**ENGL 877 Reading Response 3 by Tina Le**

This Reading Response comes from a course called ENGL 877 Advanced Topics in Digital Humanities at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Spring 2023. Each week, we do Reading Responses engaging with ideas from the texts we read that week. This is the third Reading Response, along with a comment I left on a classmate’s Reading Response:

**Instructions for Reading Response 3:**

As we mentioned in class, we covered a lot of ground between this week's readings and our class discussions, so this week's reading response is left fully open for you to cover any aspect of this that you like.

Also, after you submit your response, please read one of your colleagues' responses and write a short reply in which you offer some constructive feedback. Please choose an essay upon which no one has yet commented.

Specs

Undergraduates: 400 words + 100 words feedback

Graduates 500 words + 100 words feedback

After the readings this week, I’ve been thinking about publishers’ role in determining what literatures do or do not get circulated widely and what we can do to make texts more accessible for writers and readers given the digital technologies that we have. In “Anglophone World Literatures,” Neumann and Ripple critique how publishing hubs, such as London, define what literature is, causing other works that don’t take on European forms to be seen as peripheral and less-than. In “Undisciplining Victorian Studies,” Chatterjee, Christoff, and Wong critiques the inaccessibility of academic publishing, explaining that their choice to publish their essay “in a non-paywalled form, outside the disciplinary institution of the academic journal, would enable us to build broader coalitions—especially with those who may not have access to such institutionalized spaces.” They also call for us to “interrogate our own citational politics” because they “worry about the ways that crucial ideas and paradigms developed by scholars of color only get taken seriously in VS when they are repeated or absorbed by white scholars.” By deciding what tastes readers should have and what—and who—is worthy of publishing, publishers gatekeep the act of sharing writing.

In addition, the trends that publishers capitalize upon end up stifling topics and styles of writing. For example, after the success of Marie Kondo’s *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, many books followed suit with variations of the title format *The Life-Changing Magic of [fill in the blank].* Trendiness also shows up in the visual design of books; this article “Behold, the Book Blob” explores why books released in a similar time frame often have a similar cover design. If what someone wants to write about does not fit what publishers think would be popular at the time, it may be difficult for them to get their work out into the world.

In the context of our DH class, digital technology has the potential to combat some of the gatekeeping qualities of formal publishing, but we still need to be wary of constraints and dangers that Glass warns us about in “Reprogramming the Invisible Discipline.” Digital tools and platforms can make it more accessible for writers to share their work without going through formal publishing processes. For instance, at the high school I taught at, one of the English electives that students could take was Children’s Literature. The final was to create their own children’s book. A student recently self-published their book from that class, and it’s now for sale on Amazon. However, there’s also danger in Amazon being a giant in the self-publishing world given their ethical infringements. Social media, such as the #BookTok community on TikTok, also influences what books become popular. As Glass explains, we need to be mindful of the technologies we use and not be complacent about them. As we’ve been discussing world literatures, another constraint we still face is the fact that some websites that can be accessed in one country can’t be accessed in other countries. That makes it challenging to have a broader circulation of world literatures.

ex: after

- article “Behold, the Book Blob” <https://www.printmag.com/book-covers/the-book-cover-behold-the-book-blob/> about why many books have a similar cover design

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/01/books/tiktok-books-booktok.html>

ex: However, there’s also danger in Amazon being a giant in self-publishing platforms given their ethical infringements. As we’ve discussed with Glass’s article “Reprogramming the Invisible Discipline,” we need to be mindful

**Comment to Thara**

Hi Thara,

I appreciate your discussion of how Open Access can be a step to make texts available to more people, but that doesn’t always equate to visibility to the general public—especially given the jargony language of academia. This reminds me of the “What’s in a Name?” article we read about digital humanities labs; these labs might be available and useful to university-affiliated folks, but not necessarily the general public.

Something that your discussion of making texts Open Access reminds me of how different that process is in different disciplines. A classmate last semester talked about how in STEM, the *Nature* journal charges $11,390 to make an article open access in their journal. Where does that money come from? Who pays for it? It reinforces inequities, especially for scholars in marginalized positions who do not have the financial backing from their institutions.