

**The Rise of the Citizen Author:  
Writing Within Social Media**

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**Abstract:**

The concept of the citizen author is defined and explored within the publishing industry. In order to understand what positions the citizen author currently, and potentially could, hold it begins with a historical view of their rise, including concepts of their eighteenth century antecedents. But the focus of this research is on their growth alongside that of social media platforms. This allows for drawing out relationships between genre fiction, publishers, and the citizen author, which provides a more full understanding of the power dynamics involved when publishers, social media, and the citizen authors mix in the current industry climate.

**Key Words:**

Citizen Author; Social Media; Self-Publishers

**The rise of the citizen author**

This essay will examine the rise of the citizen author through a lens of Foucault's Archaeology and McLuhan's global village by focussing on the challenges and disruptions that the rise of the citizen author brings to the discourse of the book and its relationship to the non-discursive elements of the publishing industry and digitally social platforms. Considering the rise of the citizen author in terms of the global village highlights the "dynamic relationship between a mediated sense of the 'local' and an equally mediated sense of the 'global'" (Cavell, 2014, p. 57) where through technology, physical distance no longer separates individuals

and organisations who have access to the digital global village.

Particularly, I am interested in exploring where those citizen authors who choose to write their works of fiction onto social networking sites directly, and do not actively seek to be a part of the mainstream publishing process, fit into the larger discourse of the book, and the tensions they create within the publishing industry. In order to understand how the citizen author currently, and potentially could, be discursively positioned, I will begin with a historical view of their rise, including concepts of their eighteenth century antecedents in order to highlight how the author continues to challenge the definition of the book, creating stresses in the industry. From there, I will use the Archaeology to explore the modern self-publisher and discuss how the citizen author has evolved further, alongside the growth of digitally social platforms. This will allow for drawing out the relationship within the discourse of the book, between digital social media, publishers, the book, and the citizen author, providing a fuller understanding of the power dynamics involved when they come together and diverge in the current industry climate.

### **8.1 What is the Citizen Author?**

It is important to understand where the citizen authors' predecessors fit in the wider discourse by selecting "a problem rather than an historical period for investigation" (Kendall & Wickham, 2003, p. 22) and the disruptions they create. Discursive disruptions are of interest to the Foucauldian scholar in that understanding the blanks and gaps these disruptions create can identify how some statements of the book, such as the rise of the citizen author, come to exist instead of others. The citizen author disrupts the discourse of the book by

challenging the hierarchy of the traditional publishing model and introducing new elements of power that are situated within the relationship between the citizen author, the reader, and the publisher.

In her work on self-publishing in the Eighteenth Century, Felton defines a self-published author someone who “owned and kept all the rights to his work, paid for the publishing costs, and sold the book by himself” (2014, 2:05). Keeping in mind Felton’s understanding of a self-published author, I am moving away from the term ‘self-published author’ and embracing ‘citizen author’ to highlight the differences formed at the point where these two groups diverge. The point where the citizen author differs from the self-published author creates a place where the possibility of new statements of the book can come to exist. The blanks and gaps around this point of discursive disruption allows for the development of a new referential which governs what statements are created. The place these citizen authors are writing is on the digital social platforms that are available as apps, websites, forums, etc. The timeline coincides with the advent of digital technology and social platforms, while the relationships that are formed in the global village at the point of disruption serve to connect readers and writers outside the traditional publishing model.

Though the citizen author may take on many of duties Felton ascribed to the self-published author in that they often edit, print, and absorb any fees related to selling and promoting the work, the key distinction is the place the citizen author’s wilfully occupies within the global village, which makes “creative dialogue inevitable” (McLuhan, 1969, p. 250) and allows them to develop direct relationships with others who have access to the global village. While a self-published author may still subvert the traditional publishing system by

publishing and selling their own work – in this case print books and eBooks – a citizen author is someone who embraces the new digital technologies to produce their own works, create new networks, communities, and followers, bypassing the gate-keeping mechanisms of the publishing industry. In choosing to forgo the traditional business model of the publishing industry the citizen author actively disrupts the discourse of the book by creating points of dispersion where new statements of the author and book are formed which challenge the industry's conception of what a book and author can be. These tensions and ruptures allow for the formation of new discursive regularities and constraints around the definition of the book and changing slush pile, by creating new places of writing situated in the global village which leads to further relationships in and around the discourse of the book.

Here, the focus on the rise of the citizen author is based within the wider discourse of the book and encompasses the use of new digital social technologies available to them, allowing them to create, publish, and disseminate their works on the open market, going beyond the step-by-step platforms for uploading their text to an eBook creator or self-publishing platform. An important aspect of understanding the modern citizen author is in learning of their evolution from the early self-published authors of the late 1600s and how those self-publishers were the first to forgo the accepted publishing model.

## **8.2 The Citizen Author's 18<sup>th</sup> Century Antecedents**

The 18<sup>th</sup> century antecedents of the citizen author set a precedent for creating disruptions in the publishing industry by editing, printing, and selling their own work directly to booksellers and their readers. In 1695, by choosing not to renew

the Licensing of the Press Act of 1662, which imposed strict censorship and regulations on publishers that were approved by the Stationers' Company, the Commons opened up the printing and publication of books and pamphlets beyond the handful of chosen institutions and gave the power of publication to new publishers and individuals, expanding the discourse of the book (Downie, 2008, p. 261). This created new sites of inquiry within the discourse where new authors could develop their own publishing models based not on traditional formats, but on trial and error of what worked best for each individual author. However, as noted by Downie, the expiration of the Licensing of the Press Act of 1662 did not immediately result in publishers and writers flooding the market with new works (2008, p262).

Those that self-published in the Eighteenth Century were most often professionals, including members of the clergy, education, nobility, and engineers who were in a position of power within their professions, and wanted to share their specialised knowledge and see some return on their investment (Felton, 2014, 14:35). They often supplemented their writing and the fees they were charged for managing their own publications with other roles. In the Eighteenth Century, up to three percent of self-published authors were women, and self-publishing was not thought of in terms of the current-day "reputational economy" that gives greater value to those works that come to market through a prestigious publisher (Carolan, S. & Evain, C. 2013, p. 293). In fact, there was little distinction between 'high' and 'low' literature (Felton, 2014, 19:46), and self-published authors not only had to orchestrate the writing, printing, (occasionally) engraving, and binding of their work, they also had to promote and sell it on their own. By choosing to self-publish, authors of the eighteenth

century were actively disrupting the publishing model of the time by defining the book as suited their work. In doing so they were able to remove themselves as the subject, and author, and become the speaker of the statements engaging with and diverging from their book. This creates new statements around the book that allows them to further connect with their readers, creating a network of relationships within the discourse.

Self-published authors of the eighteenth century had two main options for selling their books: they could broker a deal with a bookseller, or they could sell the books themselves. If they chose to work with a bookseller, they often did so on a commission basis where the bookseller offered the book for sale in their shop in return for 20-30% of the profit (Felton, 2014, 33:35). Those books that did not sell were returned to the author, bringing to mind the modern system where books are stocked in brick and mortar retailers on a sale or return basis. The second option available to self-publishers was to sell the books themselves. This face-to-face connection with potential readers enabled authors to get feedback, gain a readership, and sometimes develop relationships with readers, which was a valuable asset when each sale counted and potentially extended their reach as an author, which increased the power of the author's position in relation to the publishers and booksellers. This connectivity between readers and writer is echoed in the modern citizen author's digital global village where social technology allows readers and writers to interact with one another within their digital home.

Though there were a few major success stories of self-published authors of the Eighteenth Century, many who managed their time and money carefully succeeded. Furthermore, those authors who managed to strike a deal with the

printer directly enabled them to have better control of a key element of publication: editing (Felton, 2011, p. 455), a control that is seen today as both a benefit and detriment to the modern self-publishing industry.

### **Who Are the Modern Self-Published Authors?**

In order to understand how the self-published author developed into and continues alongside the citizen author, it is important to know who the modern self-publishers are and where they are situated within the discourse of the book in relation to the publishing industry, digital technology, and the global village. This section will explore their development, facilitating and understanding of how self-published authors create rifts in the discourse, and in doing so develop new statements and relationships at the points of disruption. To this end Carolan and Evain suggest that current self-publishers fall into three categories: “big fish in the big pond[,] big fish in the small pond[, and] small fish in the big pond” (2013, pp. 286 – 288). Essentially, authors who are usually read online by large numbers, often leading to traditional book deals and commercial success, are those big fish in the big pond, such as Cassandra Clare and Anna Todd. Secondly, the big fish in the small pond are those who are great at making a name for themselves within a niche community. The third, and largest group identified, is the small fish in the big pond. These are the authors who write and self-publish, but never sell more than a handful of books (2013, pp. 286 – 288). While these general groupings are beneficial as a means of distinguishing the categories of self-published authors, having more in-depth demographic statistics is useful in knowing more about whom the self-publishers are and how they disrupt the coherence of the discourse.

In 2013, Baverstock and Steinitz conducted an in-depth survey of self-publishers and discovered that “There are no demographic barriers to self-publishing” (p. 213). While this may be the case within the relatively small (120 participants) group of self-published authors that responded to their survey, this cannot be generalised to a wider set of authors due to the fact that not everyone has the same advantage of access to the computers, software, and connectivity that today’s self-publishing, generally, requires. Access to the global village, the internet, and the knowledge to use it, fluctuates according to the socio-economic leverage to used to gain access; and it is this specific set of digital contingencies that allow for the development of the self-published author. That being said, those that did respond can create an image of whom these self-publishers are and provide a good baseline for distinguishing the self-publishers from the modern citizen authors.

In their 2013 study, Baverstock and Steinitz found that sixty-five percent of respondents were female, and the vast majority (eighty-eight percent) were over the age of forty (p. 214). Additionally, they found that most participants were educated to undergraduate degree level and above (seventy-six percent) (2013, p. 214), numbers that highlight the potential for unequal access to the global village where self-publishing is only a few clicks of the keyboard away.

A second study, also in 2013, by Baverstock and Steinitz, found that “selling material was by no means the only goal of self-publishing authors – or even the most important one” (p. 274). The most valuable result of self-publishing among the 120 authors surveyed was the “completion” of the process of writing, editing, and publishing the book that provided the most satisfaction (p. 273). However, the satisfaction of completion does not preclude a self-

published author from doing well monetarily. According to the May 2016 data from the Author Earnings Report half of the 1,340 authors who earn more than \$100,000 a year are independent, self-published authors and Amazon-imprint authors. In the 'hidden' authors who do not, for some reason or another, show up in the Amazon best-seller list, 30 of the 43 listed, including the top earner of over \$250,000, are self-published authors (2016, p. 3). This disparity creates tensions in the relationships between the publishing industry, the socio-economic climate, the book, and the author, and alters the subject positions that can be occupied by a new type of author in the discourse of the book: the citizen author (Kendall & Wickham, 2003, p. 27).

### **Who is the Citizen Author?**

In defining the citizen author, the use of technology, social media, education, and socio-economic levels all play a role in giving the citizen author access to the global village where they develop relationships with each other and readers that further challenges the relationships in the wider discourse of the book. They actively bypass the traditional gatekeepers of the industry by writing, sharing and promoting their work directly within the global village. "The old patterns of content creation and distribution are being worn away" (Phillips, 2015, p. xiii) and self-publishers have become more adept at using the technology and social platforms available to them in new and innovative ways to expand the definition of the book and their global village. The numbers of self-publishers who prefer to publish their work for their own enjoyment and who do not wish to engage with new social technology or even produce eBooks will diminish as the dynamic of the publishing industry shifts to accommodate more routes to traditional

publication that do not always lead to the development and dissemination of a printed book or an eBook.

“Electronic technology has created a global village where knowledge must be synthesized” (Gordon, 2010, p. 110) to allow those villagers to seek out connections and information in a global village which is not limited by geographical boundaries. Authors in Japan and China engage with technology to write and publish works directly onto their cell phones and hand-held devices, a format which is referred to as Keitai Shōsetsu. These Keitai Shōsetsu, or cell phone novels, disrupt the discourse of the book by challenging what the industry considers a book to be and how that book is written and delivered to the market. This challenge is linked directly industry’s adoption of skeuomorphic design, as seen through the rear-view mirror, where the industry wants writing and reading on a digital device to “simulate reading physical books” (Phillips, 2015, p. 36). Keitai Shōsetsu diverges from the industry norm, and in doing so creates new statements, objects, texts, and strategies relating to the definition of the book and its relationships in and outside of the discourse.

### **Gender and the Citizen Author**

Women in the global village are harnessing this power to actively disrupt the heirarchisation of literature which is built on a “gender-based hierarchy with men at the top [... where] men and masculinity are ascribed a higher value than women and femininity” (Pauli, 2015, p. 195). This disruption can be seen in Keitai Shōsetsu, which are “typically written and read by young adults [... with] Young, just married or single women in their twenties” as the largest portion of the writing and reading market (Keckler, 2010. p.3).

The connectivity to other readers and writers in the global village often feels like a personal connection between the readers and writers, writers and writers, and readers and readers, much like the ones fostered on social media platforms and invited in the comments sections of blogs, social posts, and reviews, etc., which facilitates a form of intimacy with the author and other readers in the global village where, “private and public messages on SNS [Social Networking Sites] can result in positive relational outcomes” (Utz, 2014, p. 1). In their study on ‘circuits of value’, Skeggs and Wood found that:

The realm of intimacy is one traditionally associated with the feminine private sphere, but various commentators have marked out how public worlds, institutions, and market forces have marshalled the intimate terrain into public spaces for the operation of power. (2008, p. 559).

Other digitally social platforms’ demographics echo this female-driven use of social platforms on which to write to and engage with the global village. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport’s Taking Part – Statistical Release found that seventy-two percent of internet users use Facebook, which is 53.4 percent female to 46.6 percent male and used by 57.5 percent of adults in England in 2014/15. Instagram follows suit with 56.5 percent female to 43.5 percent male; and Instagram enjoys 15.7 percent internet usage. The major social media platform that bucks this female-driven trend is Twitter, which only boasts twenty-two percent total internet usage, but is occupied by 53.3 percent male and 46.7 percent female users (UK.GOV, 2016). Data mining into the registered users (authors/readers) of FanFiction.net in 2011 found that seventy-eight percent of registered accounts were owned by female-identifying users

(FFN Research). Likewise, “Wattpad’s population is not entirely female, though they are the majority” (NickUskoski, 2015, p. 2).

As women authors occupy more space in the global village, they are subverting the traditional publishing industry’s hierarchy of gender by embracing the digital social spaces where they can actively commoditise their connectivity with readers by creating feedback loops on their work, where “the effects of public self-disclosure on feeling connected are mediated by the received likes and comments” (Utz, 2014, p. 4). This interactivity, in turn, increases the cultural capital of the citizen author’s work, bringing in more readers and the potential interest of the publishing industry, who may choose to traditionally publish the citizen author’s work. In this way, the female citizen author is shifting the power dynamic in the traditional, and traditionally male dominated, publishing industry by embracing technological attributes available in the digital global village such as feedback loops, connectivity, and focusing on the end-user.

### **Demographics of a Citizen Author**

Understanding the demographics of the writers of fiction repositories is necessary to better frame the citizen author. In order to develop a more complete view of who the citizen authors are and how they are situated within the wider discourse and connect to the industry and socio-economic climate, who is writing, how that compares to self-publishers, and how it relates to the early adoption and use of new technology and social platforms must be taken into account.

The use of social media platforms, self-publishing, and early adopting of new technology can also be broken down into age of use to give a better overview of whom the citizen author is and where they situate themselves within the global village. Baverstock and Steinitz found that most self-publishers are over the age of forty, whereas the readers and writers of Fanfiction.net are mostly between the ages of 13-17 (FFN Research, 2011); and with the users of social media, with only LinkedIn excepting, the majority are aged 18-29 (Duggan, 2015). Though there is a decent up-take of social medial platforms among all ages, this slows as the user's age rises and digital natives give way to digital migrants, defined as those who were not born into the digital age but have adapted to it by taking part in social media platforms and embracing new technologies (Prensky, 2001, p. 2).

When it comes to who is writing in the global village and how easily they adopt new technologies, education also plays a role. Access to the technology in monetary terms and the ability to have leisure time to spend on the platforms, are two considerations that relate directly back to the socio-economic status from which the citizen author arises. Baverstock and Steinitz' self-published authors were over sixty percent university graduates (2013, p. 214). This is comparable to the use of social media platforms where seventy-two percent of Facebook users, thirty-two percent of Instagram, and twenty-three percent of Twitter users have at least some college or university education (Duggan, 2015, pp. 10-14). Unsurprisingly, those users that have a higher annual income are more likely to be early adopters of technology such as social platforms and new hand-held devices that give access to the internet, and there is strong correlation between an individual's education and income levels (Graham and Paul, 2011).

However, there will be outliers who have gained access to, and made a success in, the global village who have created a network based on cultural capital and their status within a subculture in the global village.

The rise of the citizen author is advanced by an awareness of the globally connected village and adoption of and innovative use of technology as a place to write and share works of fiction. They embrace new digitally social technologies not only as places to build networks, but as communities where they can write and market their work using cross-platform techniques which develops new relationships within the discourse of the book. By actively engaging with their real and potential audiences on digitally social networks, the rules of followers and following, and by replying to comments on works, the citizen author actively fosters their own digitally social presence and the relationships they create with the reader. In doing so, the citizen author, much like the self-published author, decentres themselves from their work so that as a speaker they are in a distinct place to act on the statement of their book, and to engage with global village in a way that can feed back into the book at a new point, creating new statements, objects, and relationships of power.

To better define whom the citizen author is and their relationship to the industry and technology, we begin with their age, sex, income, adoption and use of digitally social platforms and social story repositories. These traits, combined with the 2016 PEW research on early adopters of technology, which found that young men are most likely to be early adopters of new technology (Kennedy) and Baverstock and Steinitz' demographic findings of self-publishers, shows that the majority of citizen authors who are using innovative technology and social platforms to write and disseminate their works are likely to be female, but not

overwhelmingly so, between the ages of 18-49, have at least some college or university education, and be of a socio-economic status that allows for access to and adoption of new technologies and digitally social platforms.

### **Where Are the Citizen Authors Writing?**

Popular social media platforms, blogs, fiction repositories, reviews, audio platforms, websites, etc., all are locations that appeal to the citizen author who lives in the global village. The different sites of inquiry where the citizen author chooses to write creates tensions within the discourse of the book by challenging the industry's understanding of where an author can produce work and how they bypass human gatekeeping systems. The demographics of the new citizen author differs from that of self-publishers around the concept of digital natives. Though not all citizen authors are born into the digitally connected, global village, many are. This is due to many factors that have an impact on statements of the discourse of the book, including a citizen author's age, education levels and socio-economic status – which relates to access and their physical location within the world. Dueze, et.al. states that “there is no external to the media in our lives” (2013, p. 1), and the citizen author takes this continual flow between internal and external media into the process of where and how they write and what is meant by the idea of the book, creating disruptions to the discourse in the development of new statements, objects, strategies, and sites of inquiry.

This links back to technology-based focus on the end user and user design. In social repositories such as Wattpad and Medium, among many others, the citizen authors interact with their readers, vying for view numbers, answering comments, and thrive on keeping “in touch with their audiences

whilst writing their books and obtain[ing] feedback on material and plotlines” (Philips, 2015, p. 18). Which leads Philips to remark that “If a potential reader has been involved early on, they will be more likely to buy the final product” (2015, p. 18) should a work of fiction written on a social repository site be picked up by a publishing company for a traditional release.

Though the citizen author chooses to forgo the traditional author-agent-publisher route to the market, even if the market deals in cultural currency instead of money, they are usually aware of, and keen to embrace, a traditional publishing deal should it be offered, as can be seen in recent publishing deals with citizen authors such as Anna Todd and Abigail Gibbs who first found readers on Wattpad (Published Samples, Wattpad, 2017). In fact, many publishers now visit repositories such as Wattpad and Medium to seek out authors who are doing well digitally, to offer them a traditional publishing deal. This creates a place of divergence within the discourse of the book, where on the one hand there is a balance between Wattpad and other such repositories using traditional publishers to draw interest in their platform as a place of quality literature, and on the other as an infinite slush pile where undesirable writing must also be read to find the gems worth removing from the sediment of poorly written and edited works. The result is a rupture in the discourse where social repositories have created new statements of the book in relation to the citizen author, the non-discursive industry, and takes advantage of the socio-economic state where publishers can seek out works that have proven themselves prior to the investment of traditional publication.

Sites like Wattpad and Medium have low barriers of entry, which makes it an ideal place for a citizen author to hone and test their writing, interact with

readers, and get feedback, all of which increases the quantity and quality of their relationships in the global village. To gain access and expand their relationships around their writing, all the citizen author needs is a device that has connectivity to the internet and an email address with which to register with the digitally social platform. The same goes for access to other social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and more, with several new ones cropping up and falling out of favour all the time, all of which become sites of inquiry in the discourse of the book, as they relate to the citizen author and their connectivity to the changing definition of the book.

The citizen author discriminates between social platforms based on their own interests, needs, and by what is available to them. By taking on board the roles traditionally enjoyed by, “professional media workers – their ability to effectively find, create and gather, select, edit, disseminate and redistribute information” (Dueze, et.al. 2013. P. 5), the citizen author alters the available digitally social spaces to accommodate their needs as writers and producers of works of fiction, effectively creating new statements of the book within these sites of inquiry. In fact, we find again and again that those citizen authors who do not find a suitable place in the digitally connected global village to write their fiction often create one themselves. This can be seen most evidently in the proliferation of writers creating blogs and building websites to house their works, each of which becomes new objects of interest in the wider discourse. This not only gives the citizen author more control over the formatting, delivery, and dissemination of their work, but it also allows them to return to it again and again to edit the work, often based on feedback loop between authors and readers, which can be facilitated by comments and author contact forms.

Other citizen authors choose to experiment with their writing by using the technology in innovative ways that often does not lead to publication deals or monetary gain. The use of podcasting apps and programmes to share an audio version of an author's work is likely not to get as much coverage as a work written and well-tagged in other digitally social formats, and indeed, it may even cost the author money to produce; however, they are actively challenging the understanding of what the book can be, and its relationships within the wider discourse and to non-discursive elements of the publishing and technology industries. Geo-locational apps such as Podwalk and Voicemap differ in how they allow the author to share the work in that Podwalk charges the author to produce and share the work – which is then available for free, and Voicemap hosts the work while charging the user to listen to the recording, sharing the fee with the author. However, if an author's work is tied to a location, this social technology is a way forward that citizen authors are beginning to embrace as a means of engaging with the non-discursive elements of a physical space, tying together the real and global villages.

One segment of citizen authors choose to write reviews that are works of fiction. Though these may not stand out in the traditional sense as 'stories', some products have garnered more interest for their in-depth, fictional reviews that read like short, often funny, stories. One such example is the reviews for the Haribo Sugar Free Gummy Bears for which users Christine E. Torok and @StuPurdue each wrote a several hundred word story based on their literal gut-reactions to the sweets (Amazon, 2012). There is much hyperbole in the reviews, rendering them almost certainly fictional, but they still remain as influential (judged by their number of review stars) product reviews years after being

posted. While this is an unusual outlet for a short story, it does stand as a testament to the citizen author's ingenuity in creating new statements and objects in the discourse of the book by using technology to write and share their work.

### **What Are the Citizen Authors Writing?**

Though this essay centres around works of fiction written and shared in a digitally social space, this does not mean that the only things being written are works of fiction. As citizen authors expand where and how they write, they are also expanding what they write. Poetry is the most obvious fit for several of the current, major social media platforms. It provides snapshots of writing that can be quickly consumed while scrolling past and 'liked' or shared quickly. In 2015, three of the top ten best-selling poetry books were written by poets who are best known as Instapoets (Qureshi, 2015). Twitter, with its 140-character limit is a perfect example of a constrained format that appeals to a poet, who often focuses on the nuances of the language within the tight confines of pre-determined structures. For those who have a Twitter account but are not poets, there is even a website that will comb your tweets and create poetry for you, each line linked to a different tweet. The citizen author, perhaps, does not even need to have poetical leanings to create interesting new poetry using digital social technology, as the digital developments have created sets of contingencies that allow for these new expansions in the digitally global village.

Poetry is not the only genre to have a resurgence on social platforms; non-fiction, travel guides, self-help, narrative non-fiction, and cookery/lifestyle genres have all flourished at the hand of the citizen author in the global village.

There are works which cross platforms to create an interactive fiction that differs slightly depending on the access route. Works like these create new sites of inquiry in the discourse of the book, giving rise to innumerable new statements and objects. A new form of historical text is being written in the digital age, one that consists of grassroots digital activism, local eye-witness reporting, and the swift tagging of stories, organisation, and interaction of movements. While the individual tweets that are part of this new archive of digital history may not be, on their own, worthy of recording, it is when the connections within the discourse are made that a more complete understanding of a historical or social event becomes clear.

Various genres of literature and poetry are thriving in the global village, thanks in no small part to the rise of and access to social media platforms. When taking a closer look at the fiction that is being written by the citizen author, a wide variety of styles, topics, and genres emerge. In the following section Matt Stewart and Anna Todd will be briefly discussed as case studies of citizen authors who have used social media as a place to share their writing, and then were absorbed into the traditional publishing model.

Matt Stewart stepped directly past the traditional gatekeepers by choosing to release his novel, *The French Revolution*, on Twitter from his own account. Stewart wrote his novel first and used an algorithm to tweet each 130 character segment in a timely manner, sharing the entirety of the manuscript on Twitter in 2009 (interview, 2016, 137 Measures). It took 3,700 tweets to share the 480,000 character novel. It was shared at pre-determined intervals in order to facilitate an easy way to time and deliver the work in an automated fashion. This created a relationship between Stewart, as a citizen author, and his readers

in the global village as they waited for the next instalment and could reply directly to the author's Twitter account.

Stewart was not a well-known author when he used social media to write and publish his book. In fact, Stewart readily admits that as a marketer he wanted to raise the profile of the literary fiction manuscript that publishers were wary of taking a chance to publish traditionally (2016, 91 Measures). The media attention Stewart gained in tweeting the novel brought his work to the attention of Soft Skull Press, who opted, in 2010, to publish the work in a traditionally printed format. Stewart did not simply bypass the gatekeepers of the industry, he pushed the industry to bring his work into the traditional publishing model.

Todd, unlike Stewart, chose to write her fiction directly onto a social platform, which disrupted the discourse by creating new statements of the book that were rooted in digital social technology and not the publishing industry. She moved from writing her One Direction-based erotic fan fiction as lengthy captions to Instagram images to longer-form on Wattpad. Her move from one social platform to another, highlights her understanding of the digital social spaces that she, and her fiction, inhabits. By the time she published the first chapter of *After* on Wattpad in 2013, she was already boasting a huge network of readers. Soon after, Wattpad stepped in and brokered a traditional publishing contract with Simon & Schuster, and hired talent agency UTA to option the film rights. Todd said that she, "had no intention of [formally] publishing" her stories, and that she "wrote what [...she] wanted to be reading" (Qtd in Kircher, 2015). This process of simply writing what you want to read, and having the tools and platforms on which to do it, often describes the citizen author who engages with

social platforms as a means to bypass the industry entirely and in order share their works with like-minded neighbours in the global village.

Exploring who a citizen author is and where and what they write allows for the collection of a series of “micro-instances” of the ruptures to the understanding of a book within the wider discourse (Mittell, 2001, p. 10). “[B]y collecting micro-instances [...] in historically specific moments and examining the resulting large-scale patterns and trajectories” (Mittell, 2001, p. 10), we can gather an overall picture of how the tensions brought into play by the rise of the citizen author are creating new statements, objects, strategies, and relationships in the discourse of the book that challenges the publishing industry’s understanding of what a book is and its power relationships with the non-discursive industry.

### **The Citizen Author’s Role in the Publishing Industry and Its Relation to Power**

Once there is an understanding of who the citizen author is, what they are writing, and where, one must look at the citizen author’s place in the discourse of the book, their connections to the wider publishing industry, and the power relationships that entails. By mapping the breadth of the discourse of the book, focussing on the sites of inquiry where the citizen author, using digital social technology, has disrupted the discourse of the book and created new relationships in and outside of the discourse, we are able to see emerging regularities, where power comes into play, as a strategy that maintains a relationship between why books are changing and the knowledge involved in

those changes and how those changes are effecting the book and the author (Kendall & Wickham, 2003, p.49).

In the traditional publishing model, there are different levels of power working as gatekeepers to the industry, with the publisher at the top, the agent in the middle, and the author at the bottom. This sits alongside, and relates, to the audience of readers who are involved in the subtle push and pull between telling the publishers what to publish (by their purchases) and buying what the publishers introduce to the market and heavily promote. In this model the author is the one that is left powerless as Stewart suggests, stating that “in the end, you are just waiting [...] and there’s really nothing you can do. It’s just a completely emasculating feeling [...] I had no power” (2016, 62 Measures). With the advent of, and access to, the internet in the mid-nineties and the citizen author who creates as well as consumes what they find online, the power that is predominately held by traditional publishers is shifting. This is not to say that as the internet of things grows and the digitally social connectivity of the global village expands that the power of the traditional publishing industry will fall, but in the discourse of the book, it could potentially alter to better incorporate the citizen author and new definitions of the book, much as the publishing industry in the eighteenth century struggled against and then embraced the self-published author.

Making a new book meaningfully available to consumers has traditionally required the assistance of one of the major world publishing houses. Now [...it is] possible for authors to circumvent the traditional publishing gatekeepers to make their products directly available to the consumer.

(Waldfoegel, J. & Reimers, I., 2015, p. 48)

This shift was first accomplished by the self-published author, many of whom had their manuscripts rejected by an agent or publisher. Then companies cropped up to help the self-publishing author edit, format, market, and sell their books. Amazon, the home of the Long Tail of publishing, branched into self-publishing. Others such as Smashwords, Lulu, and more, raise questions of power relationships in the marketplace by stepping in and providing authors a service by actively helping them to move around the traditional publishing mechanism, which creates new sites of inquiry and statements of the book.

A separate barrier of access that the traditional publishing model holds in place is the acquisition and use of ISBN numbers (O'Leary, 2014, p. 316). The cost for a single ISBN in the UK is £89, which could prohibit a single individual from bothering to purchase one and register their books, which could lead to a lack in data for self-published works and an inability to get their work to the market. The system for ISBN numbers is arranged to benefit larger organisations who bulk buy ISBNs, that drop in cost per ISBN as the number purchased climbs higher, with 1000 ISBNs' price point at £949, making each ISBN cost less than a pound.

In some cases, it is only after the citizen author has gained power, that is measured in connectivity within the global village, that publishers are willing to give them notice. This can be seen again and again with publishers soliciting work from social media influencers, and on a smaller scale with the work by publishers such as Unbound to seek out middle-range Twitter writers to collaborate on a traditionally published work. The process of allowing the citizen author to create their own connections within the global village, which are then exploited by the publishing industry, brings into play a hierarchisation within

the global village that the female citizen author are subverting, where those who have the most connections and power within their global village are the ones sought after by the publishing industry. By harnessing the power of the citizen author, the publisher benefits from their digital social connections.

This, for publishers and agents, cuts out some of the guesswork that the publishing industry is notorious for and can give them a formula for publishing successful books (Anders, 2011, p. 326). An interesting aspect that has developed within this new dynamic is the role of the platform itself in handling the affairs of the writers. Though this sort of work brokering publishing deals is not unusual for Wattpad's international arms, it is only beginning to take hold in the United Kingdom and America and represents an external force of power to the traditional writer – agent – publisher model.

Though heralding the end of the agent system in publishing is not a likely result of platforms taking an active role in selling and promoting the citizen authors who choose to share their work within them; it is a change that is being driven by the citizen author's move back to the centre of the publishing model. The citizen author creates and shares a work of fiction when and where they choose, and the publishers, agents, and even the platforms themselves are moving to accommodate the best of them and pull them back into the fold of traditional publishing. This is not to say that all citizen authors will be read by millions, sought after for publishing deals, and sign contracts on their own terms; instead, the pool of citizen authors, like self-publishers, will grow as the use of digitally social platforms rises.

The demographic of the citizen author places them at the centre of new technology and expanding digitally social spaces, which, itself is imbued with a

power dynamic based on who has access to and use of these spaces. Publishers generally have access to social platforms and technology, but publishing is reactionary when it comes to digital technology and social spaces. In the coming years they will catch up with the rise of the citizen author, and will actively seek to shift the power dynamic back into their favour by potentially leveraging the power of reader numbers, views, and the cultural economy of a printed book more definitely in their publishing strategy.

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