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# Dismantling the Gate, Crossing the Threshold: The Promise of Producerly Paratexts in Building an Innovative, Responsive, and Representative Book Industry

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**Dismantling the Gate, Crossing the Threshold:  
The promise of producerly paratexts in building an innovative, responsive,  
and representative book industry**

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Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts in Writing: Book Publishing.  
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Portland, Oregon  
May 10, 2016

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Book history, I believe, cannot and should not be construed as a process of inevitable, irreversible evolution, or even as the product of intelligently ordered design. It is a battlefield in which technologies slog it out and voices strain to be heard, and where economics and commerce vie or conspire with the needs of self-expression.

—Robert Fraser

It is still possible for us to collectively struggle to shape the terms of a spreadable media environment and to forge a media environment that is more inclusive, more dynamic, and more participatory than before.

—Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, Joshua Green

Rather than with a limit or a sealed frontier, we are dealing in this case with a *threshold*...which offers to anyone and everyone the possibility of either entering or of turning back.

—Gérard Genette

On Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014, author Aisha Saeed tweeted this 140-character grievance at 7:43 a.m.:

No diverse authors at #BookCon None. Nada. Zilch. #nowords <http://bookriot.com/staff-contributors/> ...#weneeddiversebooks @BookRiot.<sup>1</sup>

Saeed was the first to use the hashtag that would fuel what was (and continues to be) arguably the first digital campaign<sup>2</sup> to speak loudly and directly to publishers and booksellers about the mis- and underrepresentation of nonwhite, differently abled, and queer populations in young adult and children’s literature. Though Saeed’s original tweet received only eleven retweets and seven likes, two years later, the #WeNeedDiverseBooks hashtag is now just a piece of the larger organization that generated more than 333,000 dollars in 2014 (its first year as an organization)<sup>3</sup> and continues to promote large-scale programming in schools, organize festivals, award grants, and develop partnerships with organizations and companies from all sides of the YA and children’s book industry—from publishers to librarians to booksellers. Today, the organization functions as a persistent knock on the gatekeepers’ door, demanding entry through the gate and responsiveness from the keepers. The reach of We Need Diverse Books is huge, its message loud, and it’s difficult to know where and how to categorize this new type of influence on writing and publishing. How do digital communities and conversations—organized by hashtags and hosted on social networking and micro-blogging sites—shape and inform how and what we read and publish? Still dominated by white, able-bodied, and cisgender faces, brains, and experiences (see Lee & Low Books recently released results of the Diversity

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<sup>1</sup> Aisha Saeed, Twitter post, April 24, 2014, 7:43 a.m., <https://twitter.com/aishacs>.

<sup>2</sup> It’s important to note, however, that the movement is contained by its hashtag. It’s easy to categorize movements that originally organized using social media like Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and We Need Diverse Books as “social media uprisings” wherein the people of the internet spontaneously come together in the name of a cause. Virality, or Henry Jenkins’ more desirable and descriptive term, spreadability, is often not so unintentionally achieved. Saeed’s tweet was a precursor to a very organized and intentional social media campaign designed by young adult author Ellen Oh and several other young adult and children’s literature writers.

<sup>3</sup> We Need Diverse Books 2014, Annual Report, p. 4, <http://weneeddiversebooks.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/FINAL-WNDB-2014-Annual-Report-March-24-2015.pdf>, accessed May 2016. (Annual Report for 2015 have not been posted yet.)

Baseline Survey<sup>4</sup>), the publishing industry today is challenged to the next steps. What are they? How can publishers leverage a new and rapidly evolving media environment to stay accountable to readers and audiences?

The following examination posits that these emergent, participatory digital environs might be productively considered paratexts, that is, the pieces of a book that surround and extend it, that “present...and make it present...to assure its presence in the world.”<sup>5</sup> Taking literary critic Gérard Genette’s original concept of paratext and introducing it to media theorist John Fiske’s concept of “the producerly text,” we arrive at what I call the “producerly paratext,” which not only presents and makes present the book, but also invites outside parties to participate in that presentation. Forging spaces for that participation is the way forward for the book industry and its inhabitants who are striving, and often stumbling, to keep up with ever more rapid technological change, meet a more and more elusive bottom line, and build a more responsive and representative industry.

This exploration will take three turns. The first is a twofold examination that defines the theoretical framework of the producerly paratext and then brings it into conversation with book history, keeping a keen eye toward the capacity of emerging technology to enable paratexts that are sites of resistance and reformulation. The second is a compendium of examples of paratexts that bring that examination to bear in the present moment of media and the book industry. Bringing the We Need Diverse Books campaign’s use of networked, digital tools into conversation with contemporary conceptualizations of paratext yields a dynamic vision of a publishing industry poised to actively become more innovative, responsive, and representative. The third is a blueprint for producerly paratext production: a consideration how the publishing industry might move forward on this particular track, work with audiences to understand paratexts, and build new producerly ones that both hold publishers accountable and function as spaces of resistance and reformulation—paratexts that continue to dismantle the gate and let readers cross the threshold.

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<sup>4</sup> JASONTLOW, “Where is the Diversity in Publishing? The 2015 Diversity Baseline Survey Results,” *the open book* (blog, Lee & Low Books), January 26, 2016, <http://blog.leeandlow.com/2016/01/26/where-is-the-diversity-in-publishing-the-2015-diversity-baseline-survey-results/>

<sup>5</sup> Gérard Genette and Marie Maclean, “Introduction to Paratext,” *New Literary History*, 22.2, Probing: Art, Criticism, Genre (Spring, 1991), 261.

## The Producerly Paratext

In the introduction to *Seulis* (translated as *Paratexts, Thresholds of Interpretation*), Genette writes of a text's accouterment, like title, preface, and illustrations: "they surround it and prolong it, precisely in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of the verb, but also in its strongest meaning: to *make it present*, to assure its presence in the world, its 'reception' and its consumption, in the form, nowadays, at least, of a book."<sup>6</sup> Paratextual elements exist to embody and to contain the text (as with the cover, back cover, and the spine—that is, to physically make it exist), and to make it present (the copyright page, epigraphs, title, and et cetera—that is, to locate the text in time and place). Genette separates elements by their "positioning," describing elements that directly surround the text like title, author name, preface, and et cetera as *peritext*, and elements that originate outside the book like an author interview or private journal as *epitext*. Genette includes, too, that not all elements of "paratextual value" are textual in nature. Paratextual expressions can be: "iconic [the illustrations], material [everything which proceeds, for example, from the very significant typographical choices made in the composition of the book], or purely factual...a fact whose mere existence, if it is known to the public, makes some commentary on the text."<sup>7</sup>

Media theorists have since expanded Genette's concept of paratext to include digital components specifically. Jonathan Gray's book *Show Sold Separately* deals with paratexts in the film and television industries of the United States. Göran Bolin builds a transmedia-specific theory of paratext in *Value and the Media: Cultural Production and Consumption in Digital Markets*. Ellen McCracken renegotiates Genette's static terms, "epitext" and "peritext" to better apply to the ebook realm, proposing movement-based terms, "centripetal" and "centrifugal." In any of these situations, paratext stays nestled with a critical bedfellow: audience. Notably inherent in the objective to "present and make present" the text is the assumption of an addressee (to use Genette's term). Thus, the paratext functions as a liminal zone between text and the addressee (here, the reader). Digital tools like Tumblr, Twitter, and hashtags—are

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<sup>6</sup> Genette, 261

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 265

avenues of paratextual participation, a type of participation that not only surrounds and extends, but can also function as a site of remixing and reshaping. The producerly paratext, then, becomes a site of actively speaking back to the center (the overwhelmingly white, able-bodied, cisgender publishing world), in line with the continued subsiding of New Criticism and the rise of reader-centric critical theories.

Defining his term, John Fiske writes in *Television Culture* that the producerly text “offers itself up to popular production. ...It has loose ends that escape its control, its meanings exceed its own power to discipline them, its gaps are wide enough for whole new texts to be produced in them—it is, in a very real sense, beyond its own control.”<sup>8</sup> While Fiske is widely known for his work regarding television texts, this vision of the producerly text finds footing among Genette’s book-centric paratextual work. Fiske’s work concerns the relationship between audience/reader and the text, where Genette’s work (while acknowledging the existence of the reader) generally considers the somewhat industrial relationship between the text and the publisher (wherein the publisher determines what kinds of paratextual material to present and make present the text. To combine the two into a single idea—the producerly paratext—does its own sort of inviting: the producerly paratext brings all three parties into conversation: the publisher, the audience, and the text itself.

Quoting Fiske, the authors of *Spreadable Media* write “audiences ‘pluralize the meanings and pleasures [mass culture] offers’...grassroots circulation can thus transform a commodity into a cultural resource.”<sup>9</sup> The process of transformation and pluralization of meaning described here might also describe the most effective development of a book’s paratext in new digital media environments. Genette relates paratexts to thresholds, an idea that will figure heavily into the following examination: “Rather than with a limit or a sealed frontier, we are dealing in this case with a *threshold*...which offers to anyone and everyone the possibility of either entering or of turning back.”<sup>10</sup> Genette’s

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<sup>8</sup> John Fiske, *Television Culture*, (London: Methuen, 1987), 104.

<sup>9</sup> Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media* (New York City: New York University Press, 2013), 200.

<sup>10</sup>Genette, “Introduction to Paratext,” 261.

acknowledgment of the phenomenological act of reading—that readers are active participants in a text’s production of meaning—takes a crucial step in the movement away from author/publisher-centric acts of cultural production to reader/audience-centric methods of meaning-making.

As books move from artifacts to platforms, paratexts move from containers to canvases. Such a shift can be tied to that larger cultural shift away from New Critical considerations of literary work, wherein works are considered ontologically self-contained and no meaning can be added or subtracted. New Critical notions like this keep the author at the center of meaning-making and cultural production and the publisher firmly in the position of gatekeeper. The more recent, dynamic theories I gesture to above suggest a movement away from that positionality. The very existence of paratexts demands the existence of an audience, of a participant. As described, the ability of these audiences (or publics) to participate in cultural production, effectively crossing the gate’s threshold into the text, continues the dismantling of the gatekeeper model. The development and circulation of producerly paratexts, I would argue, result in not just a value-added product, but also in a perpetuation of an inclusive, dynamic and participatory book publishing industry and, more broadly, media environment.

### **Locating Paratext in Book History**

Above, I referred to the phenomena of social media and networked communication as “new influence” on writing and publishing. While this assumption is pervasive, it is important to my argument that the history of paratext informs the way it exists in media and book publishing today. Göran Bolin writes near the end of *Value and the Media* that “There is a profound risk of throwing the baby out with the bathwater by being oblivious of previous processes, and there is a profound risk that one will end up re-inventing the wheel.”<sup>11</sup> In effort to avoid throwing any babies out with the bathwater, this section will serve to examine book history, noting where, in the development of new technologies, new paratexts have been enabled that are sites of resistance and reformulation. Tom Standage’s *Writing on the Wall: Social*

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<sup>11</sup> Bolin, *Value and the Media*, 15.

*Media—The First 2000 Years* serves here as a useful timeline for noting moments in the Western history of print in which new technologies enabled paratexts that, in turn, made reader/audience participation accessible.

Because the scope of this paper is a specifically American publishing experience and the consideration of the producerly paratext and the We Need Diverse Books Campaign as it responds to the American publishing industry, I will not dive far into the nonwestern history of print in this instance. Postcolonial book historian Robert Fraser urges against the speech to script to print paradigm of book history and toward a working specificity of different histories of print. In *Book History Through Postcolonial Eyes: Rewriting the Script*, he writes: “The position a given society occupies along any purported speech-script-print spectrum is thus little reflection of its position on the map. Nor is any evolutionary paradigm of development between distinct and separable ‘stages’ any longer acceptable.”<sup>12</sup> With this in mind, I approach a working understanding of paratext today and before the advent of digital communication in a Western scope. An exciting project, again outside the scope of this paper, would be to do the same work outside that scope, paying special attention to what Fraser calls “the multivalent process that spirals off in several different directions.”<sup>13</sup>

Rather than “new influence,” above, I might have used a more nuanced term, “re-emergent influence.” Standage writes, “many of the ways in which we share, consume, and manipulate information, even in the internet era, build upon habits and conventions that date back centuries.”<sup>14</sup> First citing Roman statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero’s advanced system of communication, carried out in the form of letters written on papyrus scrolls and intended to be read aloud and made public,<sup>15</sup> Standage works his way from the Roman empire to present day, all the while keeping an eye toward networked communication and social media. His work is a solid foundation upon which to observe innovations in paratext and discussing the emergence not simply of writing, but of *publishing*.

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<sup>12</sup> Robert Fraser, *Book History Through Postcolonial Eyes: Rewriting the Script* (New York City: Routledge, 2008), 21.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>14</sup> Tom Standage, *Writing on the Wall: Social Media—The First 2000 Years* (New York City: Bloomsbury, 2013), 5.

<sup>15</sup> Standage, *Writing on the Wall*, 2.



One outstanding example of an enabled paratext that expanded responsiveness is the use of pamphlets in spreading Martin Luther's "Ninety-Five Theses." Where Standage's considerations grow out of a desire to examine the social-network aspect of the spread of Ninety-Five Theses, here, I'd like to examine the paratextual aspects. Both the text and its various containers urged the dissemination and sharing of the work itself. The paratextual features and iterations of the "Ninety-Five Theses," namely that the pamphlets (both those within the scope of the "Theses" and without) eventually included graphics and news-ballads: "The combination of bold graphics with a smattering of text, printed as a broadsheet could convey messages to the illiterate or semiliterate and serve as a visual aid for preachers."<sup>16</sup> If one makes the claim, as Standage and most Western history textbooks do, that Luther's work effectively decentralized media distribution channels of sixteenth century Germany and fueled the Protestant Reformation, it can also be said that the accoutrement of that work, the elements designed to present and make present that work and then the elements produced by readers wishing to either spread or respond to the work, were part and parcel to its ability to, as textual critic Paul Eggert writes, "resist and reformulate the ideological cross-currents of its period."<sup>17</sup> Read this way, with one eye trained toward paratext and book history, Luther's original work, "Ninety-Five Theses" can be considered to have a truly multimedia, producerly paratext that, when paired with the text itself effect real social change and expanded representation among a medially underrepresented population, that being the lower class.

The same kind of examination can be done over and over again with instances in book history. Essentially, these examinations dismount here: that when we talk about book history, we're really talking about paratext. Points in history where new paratexts are enabled reshape the ways readers interact with the texts themselves, and, has, in many cases resulted in an engaged and better medially represented public.

### **Producerly Paratexts Today**

In a white paper published by the Center for Social Media at American University, media theorist Jessica Clark writes:

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 58

<sup>17</sup> Paul Eggert, "Modes of editing literary works: conflicts in theory and practice" *Securing the Past: Conservation in Art, Architecture, and Literature*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 161.

Rather than passively waiting for content to be delivered as in the broadcast days, users are actively seeking out and comparing media on important issues, through search engines, recommendations, video on demand, interactive program guides, news feeds and niche sites. This is placing pressure on many makers to convert their content so that it's not only accessible across an array of platforms and devices, but properly formatted and tagged so that it is more likely to be discovered.<sup>18</sup>

She goes on to identify five new habits of contemporary media users: choice, conversation, curation, creation, and collaboration. Perhaps nowhere are these five habits more actively represented than on the microblogging site, Tumblr. Within Tumblr, users are first prompted to *choose* areas of interest, the site will then populate the users feed with *curated* content—images, videos, gifs, links, short blog posts, and et cetera—from other users based on those interests. Users are invited to “reblog,” comment (*converse*), upload their own *created* content. In the whirlwind of content that is Tumblr, content is more often than not remixed to reflect new perspectives and inspire further *collaboration* and discussion. User sites are hyper-customizable and built to reflect the content that user likes to engage with. That Tumblr very much represents all five of Clark's new media habits positions it to be a perfect platform for the creation of producerly paratexts.

The book community on Tumblr is highly active, especially among accounts dedicated to young adult fiction. It makes sense then, that the We Need Diverse Books still actively uses the Tumblr site that served as its original landing spot for supporter-generated content and a launch pad for organization-built content (it has since migrated much of the organization's programmatic content to an autonomous site). Recently, We Need Diverse Books has been posting and reblogging content about disability awareness and representation and a new campaign, #whitewashedOUT, spearheaded by Ellen Oh (one of the original founders) and actor Margaret Cho that displays Hollywood's rampant casting of non-Asian actors for Asian roles. As an organization concerned with book culture with a large following (more than 22,000 followers on Twitter), We Need Diverse Books has huge sway—any book or paratextual content that is circulated by the organization's social media channels (and organized by hashtags) reaches

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<sup>18</sup> Jessica Clark, *Public Media 2.0: Dynamic, Engaged Publics*, (Washington D.C.: Center for Social Media at American University. <http://archive.cmsimpact.org/future-public-media/documents/white-papers/public-media-20-dynamic-engaged-publics>. Accessed May 9, 2016.

an extraordinarily vast and engaged audience. Some of this content is newsy, some rallying, some celebratory. Much of it is artistic, and much of that art is fan art.

Fan art, especially that which participates in the practices of “racebending” (which can refer either to a white character being re-rendered as a character of color or vice versa—see the #whitewashedOUT mention above) is prevalent on Tumblr and provides a great example of a producerly paratext. Accounts like Racebending Harry Potter, Fuck Yeah Racebending, and Racebent Disney and hashtags like #racebent and #racebending catalogue illustrations of popular characters as people of color. Naturally, one of the most popular groups of characters to racebend is the Harry Potter trio. Early last year, in a BuzzFeed article called, “What a ‘Racebent’ Hermione Really Represents,” Alanna Bennet writes about her experience in the all too common phenomenon of young people of color not seeing themselves represented in books and media: “I related to her deeply, but like with so much of what I watched and read, I couldn’t see myself in Hermione.”<sup>19</sup> Upon discovering depictions of Hermione as a woman of color, Bennet writes that “painting Hermione as a woman of color [is] an act of reclaiming her allegory at its roots.”<sup>20</sup> The Huffington Post weighed in several months later, circulating many images all pulled from Tumblr and stating: “A black Hermione Granger isn’t just a chance to *see* something new, but an opportunity to create a more complex reading of the book series, which has political themes that draw parallels between the Death Eaters and racist hate groups.”<sup>21</sup> There isn’t a better example of a producerly paratext at work: underrepresented readers using networked tools like Tumblr to display work that remixes and subverts the text that a gatekeeper model, cultural system, or hegemonic ideology originally produced, presented and made present in the world. Thus, the producerly paratext can

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<sup>19</sup> Alanna Bennet, “What a Racebent Hermione Really Represents,” *Buzzfeed*, January 31, 2015 (11:38 p.m.), [https://www.buzzfeed.com/alannabennett/what-a-racebent-hermione-granger-really-represented2yp?utm\\_term=.daNzMLG2v#.imK6yV5mo](https://www.buzzfeed.com/alannabennett/what-a-racebent-hermione-granger-really-represented2yp?utm_term=.daNzMLG2v#.imK6yV5mo).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Zeba Blay, “Black Harry Potter Characters Aren’t Just Beautiful—They’re Revolutionary,” *Huffington Post*, July 28, 2015 (12:03 p.m.), [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/black-harry-potter-characters-are-revolutionary\\_us\\_55aea1d5e4b0a9b94852c333](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/black-harry-potter-characters-are-revolutionary_us_55aea1d5e4b0a9b94852c333).

function as both a speaking back to that center and as a dismantling of those models—underrepresented populations are breaking down the gate and making themselves at home.

Ideally, publishers and others in the position of gatekeeper (in the following case, a librarian) will listen, internalize, and respond. The artist, Katie (last name absent), who runs the Tumblr page Loquacious Literature and who is known for her racebent illustrations of Harry, Ron, and Hermione was recently asked to design a poster for an elementary school library featuring her version of the characters.<sup>22</sup> An exciting example of a publisher responding to fan art (albeit, not racebent fan art) is the special edition of Rainbow Rowell's *Eleanor & Park* that includes four illustrations by artists active in the Tumblr fan art scene. The illustrations decorate the endpapers, becoming both peritext and producerly paratext.

The paratext of the 2010 bestseller, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot is a producerly one in a different, perhaps more digital, way. In the book, Skloot traces the story of the HeLa cells, the first human cells ever to retain the ability to reproduce outside of the human body. HeLa cells were used in hundreds of tests for cancer treatments, among other scientific advances, and yet, the woman from whom the cells came never knew or consented, and her family remained impoverished, unable to gain the healthcare that the HeLa cells were rapidly helping to advance.

Rebecca Skloot's website, [rebeccaskloot.com](http://rebeccaskloot.com), is a veritable mine of easy to navigate information and accessible opportunities for interaction. A website user is greeted immediately by an embedded video of Skloot discussing the book. Just below are four colorful boxes, each linked to a different interactive medium in which users can find school resources, access special features about the book, watch videos about other readers talking about the book, and connect on a forum about HeLa cells. Readers are invited to submit their own video about the book or share their own story about HeLa cells on the forum. Below the boxes is banner that tells about the Henrietta Lacks Foundation. The digital paratext of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* is substantial. As described above, just the homepage of Skloot's

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<sup>22</sup> Katie (5 months ago), *Loquacious Literature*, (May 10, 2016), (<http://loquaciousliterature.tumblr.com/post/134038800811/i-got-a-request-to-make-a-read-poster-for-an>).

website offers several different venues for interaction, both with Skloot herself (links her Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts are all easy to find) and with readers from all over the world. The video project page reads:

Since the book was published, readers of all kinds—scientists, teachers, nurses, librarians, members of book groups, high school and college kids, people old and young from all over the world—have emailed, written and faxed author Rebecca Skloot, sharing their thoughts about HeLa, and *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. So many readers have been personally touched by her story. We want to hear from you too!<sup>23</sup>

This is the producerly paratext at its most effective – the website contains content that expands and surrounds the book and communities are actively being fostered in at least four mediums. Contained within the “Special Features” tab on the website are photographs not found in the book; the embedded audio file of the “Famous Tumors” episode of the podcast Radiolab in which the Henrietta Lacks story is featured; and video footage of HeLa cells in the lab and more footage of Skloot being interviewed with the Lacks family.

The Henrietta Lacks Foundation has awarded forty-two grants, and, according to Skloot’s website, Johns Hopkins has since taken several steps to honor the life and contribution of Henrietta Lacks, among other things, ensuring that the Lacks family is afforded access to healthcare.<sup>24</sup> At the risk of simplifying a complicated process, it seems clear that this book is not simply a book any longer – by way of its producerly paratext, it has become an instance of a public crossing the threshold of a book and enabling progressive social change.

### **Next Steps for Publishers**

While We Need Diverse Books is not a paratext for any single book, it might be considered a rallying cry to and sustained voice for readers engaged in paratextual production. Using tools like Tumblr and Twitter, the organization is a model example of leveraging Jessica Clark’s five new media habits to actively make change. Through producerly

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<sup>23</sup> “Readers Talk,” Rebecca Skloot author website, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://rebeccaskloot.com/the-immortal-life/readers-talk/>.

<sup>24</sup> “FAQ,” Rebecca Skloot author website, accessed March 8, 2015, <http://rebeccaskloot.com/faq/#questions-immortallife>.

paratexts, *We Need Diverse Books* continues to do the work of knocking down the gatekeeper's gate. Clark suggests new "impact metrics" like "facts learned; conversations launched; mental frameworks changed; events held; policies proposed, endorsed, or challenged; videos shared; memes spawned; students involved; skills acquired; and submissions posted." She goes on to suggest that public media benchmarks should also take into account the composition of participants, given the social, economic, political, and ethnic divides of the society. Do media projects create a sense of trust and buy-in, making audiences feel as though they have a voice and can make a difference?<sup>25</sup>

In an industry (and perhaps, a world) that has fetishized quantitative data, it might seem odd to pair an "industrial" (in the "industry" sense of the word) problem with a theoretical examination and solution. The active theoretical interrogation of the effect of digitization on book publishing, though, leads to ethical decision-making. Numbers make decision making in the publishing industry easy, but critical thought makes those decisions matter.

In the publishing industry, we are tasked with creating the very artifacts that, to use Genette's phrasing, "surround [the text] and prolong it, precisely in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of the verb, but also in its strongest meaning: to *make it present*, to assure its presence in the world, its 'reception' and its consumption, in the form, nowadays, at least, of a book."<sup>26</sup> In rapidly evolving digital media environments, "assuring a book's presence in the world" becomes an act of creating content that invites interaction—shaping, sharing, reframing, and remixing—among a networked community. The creation of producerly paratexts transforms a traditionally vertical method of information distribution wherein the book is an artifact with sealed thresholds into a horizontal method of distribution wherein the book is the platform of a "public" (to use Clark's excellent term) where participants are invited over the threshold and into the work of cultural production. That said, it is not enough for the gatekeepers to simply listen to the knocking at the gate, accepting bits of content under the door and parading them as proof that they are listening. Dismantling needs to come from the other side of the threshold as well. Publishers must listen,

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<sup>25</sup> Jessica Clark, *Public Media 2.0*.

<sup>26</sup> Genette, "Introduction to Paratext," 261.

internalize, and produce accordingly. Perhaps this takes the form of celebrating the digital space for remixing, as with the special edition of *Eleanor & Park*. Perhaps it takes the form of setting up spaces for multimedia storytelling and contribution as on Rebecca Skloot's author website. These are promising first steps in constructing a media environment and a book publishing industry that enables more readers to use books to engage in cultural production, both creating and demanding better, more accurate, and ethical representation of all populations.

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