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2019 Research Symposium

Living Art: The Repercussions of Separating Abusive Authors from Their Work

Whether or not to separate the art from the artist is often debated as though an abstract idea, yet there are often tangible repercussions for the decision. Many arguments fail to consider that a different response may be necessary when considering living artists, rather than dead artists, who are publicly known to use the power and platforms gained from their artistic success to harm women. Focusing on accusations of sexual assault in the literary community, particularly of Sherman Alexie, I conducted research on current news and the power dynamics of sexual assault. I was able to gather cutting edge research on this ongoing conversation by attending panels and asking questions at the 2019 Association of Writers and Writing Programs conference. This research culminates in an analytical essay that argues readers should carefully consider how their response to authors who are revealed to be abusers gives them power to continue causing harm.