**Introduction to Voyant Assignment**

**Readings**

* “Distant Reading” by Brandon Walsh <http://walshbr.com/textanalysiscoursebook/book/reading-at-scale/distant-reading/>
* [“Scale as Deformance”](https://ryancordell.org/research/scale-as-deformance/) by Ryan Cordell <https://ryancordell.org/research/scale-as-deformance/>

**Instructions**

For this exercise, you are going to work in Voyant, get to know its capabilities, and demonstrate your ability to use the tool for future assignments. (Video instructions were also provided for the original assignment.)

**Step 1:** Identify a literary text you want to work with. Project Gutenberg is a good resource, but you can use any resource you want.

* Project Gutenberg: <https://www.gutenberg.org/>

To find a full digital version of a literary work, you will need to choose something that is out of copyright. Generally, this means texts published prior to 1923, which covers a lot of the literary texts you have read. From the British perspective, think of authors from the Victorian/Edwardian period and earlier. From the American perspective, think of authors like Willa Cather and F. Scott Fitzgerald (pre *Great Gatsby*) and earlier.

If you are struggling to think of a text, consider using at a religious text like the Bible and Quran. For religious works, it might make sense to elect a portion of a text, e.g, the Hebrew Scriptures of the Bible. It just depends on what you are interested in exploring.

**Step 2:** Clean up the text and upload it to Voyant.

* Voyant: <https://voyant-tools.org/>

To do this, copy the text from the online source and paste it into a text file. Delete any unrelated information that might be at the top of the text and the bottom of the text. This is often information about the source of the text, e.g., the site it is found on, licensing information, etc. You also might choose to delete things like the table of contents, the preface, and other paratextual information. That is an intellectual choice you make when you consider what kind of analysis you want to conduct. Are you strictly interested in looking at the “main body” of the text? Do you consider the paratextual information to be part of the main body? It’s your decision.

**Step 3:** Determine the necessary stopwords to use in Voyant. (Make sure to keep a list of the terms you add or ones you delete from the list provided by Voyant.)

Selecting stopwords is a scholarly decision. Not all words that first appear to be insignificant are. For example, words like “she” and “he” might seem trivial, but what if you want to look at the representation of gender in a novel? Those small words suddenly take on greater meaning. Therefore, put thought into stopword choices and base them on the kind of analysis you want to conduct.

**Step 4:** Get familiar with the various Voyant tools that enable you to explore your text.

Experiment with the different tools and find which ones you feel have the potential to give you the greatest insight into your text. See the Voyant user guide for descriptions of the tools. To change a tool, you click in the upper right hand of an existing tool, e.g., the trends tool, on what looks like a window icon. You will see a dropdown menu that will let you select a different tool.

**Step 5:** Export your project to get the project link. Instructions on how to export the project are in the video. Please keep in mind that if you make a change to your project after having exported it, that change will not be reflected in the original exported project link. Therefore, after making a change, you will need to reexport the project and get the new link.

**Step 6:** Answer the following questions in a Word doc and include the link to your Voyant project. Submit the doc in Brightspace.

* What information did you choose to delete and keep? Why? For example, did you choose to delete or keep the table of contents?
* What stopwords did you choose and why? What was your thinking in terms of how they would impact your work in Voyant and your reading of the text?
* What Voyant tools did you find most helpful and relevant? Why? (Discuss at least three tools.)
* What struck you most about what Voyant did or didn’t reveal? (Where you expecting to see something and didn’t? Was it what you expected? Etc.)
* What impact did your experience with Voyant have on your past reading and understanding of the text?
* Based on what you see in Voyant, how might you read the text differently in the future, e.g., what else might you read or look for?
* Be critical of the tool. What are some of Voyant’s potential flaws and pitfalls? How might it be "misused"?
* How does your experience working in Voyant related to or differ from the readings by Ryan Cordell and Brandon Walsh about "close reading" and "distant reading"?