

Digital Humanities/Digital Modernism's Responsibility to Indigeneity

In the past ten years, digital modernisms as a field has seen the beginning of a gesture towards intersectionality. However, there is still much more work to be done. When using the Modnets aggregator and searching for “Native American” or “American Indian” the lack of projects centering these groups is revealing. Creating projects that center Indigenous Peoples is imperative to create the “new map of modernism” that works to expand and decenter the field.

The lack of recognition and inclusion of Native authors in modernist discourse is nothing new. In 2017 Kirby Brown, an American Indian literature scholar, noted this lack and detailed the absence of native authors in modernist studies anthologies, journals, and ultimately the modernist discourse in his 2017 essay “American Indian Modernities and New Modernist Studies “Indian Problem”. Besides a few mentions of the “Native American renaissance” the contributions of indigenous peoples is widely ignored (either “unknowingly” or actively) in not only the broader cultural discussions but in literary modernist criticism (Brown 289). Brown specifically mentions the *Modernity/modernism* site and the absence of Native modernist authors (290). The website answered that call and produced in April 2021 a collection of essays working to recenter or decenter modernism in conversation with Native authors including a look at lyric modernism within Winneman Wintu geographies (Radocay), the absence of scholarship on American Indian modernist vaudeville (Bold), and Canadian modernism within political documents (Sayers). Other organizations, journals, and scholars have also answered Brown's call including a special issue of *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*: “Modernism and Native America”. The same accountability and movement needs to be seen within digital modernism projects.

Since as Stephen Ross argues in the Afterword of the previously mentioned essay cluster on *Modernity/Modernism* that it is “...time to recognize that modernist and modernism are

irrevocably embedded in--and thus indebted to--indigeneity” (Ross), digital modernisms is therefore indebted to indigeneity as well. Mao and Walkowitz also argue in their essay “The New Modernist Studies” that modernism must participate in two new movements “one that reconsiders the definitions, locations, and producers of ‘modernism’ and another that applies new approaches and methodologies to ‘modernist’ works” (Mao and Walkowitz). Digital humanists and specifically digital modernists have a unique opportunity to not only “reconsider the definitions, locations, and producers” of modernism but also the access and presentation of these reconsiderations. The lack of digital humanities projects that center Native Authors reflects a gap in digital modernisms and therefore an opportunity for digital modernists to not only expand digital modernisms but also begin to participate in the two new strands that Mao and Walkowitz advocate for and that Kirby Brown asserts is necessary for New Modernist Studies. Digital Humanities and Digital Modernism in particular have a responsibility to begin “reconsider” the projects that are created and make sure we are not just presenting the same works and authors/artists over and over again. If the field’s mission is to engage in modernity, creating projects that present only “white” modernism (what Walter D. Mignolo coined as “new settler colonialism”) and excludes indigenous peoples are presenting a skewed version of history and of modernism itself. What this room seeks to do is offer a look into N. Scott Momaday’s interaction with modernism but also as an opportunity to suggest more projects that recover and critically interact with modernism and indigenous texts.

Works Cited

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