemmed, at least partially, from the fact that once I had a better sense of the opportunities that were available I could not settle on a narrow set of objectives. For example, because I was interested in the concept of creating a legacy project, I was especially, perhaps overly, concerned about how future students might use the product of the current students—in this context, how undergraduate students in my future courses would use the work of the current graduate students, for example, by identifying persons named and providing context and links to relevant sources, developing a glossary of certain technical terms, and providing brief discussions of important translation decisions. I could also envision how useful the tool could be for organizing the class meetings, since each student could prepare a mini-presentation and serve as an expert for a particular section of the primary text we were discussing. It was not always clear to me or to the students which of these two activities were primary, though we all became aware of the fact that these goals were distinctive and not identical. These flaws in the assignment design, however, are linked to the multiplicity of opportunities that I simply had not (and *still* have not) fully sorted. They are challenges for reflective pedagogy, not evils inherent in the media.

I also suspect that both students and I were unprepared to adapt our writing and reading strategies and expectations to the medium as suggested above. The better entries were longer—about four or five paragraphs—and the longer the entry, the less commentary it generated. I suspect this was because students had less patience for it. Our typical use of this medium is generally for informal communication as well as fast and easy digestion of news and specific facts we might be seeking. But what the assignment called for was a slow and deliberate digestion. Finding ways to balance these expectations and opportunities is challenging and reflects an unresolved tension in the assignment. However, I do not think this tension is a fatal flaw; it just focuses attention on the need to reflect more on the goals of reading, writing, and collaborating more generally and the pedagogical approaches likely to help students improve. Recent applications of the model of creative intellectual activity as *conceptual blending*, mentioned above, are striving to achieve precisely this. This approach to the science of learning regards complex ideas as effects of conceptual blends, and it is seeking ways to replicate the blends so that students can better grasp the concept and the process by which it was achieved. It is something like conceptual dissection, aiming to achieve all of the precision that is found in such activities in the physical sciences. I remain somewhat skeptical as to whether that particular goal is achievable, but I do think that the collaborative hypertext assignment can help students appreciate—by isolating, examining, repositioning, and replacing in context—the variety of facets that make up the complex works that are the treasures of humanity.

Students in later generations of the course who understood that they could link with the work of other students and comment on it benefited from it. One key way in which this could be seen is how such students could simply pick up where earlier students left off—thus, later students *potentially* (though obviously, not necessarily)

were able to stand on the shoulders of those who came before them, potentially transforming their sense of themselves as learners not only for today but for those who will come after them tomorrow.

New information technology resources can potentially help us to forge new and *new kinds* of pathways through, between, and among texts to explore with our students.³⁰ Collaboratively, we can create resources for our teaching and research that multiply the kinds of connections that can be drawn between the objects of investigation as well as among the investigators themselves.³¹ This is not to say that our habits and expectations yet match these capabilities or that we fully understand *how* to use these new tools. While there is plenty of reason to fear that new media are competing with books held in the hand and savored for their musty smells, crisp pages, and smooth papers, and that such media are winning our time more often than not, I still think it is worthwhile to pursue the development of digital tools for the humanities for the reasons suggested above—we cannot assume that we can either avoid it or that we will simply impose our old habits on the new media. In addition to the adaptation of new technologies to the needs of humanities research in particular, we need to develop scholarly habits appropriate for the tasks: The *lento* tempo of the art of exegesis, as Nietzsche describes it, might yet have *allegro* and *staccato* accompaniments, which could quickly bring together the unexpected elements that nevertheless enhance the meaning of the whole. This would, after all, mirror deliberation in which slow persistence can be punctuated by those “ah ha” moments that flash up in an *Augenblick*. We should not confuse the *lento* pace of traditional research that requires enormous investment in time and resources with

³⁰This vision and my account of the transformations I observed in my class have affinity with Richard E. Miller’s conception of “creative reading.” See his introduction to the *New Humanities Reader*, ed. Richard E. Miller and Kurt Spellmeyer (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2008). That Internet-based research might generate pathways or trails for others to follow is one of the goals of Web 2.0.

³¹There is an internal reference to this note. If the notation is added for the initial epigraphs, the internal ref. to note 30 will need to be modified. A development that might potentially change the nature of research and teaching in the humanities is the movement toward “open source” research. Curiously, if not ironically, Nietzsche is on the leading edge here, since his works and Nietzsche scholarship are being organized in a project to create a media boilerplate that would allow scholars to have a coordinated repository and outlet for research, facilitating dialogue, critique, and peer review. Conceptually, my class assignment bears some similarity to a project that was once known as HyperNietzsche (see note 15 above; now “Nietzsche Source”: <http://www.nietzschesource.org/>), which intends to create a virtual archive not only of Nietzsche’s manuscripts but also of transcriptions and scholarly contributions. The principles of organization are quite interesting to read and are easily accessible on-line. These materials will have a hypertext network equivalent to a vast *index locorum*. Producing and refereeing this network creates a community of scholars who share a certain perspective on the state of scholarship and who are able to identify certain leading problems and issues that follow from it. These problems are then open to revision, critique, and solution by anyone with access to the Internet. For some of the organizational principles and (computer-based) ontological considerations, see Paulo D’ Iorio, “Nietzsche on New Paths” <http://www.item.ens.fr/diorio/> (accessed March 12, 2007). D’ Iorio holds a major grant from COST, which is funding the development of “Open Scholarly Communities on the Web” (<http://www.cost-a32.eu/>).

the *lento* reflection that Nietzsche thought was required for real understanding. Our challenge is to make full use of these new media, integrating the *allegro* and *staccato* in a symphonic whole.

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