UNL Spring 2023 Digital Humanities Class Reading Responses for the first half of the semester

1.

It is important to examine the effect Christian conversions had on native groups during colonialization, especially the effect on native women. This project delves deeper into some of the voices identified by the One More Voice (OMV) project. The goal of OMV is to give a platform to authors who had been othered during the British Colonial era. In this project, I examine how a subset of these formerly othered voices uniquely inform us about the spread of Christianity throughout the colonized world, specifically the African continent. There are two notable sources from outside of Africa to bring in a more global perspective of the effect of colonization and Christian conversion on women. In this project, I examine the role of native missionaries, conversion stories, and how newly Christian women interacted with the world. The goal of this project is to understand how the spread of Christianity through colonization affected the women who were colonized.

2.

Colonialism and neocolonialism are important considerations within digital humanities. The work that digital humanities revives is often produced under colonialism, which makes it important to consider the structural implications of the time of original creation. What was the society like? Was it safe for them to write what they wrote? How did it survive? What are the odds that this piece was sanitized to be more palatable to the colonizers? This leads to the importance of the English language. English is a key language for academics because of the vast effects of the British colonial empire. We are not learning a new language to engage with the text, nor are we exploring the nuances of what particular words could have meant in their original language to determine if the translations are correct; we have the neocolonialist luxury of assuming they are.

Within digital humanities, it is important for researchers to realize their own structural positions and how that affects their biases. Because of the importance of the British empire in shaping the western world, the expectations that western researchers have for how texts are classified and what constitutes a novel are valuable. Acknowledging that there are other ways to write books than what we are used to is important to ensure that we do not continue perpetrating the ideals of colonialism.

The perpetuation of capitalism's surveillance state is an important consideration for the research done within digital humanities and how researchers engage with materials. Researchers who have federal and state funding can be subjected to requests under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which can be problematic for researchers who work closely with controversial subject matter. In other countries, this is more than an FOIA; researchers can be in danger for what they do, especially if there is potential for their findings to speak against their government.

Sustainability and accessibility are central themes of digital humanities work. The machines used to do digital humanities are important. The technology and equipment need to be robust and perform well, but they also need to be easy to use, reliable, and not easily broken. In western capitalism, technology is created with essentially a built-in countdown clock for when the tech is no more useful than a paperweight. This is contrary to the mission of digital humanities research as it leads to less sustainable research practices and more waste in landfills across the globe. The reliability of technology is also important to prevent hacking. Ransom hacking of institutions is not an uncommon practice and is something we as researchers should acknowledge and prepare for so that one day when our research is hacked or taken for ransom, we already have contingency plans in place. In research, we need to be proactive about data breach threats, not reactive.