

<b>Institution: BRUNEL UNIVERSITY (H0113)</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 29 – English Language and Literature</b>
<b>Title of case study: ‘KAFKA’S WOUND’ RE-IMAGINING THE LITERARY ESSAY FOR THE DIGITAL AGE (RILED A)</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>‘Kafka’s Wound’, a response to Kafka’s short story ‘A Country Doctor’ (1919), was created as part of the ‘Re-imagining the Literary Essay for the Digital Age’ (RILED A) project. The essay is available at <a href="http://www.thespace.lrb.co.uk">www.thespace.lrb.co.uk</a>.</p> <p>Commissioned from the <i>London Review of Books</i> (LRB), an independent literary publisher, RILED A was supported by £45k from ACE who invested £3.5m in 51 commissions. The work was ‘located’ in the Space, an experimental digital arts service, itself a major project within Arts Council England’s creative media policy and its Public Value Partnership with the BBC.</p> <p>Headed by Will Self, novelist and professor of contemporary thought at Brunel University, RILED A involved over 70 collaborators drawn from the School of Arts and many other departments (especially Computing, Engineering and Design) in a collaborative, interdisciplinary, practice-based, research project. Institutional contributors included the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, the Imperial War Museum, and the National Centre for Jewish Film. The research was carried out between March and July 2012 and the essay was ‘published’ in August 2012.</p> <p>Highly innovative and of high artistic quality, RILED A has impacted diverse audiences worldwide, evolving the multi-media digital literary essay while encouraging innovative approaches to digital arts and supporting the case for future public digital arts services. It raises important issues about the nature of authorship, collaboration, and co-design in digital forms which frame broader questions about the nature of creativity, intellectual property rights, and the processes and experience of reading.</p> <p>The high artistic quality and innovative user interface engaged a significant worldwide audience with 49,208 visits in 12 months, 57% from outside the UK.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Many of the key figures of the English literary tradition have been essayists. From the eighteenth century onwards the form has been associated with the vibrant periodical literature (Addison, Johnson, Steele) that reaches its zenith in the nineteenth century (Burke, Coleridge, De Quincy, Hazlitt, Lamb). The twentieth century has also seen important practitioners (Eliot, Forster, Huxley, Orwell, Woolf). Formally, the essay is highly diverse: in its early stages it was characterised by ratiocinative processes strongly linked to the linearity of prose, while later exponents have enjoyed its more associative dimensions. Ranging from the rigorous testing of an idea (assay) to more personal explorations of, or reaching towards the expression of, ideas and experiences (essay), the form has been adopted in literature, politics, and philosophy. More recently other media have appropriated the concept (cinema, music, photography). Self, the creative orchestrator of <i>Kafka’s Wound</i>, is himself a prolific and distinguished essayist.</p> <p>‘Kafka’s Wound’ evolved the long-form, transliterative, multi-media digital literary essay to provoke debate, disseminate expertise, and encourage innovative approaches to digital arts. The research engaged with the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could there be a way to embellish the unadorned line of the text without losing the impetus and coherence of the reading experience?</li> <li>• Could we create a rhythmic flow in and out of the sequence of sentences, to take in other texts, video and audio material, pictures and photographs, so that reading becomes multidimensional not merely fragmentary?</li> <li>• Will enriching the line deepen it or confuse it, energise it or dissipate its élan?</li> </ul> <p>The research was interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary, collaborative, and practice based, involving a wide range of creative practices in addition to literature, including: theatre and performance; film, television and digital media; music; translation; creative technologies; and computer-mediated</p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

communication. It engaged with questions in cultural production, the roles of media and cultural texts, forms and practices, and with issues of consumption and reception, media dissemination and publication, media and cultural audiences, and the potentials of digital humanities.

The digital output includes the virtual, textual, non-textual, visual, sonic, static, and dynamic, across the following categories: electronic resources and publications, digital and broadcast media, films, videos and other types of media presentation (game, machinima, music, documentary, dance, puppetry, animation, interviews), software design and development (micro-site and user interface).

The research was approached as an exercise in co-creation and collaboration. In terms of the central literary text, there was to be no compromise in quality, depth or length. Self wrote: "We aim to produce a digital literary essay that is 'through composed', weaving together all media: computer graphics, music, filmed performance, video diary and linked data into something that will hopefully fully express the praxis involved in composing a literary essay." Researching archival media/material happened in parallel and some archival content was digitised for the first time. A number of documentary films were made as the project progressed and these were also integrated into the digital essay.

Led by Will Self the project included major contributions from Akram Khan (Particle Physics and e-Science), Jayne Wilton (artist, funded by a grant from the Leverhulme Trust), Broderick Chow (Theatre), Johannes Birringer (Drama and Performance Technologies), Mary Richards (Theatre), Olinkha Gustafson-Pearce (Graphic Communication), Peter Wiegold (Music), Sean Gaston (English), Tanya Krzywinska (Screen Studies), William Leahy (English), Vanja Garaj (Digital Design), and Camille Baker (Multimedia & Broadcast Media Design). Input in the area of German translation came from Dr Karen Seago (Director, MA Translating Popular Culture) and Amanda Hopkinson (Visiting Professor, Literary Translation), City University, London. Further archival and technical materials were offered by the BBC Radiophonic Workshop (in association with Matthew Herbert), the Imperial War Museum, and the National Centre for Jewish Film.

*LRB* (via Helen Jeffrey) retained overall project management, technical, and editorial responsibility. Quality assurance was monitored by the *LRB* and the Managing Editor of *The Space* had overarching responsibility for the quality and compliance of all commissions. ACE and the BBC specified high standards for audio, image, and video files, suitable for broadcast on HDTV, and all media files are hosted by the BBC. The submission processes transcoded submitted media files for playback on a range of devices. The commission contract required adherence to procedures to control content licensing and ATFOD compliance. Interactive content was required in HTML5 to support the specified digital platforms.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

#### Digital Outputs:

W. Self et al, "Kafka's Wound: A digital essay", 9<sup>th</sup> August 2012, [www.thespace.lrb.co.uk](http://www.thespace.lrb.co.uk)

W. Self, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012, "Writer's Blog" <http://thespace.lrb.co.uk/blog/>

#### Funding and Commission:

*London Review of Books*, grant towards the costs of *The Space* to commission RILEDADA (Arts Council England, March-Oct 2012, £45,000).

#### Dissemination:

Digital Humanities Award 2012, Category "Best Digital Humanities blog, article, or short publication", 2<sup>nd</sup> runner-up. <http://dhawards.org/dhawards2012/results/>

Future Glimpses session: Digital Research Conference 11 September 2012, University of Oxford <http://digital-research-2012.oerc.ox.ac.uk/programme>. Slides here: <http://www.slideshare.net/imhelenj/digital-research-conference-oxford-3-2>

#### Evaluation:

Summary Evaluation of 'The Space' (on completion of the pilot phase, May to October 2012) for Arts Council England by MTM London, May 2013:

[http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/MTM\\_Summary\\_Evaluation\\_of\\_The\\_Space\\_pilot.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/MTM_Summary_Evaluation_of_The_Space_pilot.pdf)

#### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The independent evaluation for Arts Council England stated: 'A small number of projects [including RILEDA] were consistently identified, by arts organisations and audiences alike, as showing innovation in terms of art form development and production, creating genuinely new experiences' and "[RILEDA] is both a high quality artistic experience and highly innovative." RILEDA was short-listed for a Digital Humanities Award in the category: "Best Digital Humanities blog, article, or short publication" and awarded 2<sup>nd</sup> runner-up (Feb 2013). The awards recognise talent and expertise in the digital humanities globally and are decided by public votes.

**Impact and Reach:** RILEDA is principally distributed via the internet. Significant global audiences have engaged with the digital essay (9 Aug 2012- 8 Aug 2013); 49,208 visits, 118,165 page-views, 30,569 unique visitors. Average visit duration is high (7+ minutes) and bounce-rate low (2.6%) evidencing positive engagement. Returning visitor numbers are high (39%); readers are re-engaging with the content. The UK represents 43% of visits with USA, Canada, Germany, Australia, India and Brazil sending high levels of traffic. Referral traffic is the strongest driver of visits (49%) and social sharing sites perform well. The 'Writer's Blog' documenting the early part of the project had 3,239 visits, 6,988 page-views, and 2,100 unique visitors from 10 May 2012 to 8 August 2012, mainly from the UK (62%). Social media provided insight into public sentiment. Analysing tweets from the first month showed 96% of comments expressing an opinion were positive.

In September 2012 The Space became available on Freestat channel 908. On 9 September 2012 the RILEDA documentary of Prof Self's research trip to Prague, directed by Ian Potts (BBC), was broadcast on the Community Channel (Freeview channel 87).

'Kafka's Wound' also generated various live iterations and performances including a CD version (*Kafka's Wound*, Peter Wiegold and Notes Inégales), itself a studio re-composition of material embedded in the essay and improvised live performances. There have been performances at Club Inégales in London (<http://www.clubinegales.com/>), and the Cheltenham Literary Festival (August 2013), and the CD was well reviewed by *The Telegraph* and *The Independent*.

**Digital Humanities Impact:** LRB held a debate on the 'Digital Essay', in September 2012, with Prof Self, Helen Jeffrey (Associate Publisher), Nicky Spice (Publisher) and Dan Franklin (Digital Publisher, Random House), with an audience of 100, including two leading figures from the BBC. The film is online (1,250 views to 8 August 2013). The debate was reported in the Association for Management Education and Development's 'e-Organisations & People', in the article "Writing with the internet: paradise or desert for developers?" by Clare Coyne, concluding; "For e-O&P, then, the digital essay offers an exciting possibility, and one that should be harnessed sooner rather than later." *The Literary Platform*, an online magazine covering current thinking about books and technology, featured RILEDA in two editorials by Kat Sommers: '[RILEDA] shows that the fusion of associative thinking with linear reading leads to an immersive reading experience.'

Helen Jeffrey (LRB) presented RILEDA in a 'Future Glimpses' session at the Digital Research Conference, University of Oxford (2012). Johannes Birringer (Brunel) gave a keynote on RILEDA at the Digital Echoes Symposium: The Digital Economy, Coventry University (2013), dealing with digital archives and new modes of arts documentation and preservation. RILEDA was referenced by Russell Bowden, in "*New information and learning landscapes - challenges to bridge the information 'gaps'*", presented at the IFLA World Library and Information Congress, Singapore (August 2013).

RILEDA is referenced by a number of academic institutions as a digital resource for students; examples of transliterative text (University of Alabama, USA), online resources (Edinburgh College of Art, UK), 'digital writing' (Duke University, USA) and in the American *Creative Nonfiction Magazine* article 'Binary Truths: Creative nonfiction in our electronic age: Required Reading' by Eric LeMay. The Bodleian Library, Oxford, in requesting permission to add RILEDA to their digital archive, stated that 'Kafka's Wound' has been identified as being of lasting research value and worthy of permanent preservation for the benefit of historians and researchers.'

**Technical and Intellectual Property Impact:** RILEDA has already changed archival and

## Impact case study (REF3b)

technological practice and policy. *LRB* implemented technology developed for RILEDA to display footnotes within their 34-year online archive and to incorporate audio and video into new essays. RILEDA technology was adapted for a micro-site to showcase 'Enquirer', a site-specific drama performed in Glasgow, London, and Belfast in 2012, and exploring the state of the UK newspaper industry through journalists' testimonies (1,949 visits Oct 2012-Aug 2013).

Oliver Brock (digital archive researcher) gave a "Rights and IP" seminar in the BBC Academy programme 'Building digital capacity for the arts', in July 2012, outlining his approach to rights clearances in the context of RILEDA (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGQYJdwTzAK>) He was invited to present the project at the International Federation of Television Archives World Conference, London, in September 2012.

**Cultural Innovation and Policy, Publishing Impact:** the BBC College of Production invited Helen Jeffrey to participate in a podcast, Arts in the Digital World, November 2012, discussing the experience of working on RILEDA. Helen Jeffrey (LRB) also presented RILEDA at the 'Festival of Publishing', London, in January 2013, encouraging independent book publishers to engage with innovative digital projects.

The success of RILEDA has supported the case for a future development of a public digital arts service. The ACE evaluation comments that The Space has been a huge success, proving the concept for a digital platform that offers the Arts... we are actively exploring a new iteration of the platform, which we aim to launch [in 2014]." RILEDA was noted as the project most 'consistently identified' by practitioners, arts organisations, and the public as 'showing innovation' and 'creating genuinely new experiences'.

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

'Statistics and Sentiment: A Report on the digital essay "Kafka's Wound"' by Helen Jeffrey, LRB: <http://www.slideshare.net/imhelenj/statistics-and-sentiment-a-report-on-the-digital-essay-kafkas-wound>

BBC College of Production podcast; Arts in the Digital World  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/production/article/art20130702112135439>

Ivan Hewett reviews a set from Notes Inégales featuring Jewish music klemza.  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/classicalconcertreviews/9888285/Music-of-Today-Philharmonia-Orchestra-Royal-Festival-Hall-Notes-Inegales-review.html>

*e-Organisations and People*, 19.4 (2012) 'Writing with the internet: paradise or desert for developers?' Clare Coyne, Association for Management Education and Development  
<http://www.amed.org.uk/page/welcome-to-e-o-p-winter-2012>

*Creative Nonfiction Magazine*, Issue #47 (Winter 2013), 'Binary Truths: Creative nonfiction in our electronic age Required Reading', Eric LeMay <https://www.creativenonfiction.org/online-reading/binary-truths-creative-nonfiction-our-electronic-age>

Impress Books Festival of Publishing, 31 January 2013, Freeword Centre, Slides here:  
<http://www.slideshare.net/imhelenj/festival-of-publishing-slides-london>

*The Literary Platform* report on the Digital Essay debate:  
<http://www.theliteraryplatform.com/2012/09/on-the-digital-essay-a-panel-discussion-at-the-lrb/>

Letter requesting permission to archive received from Digital Archivist, Bodleian Library, Oxford (September 2012)