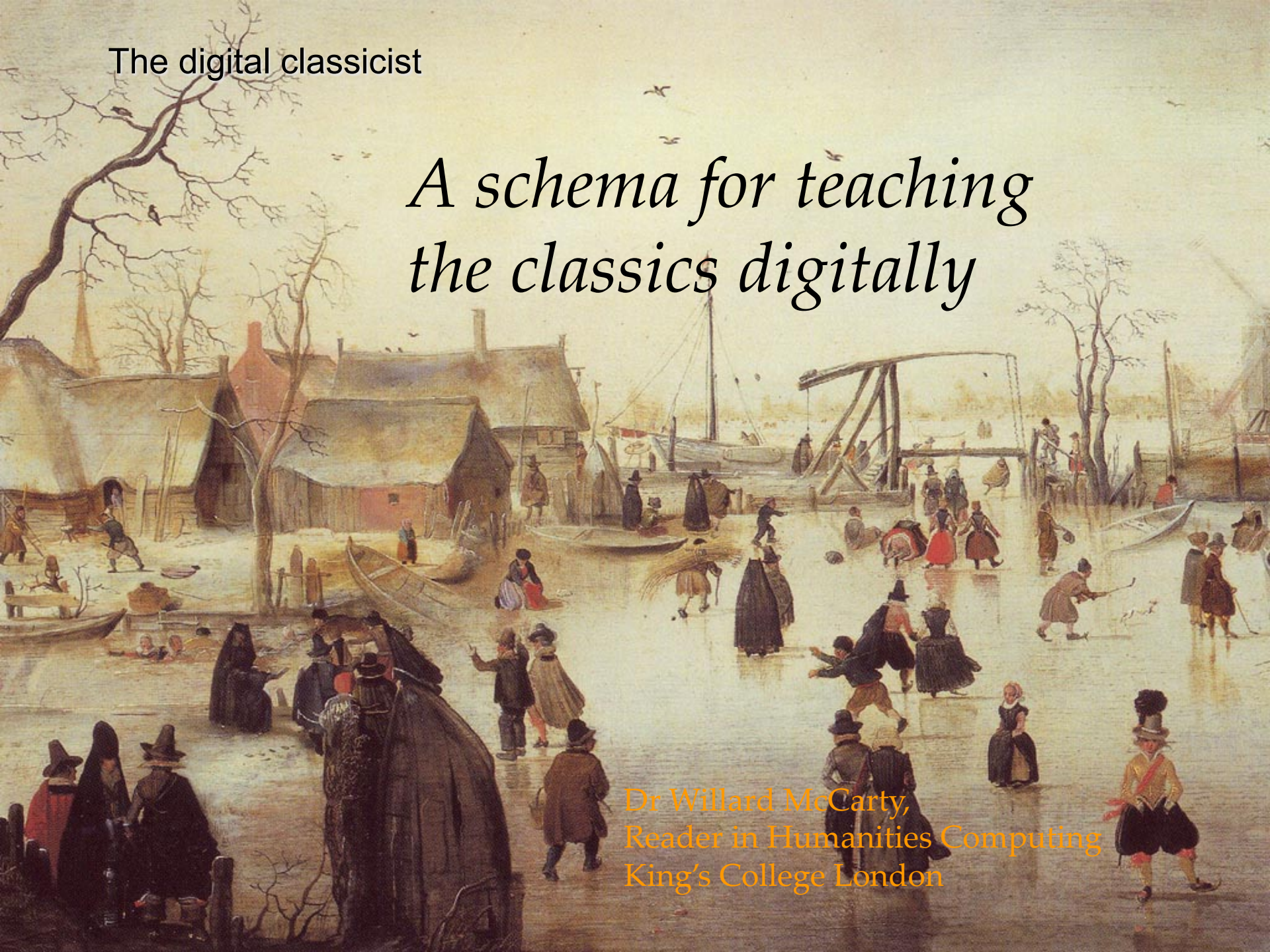


The digital classicist

*A schema for teaching
the classics digitally*

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Community of discourse

Communities are to be distinguished... by the style in which they are imagined.

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (rev. edn., 1991): 4

Collective imagining... takes shape through discursive engagement among interlocutors.... Discourse functions in this context not as a vehicle for transmitting information and beliefs but *as a constitutive force*.

Robert Asen, "Imagining in the Public Sphere", *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 35.4 (2002): 349.

Disciplinary discourse?

The next generation of specialists needs to be trained, but perhaps there are higher intellectual as well as social priorities?

What matters in both spheres, intellectual and social, is the education of students' imagination – their ability “to make present what is absent”.

The classics are only a point of departure!

Constructive discourse

- ◆ In terms of computing (and in terms of the classics) the point is for our students to become *end-makers*, not merely end-users.
- ◆ The question here is, what kind of a course would accomplish that goal for computing and for the classics simultaneously?

Two approaches



- ◆ **Parallel**

- ◆ single specialist course, major/minor or joint honours programme in humanities computing;

- ◆ **Interleaved**

- ◆ one or more courses in which computing theory and practice are explicitly combined with a disciplinary problem or area of study.

Two approaches

- ◆ **Parallel**

- ◆ serves multiple departments (and so may cheaper overall)
- ◆ brings students from classics into direct contact with students from other disciplines
- ◆ teaches the teacher much about interdisciplinarity and about the portability of computing methods.

- ◆ **Interleaved**

- ◆ can be taught by a single (though diversely talented) member of department, though possibly best taught by two lecturers working closely together;
- ◆ Allows for direct, even deep, and carefully guided exploration of disciplinary material with relevant computing methods.

A high-end example

- ♦ Specific sub-disciplinary focus on literary criticism, with the emphasis on the nature and use of imaginative language;
- ♦ A single literary-critical problem in a given text;
- ♦ Consideration of its *Rezeptionsgeschichte* in the native tradition of the students;
- ♦ Comparison of translation-as-commentary with dependent poetic practice;
- ♦ Strong, open-ended research character to the work;
- ♦ Practical, experimental, methodological – and therefore in essence portable to other disciplines, other areas of life.

Structure

- ◆ Alternating triplets of lectures: on Ovid, on computing
- ◆ Theoretical readings (provided digitally, for the sake of efficiency and accessibility)
- ◆ Parallel laboratory-tutorial sessions dedicated to practical work and discussion

Lectures: Introduction & Part I

1. Introductory overview: imaginative language of poetry vs algorithmic reasoning
- I. The literary problem and analytical approach
 2. The literary setting: Ovid's *Metamorphoses*
 3. The literary problem: personification
 4. A phenomenology of personification

Laboratory-tutorials: guided analysis and discussion of personifications in the Latin text of the poem; basic literary criticism of the *Met*.

Lectures: Part II

II. The analytical tools

5. Controlling the complexity: scholar as end-maker of a modelling device
6. Available software models for analysis of text
7. A relational database model of personification

Laboratory-tutorials: review of relational database design; hands-on critical examination of the supplied model.

Lectures: Part III

III. Imaginative language, poetry & personification

8. Imaginative language in linguistics, literary studies, psychology and philosophy
9. Conventionalization vs defamiliarization
10. Analytic vs dialogic reading, with examples from the *Met*

Laboratory-tutorials: guided work on analysis and implementation of personifications in a relational database.

Lectures: Part IV



IV. Technical problems and possibilities

11. Database implementations of the personification figure & of personifying factors
12. Problems with weighting; accommodating different readings
13. Implementing the psychology of personification: saturation & its perceptual analogy

Laboratory-tutorials: guided work on analysis and implementation, continued.

Lectures: Part V

V. Translations & migrations into English

14. Ovid & Ovidian poetics in English, part 1: Renaissance translations of Golding and Sandys
15. Ovid & Ovidian poetics in English, part 2: passages in Shakespeare and Milton; late 20C Ovidian literature
16. Ovid & Ovidian poetics in English, part 3: passages from Ted Hughes, *Tales from Ovid*; David Malouf, *An Imaginary Life*; Jan-Christoph Ransmayr, *Die letzte Welt*; Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds*.

Laboratory-tutorials: preparation of results for presentation; final discussion and submission of assessed work.

Simplifications

A faded, sepia-toned illustration of a busy harbor scene. In the foreground, several figures in period clothing are walking or standing. In the middle ground, there are boats, some with masts, and a large wooden structure that looks like a crane or a platform. In the background, there are buildings and more boats. The overall atmosphere is that of a busy, historical port.

1. Bilingual text (Loeb), or for students with no Latin, a translation alone;
2. Fewer readings;
3. Reduced scope – Ovid only; Ovidian literature only;
4. Work with an existing database rather than construction of one *ab ovo*...

Discussion?

