



Alternative Historiographies of the Digital Humanities

Edited by Dorothy Kim & Adeline Koh



ALTERNATIVE HISTORIOGRAPHIES
OF THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES

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Fig. 1. Hieronymus Bosch, *Ship of Fools* (1490–1500)

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INTRODUCTION

Media Histories, Media Archaeologies, and the Politics and Genealogies of the Digital Humanities

Dorothy Kim

To begin to discuss alternative genealogies and histories of the digital humanities, we have to first discuss the genealogy of the digital as the site of settler colonialism and transatlantic chattel slavery. I am indebted to Jessie Daniels's discussion in "The Algorithmic Rise of the Alt-Right" that succinctly points to this undergirded issue.¹ Historically, the early architects of cyberspace always imagined the internet as an extension of US manifest destiny, a "frontier" for "freedom." As Jessie Daniels explains, you can see this in the Electronic Frontier Foundation and the manifesto of its founder, John Perry Barlow.² He writes:

Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave

1 Jessie Daniels, "The Algorithmic Rise of the 'Alt-Right,'" *Contexts* 17, no. 1 (February 2018): 60–65.

2 *Ibid.*

us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather.

We have no elected government, nor are we likely to have one, so I address you with no greater authority than that with which liberty itself always speaks. I declare the global social space we are building to be naturally independent of the tyrannies you seek to impose on us. You have no moral right to rule us nor do you possess any methods of enforcement we have true reason to fear. [...]

We are creating a world that all may enter without privilege or prejudice accorded by race, economic power, military force, or station of birth. [...]

Our identities have no bodies, so, unlike you, we cannot obtain order by physical coercion. We believe that from ethics, enlightened self-interest, and the commonweal, our governance will emerge. [...]

These increasingly hostile and colonial measures place us in the same position as those previous lovers of freedom and self-determination who had to reject the authorities of distant, uninformed powers. We must declare our virtual selves immune to your sovereignty, even as we continue to consent to your rule over our bodies. We will spread ourselves across the Planet so that no one can arrest our thoughts.

We will create a civilization of the Mind in Cyberspace. May it be more humane and fair than the world your governments have made before.

Davos, Switzerland

February 8, 1996³

This idea of a colorblind, bodiless digital frontier of freedom is the frame-out of the digital worlds we deal with now. Daniels, Lisa Nakamura, and other scholars have debunked this myth

3 John Perry Barlow, "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace," *Electronic Frontier Foundation*, <https://www.eff.org/cyberspace-independence>.

that the internet is free of racism, colorblind, and/or free of actually gendered, raced bodies.⁴ Daniels explains that Silicon Valley CEOs and engineers have mined this ethos while developing the third-party platforms on which we move through our daily social, commercial, and academic transactions.⁵ They are invested in this “raceless” and disembodied internet that is imagined as a frontier utopia. As the internet is based on the centrality of coding in a monolingual English and American framework, it thus participates in the narrative of American exceptionalism, the digital jeremiad on the hill.⁶ The digital then is based on settler colonialism viewed as a version of the American West. Yet from these terms, we know it only spells out further settler colonial genocide, stolen land turned into white property, and unending epistemic and devastating erasure of Indigenous people and culture.

What further compounds this is the fact that digital structures are deeply raced: embedded in these digital structures lies the architecture of US chattel slavery. Daniels points to Anna Everett’s work.⁷ In her 2001 monograph, *The Revolution Will Be Digitized: Afrocentricity and the Digital Public Sphere*, and in her reprinted 2002 article, “The Revolution Will Be Digitized: Afrocentricity and the Digital Public Sphere,”⁸ she describes the

4 See Jesse Daniels, *Cyber Racism: White Supremacy Online and the New Attack on Civil Rights, Perspectives on a Multiracial America* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009) and Lisa Nakamura, “Cyberace,” *PMLA* 123, no. 5 (2008): 1673–82.

5 Daniels, “The Algorithmic Rise of the ‘Alt-Right,’”

6 See Michelle Moravec, “Exceptionalism in Digital Humanities: Community, Collaboration, and Consensus,” in *Disrupting the Digital Humanities*, eds. Dorothy Kim and Jesse Stommel (Earth: punctum books, 2018), 169–96 and Gretchen McCulloch, “Coding Is for Everyone — As Long as You Speak English,” *Wired*, April 8, 2019, <https://www.wired.com/story/coding-is-for-everyone-as-long-as-you-speak-english/>.

7 Daniels, “Rise of the ‘Alt-Right.’”

8 Anna Everett, “The Revolution Will Be Digitized: Afrocentricity and the Digital Public Sphere,” *Social Text* 20, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 125. See also Anna Everett, *The Revolution Will Be Digitized: Afrocentricity and the Digital Public Sphere* (Utrecht: Uitgave Faculteit der Letteren, 2001).

embedded North American chattel slavery manifest in turning on her personal computer. She writes:

In powering up my PC, I am confronted with DOS-based text that gives me pause. Before access to the MMX technology powering my system is granted, I am alerted to this opening textual encoding: “Pri. Master Disk, Pri. Slave Disk, Sec. Master, Sec. Slave.” Programmed here is a virtual hierarchy organizing my computer’s software operations. Given the nature of my subject matter, it might not be surprising that I am perpetually taken aback by the programmed boot-up language informing me that my access to the cyber frontier indeed is predicated upon a digitally configured “master/slave” relationship. As the on-screen text runs through its remaining string of required boot-up language and codes, I often wonder why programmers chose such signifiers that hark back to our nation’s ignominious past.⁹

This structural, violent, anti-Black naming continued into the controversies surrounding the language of standard computer programs, including Python.¹⁰ It was only in the last two years that Python finally removed the Master/Slave language from its computing language.¹¹ Github only began discussing this removal in the aftermath of the #GeorgeFloyd protests in Minnesota.¹² The digital world, the internet, is an extension of US settler colonialism, the digital arm of US manifest destiny that already structures through its system the frames of US chattel slavery. Thus, we cannot begin a discussion of the alternative ge-

9 Everett, “The Revolution Will Be Digitized,” 125.

10 “Master Slave Communication,” *Python Testing Infrastructure*, <https://pyti.readthedocs.io/en/latest/master-slave.html>.

11 Daniel Oberhaus, “‘Master/Slave’ Terminology Was Removed from Python Programming Language,” *Motherboard: Tech by Vice*, September 13, 2018, https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/8x7akv/masterslave-terminology-was-removed-from-python-programming-language.

12 Elizabeth Landau, “Tech Confronts Its Use of the Labels ‘Master’ and ‘Slave,’” *Wired*, July 6, 2020, <https://www.wired.com/story/tech-confronts-use-labels-master-slave/>.

nealogies and historiographies of the digital humanities without discussing this genealogy of the digital.

At DHSI 2019, Arun Jacob, one of the writers included in this volume, presented a talk that examined digital platforms and tools through the lens of a critical media archaeology that is politicized, raced, gendered, and considers the issues currently related to surveillance, security, and the complex interconnection between digital media development and the military-industrial complex. Jacob defines media archaeology vis-à-vis Jussi Parikka's *What Is Media Archaeology* (2012)¹³ as “a field that attempts to understand new and emerging media through close examination of the past, and especially through critical scrutiny of dominant progressivist narratives of popular commercial media.”¹⁴ Jacob's presentation included an analysis of several different digital tools and their histories.

One of these tools is the ubiquitous ArcGIS. By examining its history, its genealogy, along with a media archaeology methodology that also references Parikka's *A Geology of Media*,¹⁵ we can rethink the digital humanities through an examination of the history of the media tool or platform or practice as well as an examination of its structures. In this way, Jacob follows the origin genealogy of ArcGIS and ESRI to Laura and Jack Dangermound, who established the ESRI in 1969 for “digital mapping and analysis services.”¹⁶ Jacob excavates the history of ESRI in relation to its military-industrial complex history and even its current capabilities to transform into “Military Tools for ArcGIS” as a straightforward “extension” of the ArcGIS

13 Jussi Parikka, *What Is Media Archaeology?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012).

14 Arun Jacob's Digital Humanities Summer Institute 2019 presentation is available here: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1OhTECuxOJDVEo9jyydjTA2FBrPCD72pa8iam7blK1ns/edit#slide=id.g5b4675e386_o_53. See also Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_archaeology.

15 Jussi Parikka, *A Geology of Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

16 Jacob cites Miguel Helft, “The Godfather of Digital Maps,” *Forbes*, February 10, 2016, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/miguelhelft/2016/02/10/the-godfather-of-digital-maps/#4b55009e4da9>.

desktop.¹⁷ This is juxtaposed with the favorable press that the Dangermounds have gotten for their environmental conservation work—in particular, the Conservation land, the Coastal Ranch at Point Conception, as well as the Dangermound Endowed Chair in Conservation Studies at UCSB.¹⁸ Gender is an interesting point of analysis with this genealogy of the digital humanities because, as a husband and wife team, this includes the participation of a white woman in the formation, building, and work to create a digital geospatial system primarily used to find war targets. Jacob charts a historical genealogy of ESRI, which has a huge share of the GIS business, that also intersects with a philanthropic, “conservation,” and environmental profile that ESRI and its founders project. Thus, one of the main areas of digital humanities—digital mapping—often built on the ESRI platform, has and continues to have a history that is intertwined with the military-industrial complex, war, and ongoing violent settler colonialism. It is through media archaeology, microhistory, and a wider net in addressing community praxis—the ways in which the internet’s most toxic elements can enter into the research and pedagogical experience—that many of the essays in this collection resituate the genealogies and historiographies of the digital humanities. Thus, these essays address whiteness, fascism, race, decoloniality, feminist materiality, toxic masculine gamer cultures, queer digital histories, multilingualism, the military-industrial complex and the history of area studies and environmental studies, Indigenous futures, Black futurities, Black diasporic protest, Black digital social media, Black

17 Jacob’s discussion of the ArcGIS desktop: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1OhTECuxOJDVEo9jyydjTA2FBrPCD72pa8iam7blK1ns/edit#slide=id.g5b4675e386_o_118.

18 Ibid. Jacob points to the following press releases: “The Nature Conservancy Preserves 24,000-acre Coastal Ranch at Point Conception with \$165 Million Gift from Esri Founders,” *The Nature Conservancy*, December 21, 2017, <https://www.nature.org/en-us/explore/newsroom/the-nature-conservancy-preserves-24000-acre-coastal-ranch-at-point-conceptio/> and “Preserving Nature: UC Santa Barbara announces Dangermond Endowed Chair in Conservation Studies,” *The Current*, 2017, <https://www.news.ucsb.edu/2017/018606/preserving-nature>.

feminist archival praxis, cultural studies, digital archives of the global South, and the spectre of IBM as the origin myth of DH.

Within these essays, a main focus is on the question of power in thinking about genealogies, history, praxis, pedagogy, and futures of the digital humanities. However, this book engages with three main historical methodologies — media archaeology, the discussion of historiography in relation to “big data” and big humanities/digital humanities; and the discussion of silence and history making. Media archaeology as a methodology is characterized as “a sobering conceptual friction in the way that certain theorists identified with the field, such as Geert Lovink, use it to undertake ‘a hermeneutic reading of the ‘new’ against the grain of the past, rather than telling of the histories of technologies from past to present.’”¹⁹ This volume is an instantiation of media archaeology and particularly its tendencies to go “against the grain” and push back against “progress model” narratives. Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka explain that: “Media archaeologists have challenged the rejection of history by modern media culture and theory alike by pointing out hitherto unnoticed continuities and ruptures... On the basis of their discoveries, media archaeologists have begun to construct alternate histories of suppressed, neglected, and forgotten media that do not point teleologically to the present media-cultural condition as their “perfection.””²⁰ This volume rethinks media archaeology in relation to “alternate histories” as well as potential “futures” particularly in regards to how power, different marginal groups, have been embedded in these “suppressed, neglected, and forgotten media” histories.

19 Lori Emerson, *Reading Writing Interfaces* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), xii. See also Geert Lovink, *My First Recession: Critical Internet Cultures in Transition* (Rotterdam: Nai Publishers, 2004), 11.

20 Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka, “Introduction: An Archaeology of Media Archaeology,” in *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, eds. Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 3.

The second historical methodological discussion is in relation to longer considerations of history and big data. In particular, the debates in historiography about different models of historical inquiry predicated on a genealogy based on 19th-century German models of *Wissenschaft*. This discussion reconsiders the conflict between the methodologies championed by Theodor Mommsen's vision of a Big Humanities in his systematic collection and collaborative "industrial" model vs. Friedrich Nietzsche's critique of *Wissenschaft* in which he supported a vision that "philology was a way of life and the philologist was an ethical persona."²¹ This discourse about the longer histories of "big data" projects and their methodological priorities in contrast to the individual scholar and his/her interpretive interaction with the past leaves out precisely the history of the workers, what Mommsen termed *Arbeiter* in what was ostensibly his large-scale Big Humanities "database" project of classical epigraphs.²² However, this examination rarely addresses the issue of how "the history of the workers" or even the "individual scholar and his/her(/their) interpretive interaction with the past" can in fact also be a history of fascism and white supremacist actors. What do you do when we know that Nietzsche was a primary source for Germany's 20th-century fascism and the current far right?²³ How do these questions about different kinds of knowledge production also then intersect with the work of Black queer feminists in the Combahee River Collective and how intersectionality, identity politics, and autoethnography especially of BIWOC create friction with Nietzsche's idea of the "ethical philologist" and whose imagined lived experiences gets to interpret the past.²⁴ In fact, in

21 Chad Wellmon, "Loyal Workers and Distinguished Scholars: Big Humanities and the Ethics of Knowledge," *Modern Intellectual History* 16, no. 1 (2019): 116.

22 *Ibid.*, 97, 108.

23 *Ibid.*, 108–13. Sean Illing, "The Alt-Right Is Drunk on Bad Readings of Nietzsche. The Nazis Were Too," *Vox*, December 30, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/2017/8/17/16140846/alt-right-nietzsche-richard-spencer-nazism>.

24 Keeanga Yamahtta Taylor, ed., *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017).

reassessing the work philology, scholars have discussed the raciolinguistic bent of the “Romance of Philology” and especially the romance of Germanic philology (English national and German national)²⁵ in relation to racialized white nationalism. The ethical Germanic philologist can be a white supremacist, if not potentially a fascist. The field of philology is ripe with a raciolinguistic focus on genealogical origins as a form of raciolinguistic white supremacy. Big Humanities, in either *Wissenschaft* vision, cannot escape its entanglement with white supremacy and with nineteenth and twentieth-century fascism.

Finally, in Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, he writes that by examining the process of history we can “discover the differential exercise of power that makes some narratives possible and silences others.”²⁶ This volume on *Alternative Historiographies of the Digital Humanities* examines the process of history in the narrative of the digital humanities. This volume’s *raison-d’être* in considering DH’s historical narrative is to dissect power. In essence, as Trouillot explains: “Power is constitutive of the story. Tracking power through various ‘moments’ simply helps emphasize the fundamentally processual character of historical production”²⁷ Trouillot’s discussion of the four-stage system of silences — from “the making of sources,” “the making of archives,” “the making of narratives,” “the making of history” — highlights the locations where silences enter the process of history.²⁸ He explains that “any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly.”²⁹ It is the silences

25 See Shyama Rajendran, “Undoing ‘the Vernacular’: Dismantling Structures of Raciolinguistic Supremacy,” *Literature Compass* 16 (2019): e12544 and Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

26 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 25.

27 *Ibid.*, 28.

28 *Ibid.*, 26.

29 *Ibid.*, 27.

in these alternative media histories that many of these essays highlight and these are not just silences of the past and present, but also silences about the digital future.

Alternative Historiographies of the Digital Humanities resists a linear history of the digital humanities — a straight line from the beginnings of humanities computing. By discussing alternatives histories of the digital humanities that address queer gaming; feminist game studies praxis; Cold War military-industrial complex computation; the creation of the environmental humanities; monolingual discontent in DH; the hidden history of DH in English studies; radical media praxis; cultural studies and DH; indigenous futurities; Pacific Rim postcolonial DH; the issue of scale and DH; Black feminist praxis; Global African feminist protest; Black feminist archives; and the racialized silences in topic modeling; the radical, indigenous, feminist histories of the digital database; and the possibilities for an antifascist DH, this collection hopes to re-set discussions of the DH and its attending straight, white origin myths. Thus, this collection hopes to reexamine the silences in such a straight and white masculinist history and show how power comes into play to shape this straight, white DH narrative.

The collection includes work from Edmond Y. Chang, David Golumbia, Alenda Y. Chang, Domenico Fiormonte, Alexandra Juhasz, Carly A. Kocurek, Viola Lasmana, Siobhan Senier, Anastasia Salter, Bridget Blodgett, Cathy J. Scholand-Vials, Arun Jacob, Jordan Clapper, Ravynn K. Stringfield, Nalubega Ross, Jamal Russell, Christy Hyman. The volume is organized into six sections: Presents; Histories; Praxis; Method; Indigenous Futures; and Black Futurities. In Presents, I interview David Golumbia about Digital Humanities and/with White Supremacy to think about the histories of fascism and white supremacy in relation to the digital and what it means to reckon with digital humanities' fascist politics and historiographies. Carly Kocurek's "Towards a Digital Cultural Studies: The Legacy of Cultural Studies and the Future of Digital Humanities," thinks about the potential for remixing methods in which "the framework proposed here is a call to action for digital humanities, like cultural

studies, is aware of the degree to which it is always already engaged in the work of cultural politics.”³⁰ A number of the pieces, including Arun Jacob’s “Punching Holes in the International Busa Machine Narrative,” Cathy J. Schlund-Vials “Cold War Computations and Imitation Games: Recalibrating the Origins of Asian American Studies,” and Dorothy Kim’s “Embodying the Database: Race, Gender, and Social Justice,” reexamine the origin myth of the digital humanities to reassess Father Busa’s hagiography and work in relation to media archaeology, politics, Cold War maneuvers, mechanized genocide, the Third Reich, and the military-industrial complex as it has organized fields including Asian studies. This is a reassessment of comparative genealogies — vis-à-vis Foucault — as well as ways to tell an alternative history of the Jesuit hagiography we have so far been unwilling to reexamine for its narrative use in embellishing an origin hagiography/historiography for digital humanities.

Cathy Schlund-Vials and Edmond Y. Chang also rethink the military-industrial complex and the legacies of the queer father of 20th-century computer science, Alan Turing. Chang’s essay is also a form of new alternative praxis in which a critical essay is also a text game. His chapter is a transition into the section on Praxis. A number of pieces considers alternative praxis in rethinking these histories — whether it is an essay that is a game or a reevaluation of feminist media praxis. Alexandra Juhasz’s “The Self-Reflexive Praxis at the Heart of DH,” becomes a form of autoethnography about teaching YouTube in prison pedagogy while simultaneously rethinking the digital humanities genealogy back to BIWOC feminist critical theory. Bridget Blodgett and Anastasia Salter’s, “Training Design 2: Ideological Conflicts in Feminist Games+Digital Humanities,” considers the problems of audience and designer as those toxic cultural worlds come into the world of digital games pedagogy. They advocate for a “counter-canon” in order to push back against toxic masculinity, white supremacy, and racism in video games.

30 Carly A. Kocurek, “Towards a Digital Cultural Studies: The Legacy of Cultural Studies and the Future of Digital Humanities,” this volume, 79.

In “An Indigenist Internet for Indigenous Futures: DH Beyond the Academy and ‘Preservation,’” Siobhan Senior gives a larger view of Indigenous digital humanities that addresses Indigenous futurities and moves away from the touchstone of Indigenous “preservation.” Senior thinks of the Indigeneity+digital as a method that requires co-creators, are reciprocal, respectful, and thinks through how digital media can create communities and futurity. Jordan Clapper’s “The Ancestors in the Machine: Indigenous Futurity and Games,” examines how different kinds of games can be “indigenized” and what the future may hold for Indigenous games and gaming.

Other pieces intertwine the digital humanities with other fields and a reevaluation of methods—distance reading, archives, area studies, Asian studies, cultural studies, literary studies, and environmental studies—in order to reexamine how the intersections and juxtapositions reveal silences in these histories. In *Methods*, Viola Lasmana’s “Towards a Diligent Humanites: Digital Cultures and Archives of Post-1965 Indonesia,” rethinks digital humanities as a methodology that allows alternative trajectories, and in this case, beyond academic digital humanities, for a “diligent humanities, practiced and theorized with care, with a hermeneutics that is attentive to the frictions between multiple scales of analyses, scales of production, as well as scales of tensions between the global and the local.”³¹ Domenico Fiormonte’s “Taxation Against Overrepresentation: The Consequences of Monolingualism for Digital Humanities” begins with a self-reflexive discussion of the author’s situatedness, begins to unpack the work of Walter D. Mignolo and Linda Tuhiwai Smith to discuss decoloniality, translation, language, and how “the technical is always political.”³² And finally, in Alenda Y. Chang’s article, “Pitching the ‘Big Tent’ Outside: An Argument for the Digital Environmental Humanities,” she discusses

31 Viola Lasmana, “Toward a Diligent Humanities: Digital Cultural Productions in Post-1965 Indonesia,” this volume, 290.

32 Domenico Fiormonte, “Taxation against Overrepresentation? The Consequences of Monolingualism for Digital Humanities,” this volume, 334.

the emergence of two different fields — digital humanities and environmental humanities, and also their intersections.

The volume finishes with a meditation on Break (Up, Down, Out, In) DH and Black Futurities. It opens with Ravynn K. Stringfield's essay "Breaking and (Re)Making" in which she states in the first sentence: "The interesting thing about the digital humanities is that it is exceptionally fragile."³³ Christy Hyman's piece, "Black Scholars and Disciplinary Gatekeeping," invokes Afrofuturism to discuss the archive of Black life and the constant disciplinary gates that will not allow Black scholars to use Black methodology to recover and bear witnesses to these archival narratives and their silences. Nalubega Ross's chapter, "Dr. Nyanzi's Protests: Silences, Futures, and the Present," considers the African feminist Dr. Stella Nyanzi's poem, "Feminist in High Heels" as a counter-poem and a form of feminist digital protest that broke out of its prison environment onto viral digital networks. And finally, Jamal Russell asks about Black futurities in topic modeling if there is no given to context of how the model is created and no context on the data itself. What he wonders is the future of Black DH in topic modeling?

DH must reckon with its past to reevaluate its methods, praxis, vision, politics now in order to create a different antiracist, decolonial, and just future. However, we cannot create this without reckoning with the digital humanities complex, often violent, fascist, and difficult genealogies and histories. We are not the only field in the midst of a reckoning. I take inspiration from Zoe Todd's discussion of anthropology's reckoning in her piece, "The Decolonial Turn 2.0: The Reckoning."³⁴ Todd channels the work of Rinaldo Walcott's *Queer Returns: Essays on Multiculturalism, Diaspora, and Black Studies*.³⁵ She writes:

33 Ravynn K. Stringfield, "Breaking and (Re)Making," this volume, 461.

34 Zoe Todd, "The Decolonial Turn 2.0: The Reckoning," *anthrodendum*, June 15, 2018, <https://anthrodendum.org/2018/06/15/the-decolonial-turn-2-0-the-reckoning/>.

35 Rinaldo Walcott, *Queer Returns: Essays on Multiculturalism, Diaspora, and Black Studies* (London, Ontario, Canada: Insomniac Press, 2016).

Anthropology continues to be a colonial and exclusionary discipline, and that in order to reckon with its structural violences we need — in a nod to the work of Dr. Rinaldo Walcott (2016) in his text “Queer Returns” — a decolonial (re)turn in anthropology. I am inspired here by Walcott (2016:1), who notes, in engaging with his previous thinking and writing, the value in a “return to scenes of previous engagements in ways that demonstrate growth, change, and doubt.” In imagining a Decolonial Turn 2.0 or Decolonial (re)turn for Anthropology, I envision an engagement that forces us to return to the ‘scenes of apprehension’ (Simpson 2014) through which Anthropology imagines, reproduces, and promulgates itself as largely, still, a white, male, and colonial discipline.³⁶

My hope is that this volume begins that work of digital humanities reckoning with its past, its historiographies, as a way to confront its historical and current structural violences. I believe this is the only way to imagine a just digital humanities future.

In addition, I hope this book is a way to subvert the very forms of power it critiques by being published by an open-access press supported by university libraries. So much of the digital humanities and its genealogical histories have involved large amounts of funding tied to the military-industrial complex and the academic-industrial complex that have often been about devastating violence and harm. In addition, the six areas that this book has organized its essays — Presents; Histories; Praxis; Methods; Indigenous Futures; and Black Futurities — should make clear another way to discuss the digital humanities. So moving beyond definitions or debates, what I lay out here is an alternative path to examine the present, the future, and the past through a situated politics as well as a way forward in thinking about how to address digital humanities’ long genealogy in its complicity to military power, fascism, settler colonialism, chattel slavery, violence against LGBTQIA+ people, toxic masculine digital cultures, the Anthropocene and environmental disaster,

³⁶ Todd, “The Decolonial Turn 2.0.”

archives of violence, the price of American monolingualism, Indigenous games and archives, Black digital methods and futurities, etc. The way to move forward is to precisely examine our praxis and our methods in order to think about the digital humanities as a process of scholarly, critical, discursive ways to always examine power.

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