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Teaching Spanish Golden Age texts in the 21st century: transmedia practice and the case for the *Novelas ejemplares*.

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During my undergraduate degree, Professor Ángel García taught me the *Novelas ejemplares* when I chose Cervantes as a special subject in my final year. He would sit at his desk and speak gently and elegantly about Cervantes's works. These and other sessions taught by Hispanists and great scholars such as Jack Sage and Alan Deyermond confirmed my taste for literature and led me to embark on a PhD thesis on the *Novelas ejemplares*. At the end of it, it was Ángel García together with Edwin Williamson who were my PhD examiners.

Those were the days when the power of both the teacher and the text were the main elements available to attract student attention. Powerpoint presentations did not yet exist and essays commenting on the texts had to be handwritten. This was not centuries ago but rather just a few decades and since then teaching and education have undergone an incredible transformation. A transformation in which many aspects have been called into question, one of them being the value of teaching literary classics. In the case of Spanish, is it still relevant to teach Golden Age texts by Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca and Quevedo and, if so, how can we do this? Are the texts too difficult to read or too distant to kindle interest among present-day audiences?

In this paper I would like to bring in some discussion around the perennial value of literary classics and then explore some new pedagogical approaches, particularly transmedia practice. Such approaches can facilitate access to Golden Age texts in general and Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares* in particular if a basic theoretical framework is adopted. A number of examples of specific initiatives already being introduced will serve to illustrate the effectiveness of these new practices in education.

In this regard, it is worth recalling the collection of articles published in *Spanish Golden Age texts in the Twenty First Century: Teaching the Old through the New*, which set out the rationale justifying the teaching of Spanish Golden Age texts and brought together ideas and teaching experiences from UK, US and Spanish universities in recent years.¹

In his article in the volume, Stuart Davis outlined the results of research on three sets of data covering an 18-year period and reviewing materials taught in Spanish Studies undergraduate degrees at British universities.² The Golden Age period of Spanish literature in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is acknowledged as being central to the Hispanic literary canon. Davis's article showed the decline in the study of what are considered canonical texts but an increase in the number of authors and texts, i.e. greater diversification. Put another way, the Golden Age period is still well represented in UK

¹ Idoya Puig and Karl McLaughlin (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019).

² 'The Golden Age in the Hispanic Studies classroom: the changing shape of what we teach our undergraduates in the UK', in *Spanish Golden Age texts in the Twenty First Century: Teaching the Old through the New*, 31-54, (p. 31).

universities but there is a much wider range of texts which, in some cases, may be taught in just one university.

However, the greater dispersal of the material across authors and texts means that there is a less clear core of authors and texts to which the majority of undergraduate students are exposed. (...) The period remains visible, despite there being a dispersal of the canon. The most famous Golden Age texts remain central to the core, alongside more contemporary material from the twentieth century to the present day.³

Nevertheless, the comparison of data sets across the years shows that the presence of a number of key Golden Age texts is declining on the university curriculum given that they are viewed as difficult and excessively long. Film modules or shorter, more accessible contemporary texts are replacing certain Golden Age modules. In view of this situation, it has been argued that 'Even if the precise motives underlying the decline have still to be fully established, there is clear agreement that Golden Age – as an invaluable manifestation of Spanish culture and history – must continue to be studied'.⁴ The period is one of the richest and most innovative in terms of literary production in Spain and through these texts students can engage with the greatest linguistic and literary achievements in the Spanish language.

It became apparent that new approaches were needed to awaken interest in such works and, at the same time, that there existed a great desire to address the challenge: 'Broad consensus existed among contributors that the opportunity should be seized to reimagine the teaching of these texts in ways that would complement rather than replace traditional approaches'.⁵ It was clear that, as educators, we bore responsibility for transmitting culture using new pedagogical methods and needed to find ways to make the texts and authors accessible to our students, clearly signalling their value.

Although it can be acknowledged that Golden Age texts are distant and present-day generations cannot relate to them, Jeremy Lawrance noted insightfully that 'as we rightly seek to find new ways of presenting the works to modern readers, we should keep in view the vital aspect of otherness'.⁶ It is necessary to be exposed to the different viewpoints which stem from these works. There is a danger of remaining on familiar ground, keeping to contemporary outlooks that do not challenge the intellect or the way of seeing things. Confronting the past leads us to reflect on the present, where we came from, why and how.

In proposing new approaches, Lawrance suggested: 'Why Golden Age? So we and our students can enquire after the living flame. I conceive our prime task in teaching to be that of communicating the twin pleasures of studying (commentary) and recreating (critique) our texts to new generations of readers'.⁷ Our aim, therefore, is to find new ways of understanding the texts and reinterpreting their meaning.

³ Davis, pp. 52-53.

⁴ *Spanish Golden Age texts in the Twenty First Century*, p. 1.

⁵ *Spanish Golden Age texts in the Twenty First Century*, p. 2.

⁶ Why Golden Age?, in *Spanish Golden Age texts in the Twenty First Century*, 11-30, (p. 12).

⁷ Lawrance, p. 30.

Emilio Martínez Mata agrees that young people need to be able to relate to texts and topics but this is not necessarily incompatible with studying the classics and connections can be made: 'Los jóvenes necesitan obras en las que puedan reconocerse, pero estas no son incompatibles, sino complementarias, con los textos clásicos de calidad reconocida'.⁸ Young people also need to experience something which these texts can provide. Literature is thus a tool to support the learning of the language and the culture that is revealed through this, while also supporting the development of critical skills: 'Hay que leer a los clásicos para pensar bien, no sólo para usar bien la lengua'.⁹

We cannot, however, overlook the challenges we face in the 21st century in the context of education. How can we really make these classics attractive and accessible to the present reader, young and not so young?

Firstly, it is important to recall that, in the internet era, reading skills have clearly changed although this does not mean that they are to be lost or be replaced entirely. People are reading in a different way through new media. This is clearly stated in the initial documents of the New London Group, which were first to define new media literacies and the concept of participatory culture:

Textual literacy remains a central skill in the twenty-first century. Before students can engage with the new participatory culture, they must be able to read and write. Youth must expand their required competencies, not push aside old skills to make room for the new. (...) New media literacies include the traditional literacy evolved with print culture as well as the newer forms of literacy within mass and digital media.¹⁰

Therefore, we can and must harness new media literacies, which students are familiar with, and thus consolidate deep reading skills and other participatory skills which can lead to a rediscovery and renewal of older texts.

The concept of transmedia practice can assist with this task. We are now accustomed to the transmission of information on different platforms at the same time, thanks to new technologies. This is called media convergence, as defined by Henry Jenkins. It is a flow of content across multiple media platforms which fosters a participatory culture: 'A participatory culture is a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of

⁸ 'Lo diferente nos enriquece (y lo distante en el tiempo)', *El País*, 18 abril 2022, <<https://elpais.com/babelia/2022-04-18/lo-diferente-nos-enriquece-y-lo-distante-en-el-tiempo.html>> [accessed 19 September 2022].

⁹ Lola Josa, 'Por qué leer a los clásicos nos hace más inteligentes', *The Conversation*, 27 January 2020 <https://theconversation.com/por-que-leer-a-los-clasicos-nos-hace-mas-inteligentes-129691?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=footertwitterbutton> [accessed 15 August 2022].

¹⁰ *Confronting the challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st century*, ed. by Henry Jenkins et al., *MacArthur Foundation* (2006), p. 19 <<http://www.newmedialiteracies.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/NMLWhitePaper.pdf>>, [accessed 16 August 2022]. For a more detailed understanding of changing reading skills in the new digital world see *Lectoescritura digital*, Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2019 <<https://sede.educacion.gob.es/publiventa/lectoescritura-digital/investigacion-educativa/22961>> [accessed 19 September 2022].

informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novice'.¹¹

As individuals share and generate new content, transmedia practices are developed and cultural texts are transformed. They are appropriated and expanded in new contexts. As Jenkins notes further, 'Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story'.¹² It is a form of production based on networking, with each medium adding something new.

These new approaches have found their way into education settings in recent years. As Carlos A. Scolari explains, the book is no longer the only source of information and, at all educational levels, other media have become common, including the use of video and even video games in some cases. However, a lot more can be done in terms of content production by students. Content can be generated by students and later re-used by other students. In transmedia terminology they are the *prosumers*, who produce and consume, or *fans*. In the study of literary classics, for example, student-created content can be incorporated into the narrative worlds they are studying.¹³ Classic works of literature have already achieved wider reception through transmedia practices such as extension and adaptation.¹⁴ Books have been made into films, new versions of books, sequels, etc. One such example is *Lord of the Rings* and the new Amazon series currently on release.

Having defined briefly the concept of transmedia and its potential use in the field of education, it is appropriate now to explore a number of examples of transmedia practices involving Spanish Golden Age texts to demonstrate how they can make the stories known to a wider public and be used in teaching.

On the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the death of Cervantes in 2016, a platform was created by Spain's Ministry of Sport and Culture to bring under one roof information on the commemorative activities organised both in Spain and worldwide. The activities were classified under a range of headings such as exhibitions and visual arts, theatre and dance, cinema, literature, internet resources and cultural tourism development. The book subsequently published with all the activities organised was a good illustration of the range of media in which Cervantes was celebrated.¹⁵ The experience of the 400th anniversary is, in my opinion, a good example of the potential offered by transmedia practices. Some of the activities included active participation by the public, the creation of new materials and

¹¹ Jenkins, et al., *Confronting the challenges of Participatory Culture*, p. 5.

¹² Henry Jenkins, Transmedia storytelling 101, 21 March, 2007

<http://www.henryjenkins.org/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html> [accessed 16 August 2022].

¹³ 'Narrativas transmedia, nuevos alfabetismos y prácticas de creación textual. Conflictos y tensiones en la nueva ecología de la comunicación', in *Lectoescritura digital*, 45-51, (p. 48).

¹⁴ Henry Jenkins et al., *Reading in a Participatory Culture: Remixing Moby-Dick in the English Classroom (Language & Literacy)*, (New York and London, Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 2013).

¹⁵ *Memoria de actividades del IV Centenario de la Muerte de Miguel de Cervantes*, Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte, 2020.

reinterpretations of plays and episodes of Cervantes's works. Various characters came alive again in cities and towns, songs were sang and poems written, as were blogs and wkinovels.

An event organised at Manchester Metropolitan University, *Tilting at windmills: Cervantes 'meets' Shakespeare 400 years on*, featured students of Spanish reading different extracts from *Don Quijote*. The event also commemorated the anniversary of the death of Shakespeare, with other students performing some short extracts from his plays. The final act of the event included what might be considered a transmedia exercise: two drama students recreated a fictional encounter between Shakespeare and Cervantes who, in a dialogue scripted the occasion, reflected on issues not just of importance to their epoch but of contemporary relevance today also, thus bringing past and present closer together. Several students and parents acknowledged that the experience had prompted them to take an interest in Cervantes and decide to read the masterpiece. Such examples may be isolated, but they illustrate a world where transmedia can thrive.

As an example of transmedia practice involving Cervantes and dating back to the 19th century, Scolari identifies a series of *auques* (traditional graphic narratives with short texts in Catalan) related to *Don Quijote* and featuring a combination of official narrative (canon) and newly-generated user content (fandom).¹⁶

Moreover, transmedia practices have been of assistance in Spanish television's efforts to reconnect with young audiences, offering different platforms for different content and encouraging audiences to participate and play an active role.¹⁷ An example of transmedia practice which has already been identified and indeed studied in some detail is *El Ministerio del Tiempo*.¹⁸ This Spanish TV series incorporates historical and fictional characters from the past in plots that take place in the present. The appearance of literary figures such as Cervantes and Lope facilitates audience connection with said authors. The merchandising created around the series is also generating new transmedia experiences. The series has been highlighted as a good tool for the study of literature, for example through the devising activities that establish links between some of the episodes and leading texts by the authors. Students can engage interactively by using and contributing to internet resources associated with the series, including blogs in which they can take part. By way of example, some blogs created around *El Ministerio del Tiempo* analyse the historical accuracy of specific episodes and even invite the re-writing of a chapter.¹⁹

An example where the transmedia approach has already been applied to a university setting is found in Rebecca M. Bender, who chose a non-traditional approach combining the use of

¹⁶ *Don Quixote of La Mancha: Transmedia Storytelling in the Grey Zone*, International Journal of Communication, 8 (2014), 2382–2405.

¹⁷ Ana Azurmendi, 'Reconnecting with young audiences: transmedia storytelling to transform public service television in Spain, France, Germany and the United Kingdom', *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 73 (2018), 927 to 944 <<http://www.revistalatinacs.org/073paper/1289/48en.html>> [accessed 17 August 2022].

¹⁸ RTVE, 2015-2016.

¹⁹ J. Rovira-Collado, R.F. Llorens-García, S. Fernández-Tarí, 'Una propuesta transmedia para la Educación Literaria: *El Ministerio del Tiempo*', in *XIV Jornadas de Redes de Investigación en docencia universitaria*, ed. by María Teresa Tortosa Ybáñez, Salvador Grau Company, José Daniel Álvarez Teruel, (Alicante: Universidad de Alicante, 2016), 569-584.

the complete novel of *Don Quijote*, a graphic novel, several films and adaptations of the story, among other channels:²⁰

In addition to the full-length novel (Tom Lathrop's Legacy edition) for the main close-readings and discussions, I included the following supplementary materials: the graphic novel, *The Complete Don Quijote* (by Rob Davis), to aid in full comprehension of the original novel and pique students' interest right away, while also opening discussions on issues of translation, interpretation, and representation; select films sharing certain narrative elements or modes of characterization relevant to the Quijote (like *Into the Wild*; *ToyStory*; and *Stranger than Fiction*); adaptations of the tale for different audiences and with different goals (from the musical *Man of la Mancha* to the children's program *Wishbone*); and carefully selected critical articles.²¹

The assessment required the students to interpret scholarship via alternative formats such as Snapchat. It also encouraged literary analysis as the students expressed their point of view and created new stories, combining short essays and some snaps.

It is important to acknowledge that initiatives such as the above can awaken interest among younger audiences familiar with these digital channels:

El punto de partida es el reconocimiento de la importancia actual de los contenidos audiovisuales y la visión de los estudiantes como 'prosumidores' que combinan habilidades como la apropiación, la capacidad crítica o la navegación transmedia. La cercanía a la experiencia cotidiana de los alumnos y 'el sustrato crítico, emocional y colaborativo que subyace en los relatos y prácticas transmedia' hacen que el empleo de este tipo de contenidos resulte especialmente motivador.²²

We can see from these examples that transmedia can be used successfully to connect Golden Age literature and its historical context to contemporary issues and cultural practices that students and wider audiences can identify with. These practices can kindle the motivation necessary to initiate engagement with literary classics and their context.

In the case of Cervantes, his masterpiece *Don Quijote* has understandably been the main work to be reworked and adopted for transmedia practices. However, other Cervantes works can benefit from this popularity and serve as tools to expand the Quixotic and Cervantine world further. In this regard, the *Novelas ejemplares* may be even more suitable for the development of transmedia practices in the study of literature. The short stories of

²⁰ 'Snapping the *Quijote*: Examining L2 Literature, Social Media, and Digital Storytelling through a Cervantine Lens', *Hispania*, 103 (2020), 323-339.

²¹ 'Don Quijote, the Graphic Novel, and Snapchat: Alternative Assessments in the L2 Literature Classroom', Blog post, 1 October 2020 <<https://rebeccambender.com/2020/10/01/don-quijote-snapchat>> [accessed 17 August 2022].

²² Javier Ramos Linares, 'A propósito de «La enseñanza del español en las universidades del Reino Unido»', in *TECLA, Revista de la Consejería de educación en el Reino Unido e Irlanda*, 2, (2022), 25-34, (p. 30), review of Carmen Herrero, 'La educación transmedia como estrategia innovadora para integrar lengua y cultura en la enseñanza de ELE', in *Doblele*, 7 (2021), 50-66 <<https://revistes.uab.cat/doblele/article/view/v7-herrero>> [accessed 22 August 2022].

the *Novelas ejemplares* are more easily read and can thus help overcome initial reservations and foster motivation. At the same time, they present a wide range of situations and adventures in varied settings, from the underworld of Seville in *Rinconete y Cortadillo* and *El coloquio de los perros* to sea fights against the Turks in *El amante liberal* or *La española inglesa* and abductions in the university environment of Bologna in *La señora Cornelia*. Scolari refers to the notion of a snack culture, driven by small fragments of text:

The explosion of snack culture (with all the collateral concepts that it implies and that I analyze in the book: brevity, miniaturization, transience, fractality, fragmentation, remixability, infoxication, mobility, speed) could be considered the breeding ground of an 'original' cultural form that emerges from the new media ecology. The fragmentation and speed of the video clips, which surprised analysts and intellectuals in the last decades of the 20th century, was only the prelude to a textuality that is taking the cult of brevity to its last consequences.²³

Shorter stories can be more conducive to development, appropriation and sharing. The *Novelas ejemplares* provide a multiplication of actors and texts to mix with the technology that is characteristic of this snack culture. There is great potential in the numerous characters appearing in the *Novelas ejemplares* to generate new and independent creations. They can populate these settings and generate new stories: what did Carrizales (*El celoso extremeño*) do in the New World that might explain his extreme jealousy, before returning to Spain to marry Leonora?; similarly, we hear the dog Berganza talking about his life, but we have not yet heard Cipión's account of his (*El coloquio de los perros*); how did Preciosa grow up among the gypsies (*La gitanilla*)? etc.

More importantly, the characters and their adventures present a wide range of issues of the time which, in many cases, will resonate in our own times: freedom in matters of love and choice of partner, love and betrayal, friendship, loyalty, rape, female imprisonment, deception, abduction, jealousy, etc. The stories are thus not only suitable for understanding the historical context of the past and exploring the language, but also in terms of providing a link to the present.

In order to exploit the *Novelas ejemplares* and create new activities, we need to take into account the characteristic features of digital texts, which is where transmedia practice mostly takes place. As Carmen Herrero notes, in the digital world texts are multimodal and use a combination of linguistic elements, images, sound, etc, while also facilitating interaction, as seen above. Texts become dynamic and flexible and can thus be continuously revised, re-used and remixed.²⁴ The key characteristic of a remix is that it appropriates and changes other materials to create something new:

²³ Carlos A Scolari, 'Goodbye liquid society. Welcome gaseous society', *Medium*, 30 August 2021, <<https://cscolari.medium.com/goodbye-liquid-society-welcome-gaseous-society-9ef0586d697d>> [accessed 19 September 2022].

²⁴ Carmen Herrero, 'Escritura digital: estrategias de enseñanza-aprendizaje en entornos digitales', in *Lectoescritura digital*, 123-132.

Remix education is a pedagogical approach that gives students the tools and critical approaches to communicate their own novel ideas, identities, and rhetoric through refashioned, retooled, and repurposed cultural objects. Put more simply, remix education empowers learners and students to express themselves thoughts through ‘recycled’ culture and media, using preexisting objects—including music and video—as the building blocks for their own unique point of view.²⁵

Rather than keep to a particular story line, students can incorporate new elements from other media and contexts. The text becomes autonomous and develops far beyond its initial setting and understanding of the world.

First of all, in the digital text, attention has to be paid to the graphic design. In the digital world, texts tend to be brief but may prioritise certain sections of content for further exploration via hyperlinks, for example. Prosumers need to possess skills that include, among others, transmedia navigation to find new material, appropriation to incorporate and reinterpret content, and collective intelligence to share and compare new material in order to move towards a common objective. These skills should be uppermost in mind as we prepare new tasks. Particularly useful is the summary of skills required for the creation of digital texts in four areas proposed by Dudeney, Hockly and Pegrum: language (in new contexts such as Facebook and Twitter; information (search of material and assessment); connections with other users (including issues of privacy and copyright) and groups; and redesign (to re-use new material).²⁶ Examples of activities arising from these areas may include digital presentations, microblogging with brief entries from different students, infographics in form of a poster, book-trailers or short videos and digital narration combining text, images, sound and music.²⁷

A good illustration of the above is the International Digital Storytelling Festival *Our New Gold*, which asked university students to explore texts from the Spanish Golden Age period focusing on current social issues (racial and social inequality, gender, environment) and rework them into digital storytelling pieces such as video art, short films, or podcasts.²⁸ The winners were unveiled at the 2022 International Festival of Classical Theatre in Almagro.

Among the winners this year was a story inspired by *El coloquio de los perros*.²⁹ In the short clip produced, text from the short story is read aloud with English subtitles. Thus, not only is there direct engagement with the original Cervantine text but linguistics skills are clearly put into action by reading the text and translating it into English (language). In addition, there is evidence of research and critical thinking as the students interpret the Cervantine text from the point of view of double standards and the coherence of a teacher who ‘practices what they preach’, as they explain. The students chose the setting of their Texas Tech’s university because of the Spanish influence on the architecture there, recreating a Seville

²⁵ Gavin Dudeney, Nicky Hockly, and Mark Pegrum. *Digital Literacies*, (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 37.

²⁶ Dudeney, Hockly and Pegrum, p. 127.

²⁷ Herrero, ‘Escritura digital’, pp. 129-130.

²⁸ *Our New Gold*, <<https://ournewgold.com/>> [accessed 23 August 2022].

²⁹ Yazarei Bazaldua and Yesica Amaya, ‘El coloquio de los perros’, <<https://youtu.be/UqhwldYKDBg>> [accessed 23 August 2022].

environment. The video includes footage of two dogs as the text is read, together with music played by a student (re-design). The message is a reminder to avoid being judgemental and be open to the world around, with images relating to this message added. The clip has been shared with other people via the *Our New Gold* festival and has been posted on *Youtube* for others to see.

Another of the finalists focuses on *La fuerza de la sangre*, with a video online magazine created in this case.³⁰ There is a contemporary retelling of the novel, again with some reading aloud of the original text. Writing and images are presented in the form of a magazine. The reading of the short extract of the novel is followed by a brief commentary in English relating the text to a present-day understanding of the content or situation as experienced by students today. This is a further example where we see the four areas of transmedia practice -a combination of language, information, sharing with others and recreating- being exercised.

Rather than merely repeat the original stories, such exercises are designed to bring them closer to the 21st century, creating bridges between the two:

Evidentemente la dramaturgia del Siglo de Oro se tiene que traer de alguna manera al siglo XXI. No buscamos rehabilitaciones arqueológicas de los textos, porque mientras los textos no han cambiado, la sociedad, sí. Entonces lo que hay que hacer desde la dirección y la interpretación es tender puentes entre estos textos clásicos y los espectadores actuales.³¹

Initiating and developing initiatives such as those mentioned in this paper is far from easy. However, existing materials can be used as a platform that serves as a springboard or catalyst for transmedia practices. In this regard, the film *La española inglesa* produced in 2015 by Televisión Española can be used for precisely this purpose. The challenge of making a film of each of the *Novelas ejemplares*, as suggested a few years ago by writer Jorge Edwards, would ideally be taken up by cinema directors: 'Soy un gran aficionado a las *Novelas Ejemplares* y creo que cada una es una película. Habría que hacer películas con ellas porque son filmicas y divertidas'.³²

It is a good idea to harness today's generations' familiarity with film. People can connect readily and easily and be introduced to a particular historical setting, in this case, the Spain of the sixteenth century. Taking the film as a starting point, a number of tasks and exercises covering the four areas of transmedia practice can be devised.

The film helps overcome possible fears concerning tackling a Golden Age text. Students can engage firstly with a specific scene and begin to work on the areas of language and

³⁰ Bryan Nicholas Fletcher, 'Mujeres sin voces', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fkY_kkCOTkw> [accessed 23 August 2022].

³¹ Nicholas Dale, 'Traer el Siglo de Oro a la actualidad: ¿y si los perros de Cervantes fueran perras?', *El País*, 12 June 2021, <<https://elpais.com/espana/madrid/2021-06-12/traer-el-siglo-de-oro-a-la-actualidad-y-si-los-perros-de-cervantes-fueran-perras.html>> [accessed 23 August 2022].

³² Jorge S. Casillas, 'Jorge Edwards: «Habría que hacer películas con las *Novelas Ejemplares*»', *Abc*, 4 April 2016, <https://www.abc.es/cultura/libros/abci-jorge-edwards-habria-hacer-peliculas-novelas-ejemplares-201604202102_noticia.html> [accessed 23 August 2022].

information. They can draw out some of the historical background and research further into the historical period. The scene where the protagonist Leonora meets the Queen can be used as an example. This scene is very visual, with strong colours, some dialogue and gestures. The various issues that might be discussed and explored include the rivalry between countries at the time, class difference, and State power, as embodied in the Queen in this case. At the same time, linguistic skills come into play as students need to listen to and be able to understand the dialogue, an activity that reinforces grammar and widens vocabulary range.

On completion of these preliminary tasks, students can then be introduced to the original text by reading the extract corresponding to the clip in the film they have just viewed. They can, for instance, compare how the same scene is presented in different media and how effective the respective written and filmic versions are. Different channels thus come together and students move from one channel to the next, contrasting different media.

Additional information on other specific topics might be explored in order to establish further connections with present-day issues. Topics for potential discussion in *La española inglesa* include the role of consent in relationships, sexual harassment including acid attacks, the imposition of limits on personal freedom, race divisions in society, along with religious tolerance, the understanding of marriage, and personal choice. Connections can also be made at any time with other people and groups to explore these areas further, either with class peers or, outside the classroom, through friends via social media and beyond. This work can be combined with the production of own presentations, posters or videos to express impressions, opinions and suggestions. One media leads to another once the student has engaged and identified with a particular issue. As a final outcome, there will be new redesigns such as some of those mentioned above. Students themselves can suggest further initiatives and future avenues of interest. What do they find appealing about these stories and how can they re-elaborate them and present them to their peers? As part of their engagement with the texts in class, they might be asked to redesign new materials and propose new projects to remix the stories.

The title of the novel might also be part of an assessment brief for the creation of an infographic, book trailer or digital narration. How do cultures mix in our society? In what way do people integrate in society and protect their own cultural identity? Is it even to be an *española inglesa*, an English-Spanish girl? In the sixteenth century this would have been a contradiction in terms, a challenge. What challenges are faced nowadays by young Hispanics in the United States or British Asians in the UK? As indicated at the beginning, certain views from the past will differ with respect to issues of culture, race and gender, but students must be prepared to be challenged and to enrich their understanding of other contexts and people. Issues that may be considered politically incorrect can be explored in a different setting and relevant connections established with the present. Triggers warnings should not be needed as students embark on a voyage of discovery of past values and geographies which, in many cases, ultimately prove to be highly relevant to our times.

We also must take into account the other side of the coin and should not be afraid of 'losing' the classics in this exercise. Some may be concerned at the prospect of destroying

the classics if they are approached with outlooks that are foreign to them, not intended to be there. Some might argue that we are corrupting the original works and adulterating their meaning. However, it is clear that we cannot just present the Golden Age text intact, without adaptation or a bridge with the present as, if we do, we run the risk of alienating the text from today: 'Aunque sea una paradoja, no alterar un texto antiguo puede suponer dinamitar un puente entre el mundo de ayer y el mundo de hoy'.³³ We should not be afraid of transformation and remix given that, in the long term, this will perpetuate the text, allowing it to remain alive and be a source that generates further products in the future.

En suma, cualquier propuesta actual que se haga con el patrimonio cultural debe ser bienvenida, desde la más conservadora a la más vanguardista, porque no sólo con las obras de nueva creación avanza el arte, sino también con las adaptaciones y versiones de obras anteriores.³⁴

While there is a strong awareness of the value of literary classics, in particular Spanish Golden Age texts, and there is general consensus on the need to protect them, educational change is slow. The relatively few and isolated examples presented in this paper are considered innovative and somewhat exceptional at present. The next step is to facilitate the introduction of these practices in mainstream education so that they become part of everyday pedagogy. Some attempts are already being made in this direction but there may also be resistance to change. However, the first step is to recognise that transmedia education is an effective way to learn. It is important to acknowledge that in the 21st century there are diverse forms of reading which include the use of different platforms. Reading is multimodal, mixing text and images. We need to learn and become accustomed to reading via screen and tablets and put behind us the pessimistic view that new generations do not read or do so only superficially.³⁵

Young people above all are ready for the challenge, as confirmed by the phenomenon of booktubers, for example. They have already embraced the new technology and new methods without discarding literature in the traditional sense, the printed word and ultimately our classic texts:

Los *booktubers* aman los libros en papel, los atesoran, los presumen y disparan su consumo (...) los *BookTubers* reivindican que se puede leer y también ver series, leer y jugar videojuegos, leer y escuchar música pop' (...). 'Las prácticas de los booktubers son parte de una trama de prácticas de prosumo literario mucho más amplias, que se sitúan 'entre el canon y el *fandom*', como la producción de bodegones de libros en Instagram, la escritura de *fan-fiction*, las fotos de pasajes subrayados, (...) esta prácticas demuestran que, contra lo que se temía al inicio, internet no desplaza al

³³ Gaston Gilabert, 'Sí, por favor, versionen los clásicos', *The Conversation*, 21 June 2022, <https://theconversation.com/si-por-favor-versionen-los-clasicos-181314?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=bylinetwitterbutton> [accessed 19 September 2022]

³⁴ Gilabert, 'Sí, por favor, versionen los clásicos'.

³⁵ Francisco Albarello, *Lectura transmedia: leer, escribir, conversar en el ecosistema de pantallas*, (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Ampersand, 2019).

mundo material, sino que le añade capas de comunicación y de sentido, lo amplifica'.³⁶

There is a need for continued engagement with Golden Age texts and some guidelines are outlined here which can facilitate the adoption of new transmedia pedagogies. Existing examples confirm that we can rise to the challenge because the Spanish Golden Age and other literary classics are of permanent value and have something to offer to the present generation. Incorporating transmedia practice in 21st-century education increases the opportunities for learning offered by these texts because of their inherent value. As Donnell puts it aptly:

The academic road ahead is more and more interdisciplinary, and early modern literary works have a crucial role to play in the teaching of language, of culture, and of genres as acts of communication.³⁷

³⁶ Francisco Albarello, Francisco Arri, Ana Laura García Luna, *Entre libros y pantalla: los booktubers como mediadores culturales* (Buenos Aires: Universidad del Salvador, 2020), pp. 9-10.

³⁷ Sidney Donnell, 'Don Quixote in the Balance: Early Modern Studies and the Undergraduate Curriculum', in *Approaches to Teaching Cervantes's Don Quixote*, ed. by James A. Parr and Lisa Vollendorf (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2015), 197-205, (p. 204).