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16 August 2013. I traveled to Brighton for the annual gathering of the Modernist Studies Association (MSA), the biggest academic conference in my field. I had been to the MSA conference many times before, but this time there was a twist. I was going to participate in the conference’s first-ever “poster session.” Humanities conferences normally consist of oral presentations and seminars, and the MSA’s decision to include a poster session – a common model in the sciences – was meant to recognize the growing prominence of digital humanities. For the first time, the use of humanities research concerned with and conducted with the aid of digital technology. Much of my work in the preceding years had focused on developing computational methods of tracking multi-voicedness in twentieth-century writers such as T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf, and I was glad for an opportunity to present this digital work to my fellow modernists. After a long transatlantic flight with an unhelpful poster tube and several computers in tow, I arrived brimming with enthusiasm.

However well-intentioned, the poster session was a disaster. In an effort to attract maximum traffic, the conference organizers had set us up in the awkward area: my booth – I set behind a table with a large poster to my left and a laptop in front of me to “demo” my work – was directly across from the coffee station. On the first day of the conference, I was asked many questions (“Where is the toilet?”; “Which way to room 312?”; “What time is the plenary?”), but none pertaining to my research. In the visual vocabulary of the humanities conference, a person seated behind a desk in the vicinity of a laptop was stiff – not someone with something to say about literature. On the second day of the conference, in a novel (and somewhat desperate) effort to attract attention to our work, the conference organizers suggested we set up during the wine and cheese reception, albeit a popular event. It was indeed packed – though no one, I feared, was in the mood to discuss textual language processing. One conference-goer, gesticulating wildly in the course of a lively conversation with a colleague, knocked my poster off the wall. My booth was quickly identified as a convenient place to discard empty wine glasses and dirty napkins. The first straw came when one scholar, needing both hands free to