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Introduction to American Studies

Annotated Bibliography

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Queer DH Annotated Bibliography

Barnett, Fiona, Zach Blas, micha cárdenas,[[1]](#footnote-1) Jacob Gaboury, Jessica Marie Johnson, and Margaret Rhee. “QueerOS: A User’s Manual.” In *Debates in the Digital Humanities* *2016*, eds. Matthew Gold & Lauren F. Klein. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016. Retrieved from\_<https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled/section/e246e073-9e27-4bb2-88b2-af1676cb4a94>.

This book chapter is a response to black feminist scholar Kara Keeling’s 2014 “Queer OS,”[[2]](#footnote-2) a short article inspired by Tara McPherson’s critical work on operating systems published in Cinema Journal that conceives an operating system as it might intersect with queer theory and challenges scholars to imagine this OS, how it might function, and the principles that would guide its development. Digital humanities scholars Barnett, et. al. take up this challenge in their contribution to the 2016 edition of *Debates in the Digital Humanities* as they “advance a theory of queerness as technological, operative, and systemic, derived from individual interests, mutual concern, and discussions.” The authors approach Keeling’s challenge structuring their piece as an instruction manual breaking down this system into key components (interface, input/output, applications, etc.), and conceiving these components through a queer lens drawing upon theory and scholarship in digital humanities, queer studies, and media studies. For instance, the section titled “Memory” turns to the work of José Esteban Muñoz, articulating that the nature of memory in a QueerOS would be haunted and “a site of utopian futurity” as well as EU legislation acknowledging a right to be forgotten. Through the conceptual frameworks Barnett, et. al. put forth, they offer queer digital humanities scholars a set of observations to interrogate and revise existing technological structures in order to avoid replicating normativity built into technology as well as to develop projects, technology, and scholarship that offer alternatives.

Bailey, Moya. *Misogynoir Transformed: Black Women's Digital Resistance*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2021.[[3]](#footnote-3)

In 2008, the author coined the term *misogynoir*, describing “the anti-Black racist misogyny that Black women experience, particularly, particularly in US visual and digital culture,” and in this book, Bailey expands her focus to include in this intersectional framework Black “nonbinary, agender, and gender-variant” individuals (1, 23). *Misogynoir Transformed* offers a series of historical examples of misogynoir early in the book from archetypes of mammys to the murder of Sakia Gunn in order to illustrate how intersectional forms of hate function within culture before framing her larger argument that digital creation is a space of resistance via “Digital Alchemy,” a process by which these individuals tack the abuse directed in them and transnform it into community and resilience. Each chapter of the book centers around a body of digital work examined through a unique methodology: the first examines the damage done by viral videos such as “Shit Black Girls Say” and uses the web-based text analysis tool Voyant to examine YouTube comments and Tweets, the second examines hashtags #GirlsLikeUs and #FreeCeCe as sites of transgender community support and engagement, the third examines web discusses three web series via lenses of production and narrative, and the final chapter takes an ethnographic approach interviewing two nonbinary femme Tumblr users about their use of the platform for self-care. Bailey’s *Misogynoir Transformed* demonstrates how scholars in the field of queer digital humanities can examine queer digital culture while employing digital humanities methods to do so.

Chang, Edmond Y. “Playing as Making.” In Disrupting the Digital Humanities, edited by Dorothy

Kim and Jesse Stommel. Punctum Books, 2018.

In this book chapter, Chang addresses the assertions made by digital humanist Stephen Ramsay in a set of controversial 2011 blog posts that DH practitioners need an understanding of coding; Chag makes the case that by using a technology, users gain an intuitive comprehension of that technology even if they do not have an understanding of the engineering that produced it. He makes this case through a reading of merritt k’s *Lim*, a game in which players navigate their avatar, an orange box, room-by-room through a maze made up of gray squares while avoiding the attacks of unfriendly squares. Chang argues that even if players do not have first-hand knowledge of the code used to build the game, they develop intuitive knowledge of making as they move around and experiment in the environment, learn what moves are possible using which keys, and identify the behavior and look of unfriendly characters within this world. The author notes a “wonderful,” “queer” moment when the aggressive blocks knock the player’s avatar through the wall of the maze (a game event that the designer has neither confirmed nor denied to be a glitch or purposeful) resulting in the player continuing the game outside of the perceived bounds of play, which offers an example of what Joanna Drucker calls “performative materiality” (365). Chang’s argument offers a queer perspective on digital humanities pedagogy centering the playful and creative, which is also present in Queer DH scholarship focused on critical making (e.g., Zack Blas and micha cárdenas’ *Queer Technologies*), examinations of online communities, and other work on video games by Bonnie Ruberg and Naomi Clark.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Ruberg, Bonnie, Jason Boyd, and James Howe. “Toward a Queer Digital Humanities.” In *Bodies of Information: Intersectional Feminism and the Digital Humanities,* edited by Elizabeth Losh and Jacqueline Wernimont. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

A product of the Digital Humanities Summer Institute course[[5]](#footnote-5) taught by Ruberg et. al., this book chapter offers an overview of the field of queer digital humanities from its beginnings to, as the title might suggest, its potential futurities. The chapter situates the field in dialogue with ongoing interventions in the digital humanities “calling for an increased investment in social criticism” such as #TransformDH—which was launched at 2011’s American Studies Association Conference (109)—before going on to acknowledge that in the same way queer studies is indebted to Black studies scholars so too are queer digital humanities scholars building on the work of scholars seeking to center race within the discipline. Their overview of the field as it exists, titled “Where is the queerness in digital humanities?,” notes examinations of queer obejcts of study like *Texting Wilde*, Edmond Chang’s work at the intersections of queerness and critical pedagogy, and *Queer Technologies*—Zach Blas and micha cárdenas’ critical making project developing objects and a“queer programming anti-language” (111). The authors’ work is significant not only for the constellations it maps, but also for the unrealized possibilities they chart, taking for example “QueerOS: A User’s Manual” in addition to work in the areas of game studies, library studies (embracing messiness in cataloguing), and ongoing discourse regarding glitches. Overall, their chapter makes the case for a digital humanities, a QueerDH, less concerned with “making sense of the world through supposedly objective computational tools'' and more grounded in queerness by “refus[ing] to allow us to stop reflecting, stop challenging, and stop questioning” (123).

Tilton, Lauren, Amy Earhart, Matt Delmont, Susan Garfinkel, Jesse P. Karlsberg, and Angel David Nieves, eds. “Towards a Critically Engaged Digital Practice: American Studies and the Digital Humanities.” Special issue, *American Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2018). [doi:10.1353/aq.2018.0025](http://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2018.0025).[[6]](#footnote-6)

This issue of American Quarterly was developed as a response to criticism, particularly the feedback provided by the Digital Humanities Caucus of the American Studies Association in response to a new “Digital Projects Review” section, as Mari Yoshihara states in the issue’s “Editor’s Note.” In their guest introduction, Tilton, et. al. address the controversy of the journal’s inaugural reviews being “out of step with the vibrant and innovative American studies approaches” by emphasizing the diversity of the fields of American studies and digital humanities in terms of approaches, methodologies, and objects of study (361). The guest editors’ introduction posits a digital humanities informed by scholarship addressing race, gender, sexuality, and the field’s “critical turn.” The contents of this volume offer a noteworthy consideration of significance of the queer digital humanities subfield within this terrain as we consider its presence throughout the volume—a sort of barometer for the status of queer digital humanities’ place at the table. The special volume’s contents addressing queeness include: “Becoming Digital, Becoming Queer,” an essay by H. N. Lukes and David J. Kim on their Scalar-based project *The Grit and Glamour of Queer LA Subculture* documenting their methodological and pedagogical approaches; queer-feminist cultural geographer Jen Jack Gieseking’s “Where Are We? The Method of Mapping with GIS in Digital Humanities” on critical GIS; a piece by Bonnie Ruberg titled “Queer Indie Video Games as an Alternative Digital Humanities;” pieces by Magdalena Zaborowska and Melanie Walsh discuss projects examining the impact of queer writer James Baldwin with the former discussing work archiving the writer’s house as a virtual museum and the latter examining the circulation of quotes by the writer on social media in the context of #BlackLivesMatter; and finally Alexis Lothian’s “From Transformative Works to #transformDH,” which considers what digital humanities can learn from critical fan studies about generating spaces and thought further grounded in representation, queerness, and social justice. The guest editors’ inclusion and foregrounding of this work suggests the value and significane of queer digital humanities, at least at the intersections of DH and American Studies.

1. Were I writing this in six months, I’d consider including cárdenas’ upcoming book *Poetic Operations: Trans of Color Art in Digital Media*, which will be released in Feb. 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. I considered including Keeling’s article instead, but felt that this article spoke more directly to the field. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This annotation is indebted to Ariel Elyce Stevenson, Adrienne Adams, Brooklyne Gipson, and Ka'Lyn Coghill, the organizers/participants of the panel discussion “Black Feminist Digital Vernaculars: A Roundtable on Moya Bailey’s *Misogynoir Transformed*” at the Association for Computing in the Humanities virtual conference on July 23, 2021. My annotation is significantly based upon my notes of their roundtable and my [Twitter thread](https://twitter.com/CD_Clawson/status/1418594172949438468) livetweeting the session. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Though I was tempted (and prepared) to include “What Is Queerness in Games, Anyway?” a piece by Naomi Clarkaddressing queerness and play in the area of game studies. I decided that Chang’s chapter spoke to the field of queer digital humanities more broadly because it is situated in conversation with some of the prevailing debates of digital humanities, most explicitly the importance of “building.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This annotated bibliography is also indebted to the organizers of this seminar who shared their syllabus and readings with me following 2019’s DHSI. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. I wasn’t sure exactly how to cite a special issue of a journal and [this reference guide](https://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/cermes/getdoc/4115ae89-9555-4b41-ae32-b28739335d34/cite_chicago_style_dec2013.aspx) seemed to contain the best example I could find that wasn’t paywalled at <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/> as referenced in this [FAQ item](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/data/faq/topics/Documentation/faq0160.html) on the site. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)