Reading Response 4:

Throughout the semester, I’ve been considering tension between minority identities and power structures and how the digital space could aggravate that tension. There are several essays that have helped me think through and complicate my thoughts. The essays “What’s in a Name?" by Arnold, Taylor, and Lauren Tilton, “Anglophone World Literatures: Introduction” by Neumann, Birgit, and Gabriele Rippl, “Undisciplining Victorian Studies” by Chatterjee, Ronjaunee, Alicia Mireles Christoff, and Amy R. Wong, and “Intersectionality and Infrastructure: Toward a Critical Digital Humanities” by Christina Boyles all explore different aspects of identity and power structures. Despite their different focuses, these essays share several common themes.

One such theme is the idea that identity is complex and multifaceted. “What’s in a Name?” highlights the idea that names can carry a lot of cultural and personal significance, and that they are not always straightforward or easy to understand. Similarly, “Anglophone World Literatures” explores the complexities of identity in literature, noting that authors often draw on multiple cultures and experiences to create their work. “Intersectionality and Infrastructure” takes this a step further, arguing that we must recognize the multiple identities that individuals hold and the ways in which they intersect and influence each other. These essays all demonstrate that identity is not a simple or fixed concept, but rather a complex and constantly evolving one. Therefore, I’m forced to wonder, since identities are complex and constantly changing, then how do we develop a digital space that accommodates and evolves alongside identities?

Another common theme is the idea that power structures play a significant role in shaping identity and experience. “What’s in a Name?” notes that names can be used to exert power over individuals or to reinforce dominant cultural norms. “Undisciplining Victorian Studies” explores the power structures inherent in academic disciplines, arguing that we must critically examine and challenge these structures in order to create more inclusive and diverse fields of study. Similarly, “Intersectionality and Infrastructure” argues that power structures are embedded in the technology we use and the digital spaces we inhabit, and that we must actively work to dismantle these structures in order to create more equitable and just systems. These essays sparked the question, if it were possible to create a digital space that accommodates and evolves alongside identities, how do we then ensure that the language used within this digital space isn't coded white supremacist language? Hence, I was intrigued by the essay, "Anglophone World Literatures", which argues that we must more beyond the narrow canon of "great" literature and engage with a broader range or voices and experiences. If we were to take this argument and apply it to language at large, would this expand our understandings and the language used in digital spaces.

Think Tank: Brett Berg, Jeff Hill, Tina Le, and Akua Manieson