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ENGL 877

OMV Exploration 2

Small Data Set

Narrowing down the larger data set from twelve to nine texts was a lot harder than I had originally thought it would be. But I am glad that I am starting to see a few more potentially linked themes make their presence known. I’m still not entirely sure what we are planning to do for our final projects, so I am again hoping that this will become more apparent in the next few days in class. I know that going forward I want to make sure to get the most out of this class (I am not a current degree-seeking student, having received my master’s degree last May and returned to teaching in the fall, so I am simply taking this class to learn more about the digital humanities field – past, present, and future – and eventually obtain a digital humanities graduate certificate). I will say that I have now read the shorter works in their entirety and skimmed the two larger book-length texts and am looking forward to reading them both to see what more I can find to connect all of these texts for the final project. For a little more context, here are my brief takeaways from the readings: “What Have I to Do Any More with Idols?” is essentially a retelling of Corinthians from the Bible, calling readers to question idols who put themselves above God. “Confessions of an Idolater” is about a man who finds Christianity and improves his life in many aspects after doing so. Both of the two book-length works I have chosen to work with are collections of an author’s poetry, both people of color and of interest to my own creative writing interests. The letters I have opted to work with so far have given much-needed context on the times, the locations, and the people of various points where the themes I’m planning on looking into make themselves known. At the moment, my three favorite McKay poems in the collection are “The Harlem Dancer,” “Outcast,” and “If We Must Die,” and my three favorite Derozio poems in the collection (which was apparently never published in his lifetime, which is also a theme worth exploring) were “The Harp of India,” “The Fakeer of Jungheera,” and “My Native Land.” I’m looking forward to reading the rest and finding more links.

As for the themes discovered and encountered, I can say that I had no trouble at all narrowing down the connective tissue to five. My thematic exploration led me to have deeper questions regarding race, religion, idol worship, poetry, and historical figures. My current scholarly interests lie in working with letters of correspondence, something that can be traced back to work for the Whitman Archive at the moment. I have also always been fascinated by the words and the works of Frederick Douglass. The poetry of Claude McKay is something I find exciting as I peruse the opening pages. And the letters and periodicals are things that will tie together nice thematically (two specifically interweaving thoughts on religion and idol worship, and the rest broadly touching on the other themes mentioned above). Obviously this will become more apparent and focused as we discuss in class and move onto the third One More Voice exploration.

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