Reading Response 3:

I'm a first year English master student who is currently exploring potential thesis topics. In the process to figure out what I want to spend the next year writing, I've been exploring the different time periods. Despite everyone telling me, I should consider a topic within the 19th century, I've been very adamant about steering clear of it. I haven't been able to figure out exactly what disconnects me, a person predominantly trained in British Literature in a country that was colonized by the British, from the 19th century, however during this week's reading I've come to understand my aversion to the 19th century. In the essay, "Undiscipling Victorian Studies", Ronjaunee Chatterjee, Alicia Mireles Christoff, and Amy R. Wong write that, "the study of the 19th century in Britain—a period and geographical center that consolidated a modern idea of race—lack, in its contemporary scholarship, a rigorous account of race and racialization". Oftentimes I either felt attacked or erased—both of which are violent in their own ways—during my experiences studying the 19th century. Therefore, I was eager to learn how Chatterjee, Christoff, and Wong suggest how to overhaul Victorian Studies.

Ronjaunee Chatterjee, Alicia Mireles Christoff, and Amy R. Wong argue in their essay, "Undisciplining Victorian Studies" that the field of Victorian Studies needs "a more robust historical and theoretical account of our objects of study that will more properly attend to the whiteness (as white supremacy) that structures [the] field's scholarly and social practices". I must admit when I initially read their argument despite agreeing, I was wary of the type of 'renovation' they were suggesting. It had been my experience that oftentimes when well-meaning white people seek to expand a framework to be more inclusive and diverse, simply result in adding works by marginalized communities within a white supremacist framework.

However, Chatterjee, Christoff and Wong were adamant that they weren't "advocating for an accumulative project that would leave the boundaries of VS untouched and intact" but rather change the thinking framework of "scholarly fields and of field-formation itself", "radically rethink and even unmake VS itself", and "resist assimilationist thinking". Instead, Chatterjee, Christoff and Wong suggest that the Victorian Studies engage in "scholarship across fields and disciplines for a richer cross-fertilization of ideas...a refashioning of academic structures to better serve the purposes of equity and justice". Though this sounds like a viable idea, as a Black woman in academia it has been my experience that most educational frameworks are steeped in Anti-blackness. Therefore, the problem isn't within the framework of Victorian Studies but rather the educational framework, which would make sense the foundation of education was never meant to withstand the inclusion of minority communities.