

## Welcome to *constellations*: A Kind of Storied Introduction

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This is a story.

This publishing space, *constellations*, is one in a set of three interrelated built communities focused on makers, makings, and cultural rhetorics—the Cultural Rhetorics Consortium and CR-CON being the other two. All three of these communities were built as constellative spaces in which cultural rhetorics practitioners can co-create in responsible, reciprocal relations with one another. Practically speaking, participants in each of these built communities bring specific foci to cultural rhetorics as an interdisciplinary field in order to create the relational constellative enterprise that is the field itself. There are a number of stories about the field itself<sup>i</sup>, and about cultural rhetorics as a practice<sup>ii</sup>, so I won't take up space here with those stories. Instead, as an introduction to this first collection of pieces in the publishing space of *constellations*, I'll begin by briefly sharing some of the details of how we (myself and my editorial team colleagues) have moved cultural rhetorics theory and methodology into an innovative set of editorial practices—practices that you'll see reflected in these first publications.

As we've said elsewhere, *constellations* came into being as a result of scholars in and outside of the field noticing a persistent need for a publishing space focused on cultural rhetorics scholarship. Even so, we decided early on not just to throw up a website and start publishing PDFs. Instead, we spent a good deal of time doing market and model research looking at digital publishing models, focusing both on Rhetoric & Writing journals plus some others outside the discipline. We also looked to diverse digital project spaces like Archives 2.0 and Mukurtu. Much of our model research focused on the usual things—usability, accessibility, sustainability. And our disciplinary market research didn't just show a definite need for a publishing space focused on cultural rhetorics; it also emphasized that the boundaries of that space needed to be both flexible and elastic enough to accept a broad range of genres and forms—from the most basic text-based to the most richly multi-mediated—but also to hold a relatively accessible technological entry point (alphabet print texts) while also maintaining space for those who might submit a broad range of multi-media, multimediated projects.

Our central theory-to-practice tenet has been to value and practice cultural rhetorics orientations in our day-to-day editorial work with one another, with reviewers and mentors, and with authors. We do that in a number of ways but one you'll notice as you engage the pieces here is a practice of honoring all contributors to a piece, including those whose labor usually goes unseen. At the end of each piece, you'll see a "production credits" section that lists and names mentors, reviewers, editorial assistants, layout, and copy editors for that specific piece. Reflected in some of those credits is another set of core practices—ones that came about as we asked ourselves how to shift the traditional "anonymous" practices of scholarly publishing into community-building and mentoring experiences without abandoning the double-blind peer review that is (unfortunately) still highly valued in academia. In naming the blind reviewers for a piece, we ask that those reviewers be accountable for what they say—and how they say it—to the writers whose pieces they're reviewing. And in instituting a mentoring policy for pieces whose innovative ideas we're invested in bringing into the scholarly conversation, we emphasize the collaborative nature of knowledge-making as well as the relational network that such conversations build for their participants.

Frankly, I'm proud of the work it's taken to get here to our first set of "live" pieces, and of the network of relations we've built in order to do this work in a good way, with good hearts. In that regard, I want to take a moment to honor the managing editors of *constellations*: Alexandra Hidalgo, Phil Bratta, Cindy Tekkobe, and Daisy Levy. These are the folks who read and manage every submission, work through the idealized version of our approach to building supportive editorial practices in order to get real usable practices/policies/procedures in place, and whose expertise spans the wide breadth of work we want the publishing space to encompass. They are also always funny, smart, supportive colleagues and relatives to me and to one another. I also want to honor our technical editor, Jeff Kuure, who is responsible for literally building the publishing space and installing each published piece into that space. The folks who are, perhaps, the least visible but who provide the connective tissue between makers, editors, reviewers, mentors that holds the entire enterprise together—and who, themselves, have had to learn the fine art of translation between our editorial imaginings and everyday processes—are Hannah Espinoza and Lauren Brentnell, the *constellations* editorial assistants who've learned about building space for diverse scholarship from the ground up. Additionally, I want to offer deep thanks to the members of our editorial board (Christina Cedillo, Gwendolyn Pough, Margaret Price, Jacqueline Rhodes, Raúl Sánchez, Trixie Smith, and Melanie Yergeau) for their patience and help as we've worked to build this editorial model. Each piece submitted to *constellations* is read by an editorial board member as well as a member of our review board, and editorial board members also agree to serve as revision mentors. And I'm also grateful to members of our review board (see that list [HERE](#)) for their commitment to providing supportive, nurturing responses to the pieces we send them.

And now, the final set of honorings. I am delighted by the initial set of published pieces, and by the ways in which they represent such a variety of kinds of things we hope to continue publishing—a small constellative indicative of the much larger one that this publishing space is meant to build. Starting us off is Kelly Medina-López’s “Rasquache Rhetorics: a cultural rhetorics sensibility,” which argues for rasquache—a movement in chicanx art, culture, and literature—as a cultural rhetorics theory/methodology as “a deliberate act of challenging what counts as academic knowledge and meaning making.” For Medina-López, rasquache rhetorics not only provide a new vocabulary of “spit, grit, and movidas” to cultural rhetorics scholars and teachers, they also echo the impulses which created CR-CON, the CR Consortium, and this publishing space: “not to simply approach the disciplinary table, but [to] build a new one out of the bits and pieces we have at hand.” Next is Mari E. Ramler’s “Beyoncé’s Performance of Identification as a Diamond: Reclaiming Bodies and Voice in ‘Formation,’” which asks “what is the line between sampling and commodification,” then uses a complex analysis of Beyoncé’s “Formation” to provide an answer that disrupts the binary of appropriation versus identification and offers in its place a way to think about Beyoncé’s performance of appropriation as identification. Then we offer the collective disjunction of “What Fucking Clayton Pettet Teaches Us About Cultural Rhetorics,” (made by Becca Hayes, Kathleen Livingston, Casey Miles, Jon Wargo, Ames Hawkins, Ezekiel Choffel, Steven Hammer, Erin Schaefer, and Les Hutchinson) which “seeks to provoke and initiate” art, performance, response, and transgenre writing in relation to the dissonance these makers offer. For these makers, what began as a conference presentation/performance meant to incite community conversation about Clayton Pettet’s “Art School Stole My Virginity” becomes an invitation to their audience members—both those represented here as well as you, their readers—to co-create “a constellation of queer provocations.”

In addition to these three article-scope pieces, we also have the privilege of hosting bringing the digital version of “Writing Networks for Social Justice,” the 4C4Equity’s zine which was edited and originally published in print by Donald Unger and Liz Lane. Hosting the digital version of the 4C4E zine is important to us because it brings the sixty-seven pages of original content—interviews, scene reports, and columns—from more than fifteen different contributors to a readership beyond those who could find and afford the gorgeous print versions of the zine. We see this act—hosting digital versions of important print publications—as a core part of our approach to make space for as wide a diversity of voices, genres, and approaches as possible. And, finally, also here is the first offering in our *constellations* pedagogy blog series (edited by Margaret Price and Chad Iwertz), “Listening to Stories: Practicing Cultural Rhetorics Pedagogy,” a virtual roundtable (contributors were Christina V. Cedillo, Victor Del Hierro, Candace Epps-Robertson, Lisa King, Jessie Male, Staci Perryman-Clark, Andrea Riley-Mukavetz, and Amy Vidali) in which these experienced teachers share how they use cultural rhetorics pedagogies in their classrooms, their lives as administrators, and their

mentoring in order to offer—and take—teachings oriented to create more space for more kinds of voices in academia.

We hope you enjoy this first set of offerings. And we hope you are inspired to join the cultural rhetorics conversation by submitting your work, attending CR-CON, joining the Consortium as we collectively build this field and the productive spaces in which its scholars, teachers, performers, makers, and activists will be created.

### PRODUCTION CREDITS

Copyeditor(s): Daisy Levy, Lauren Brentnell  
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### NOTES

<sup>i</sup> See Bratta and Powell, “Introduction to the Special Issue: Entering the Cultural Rhetorics Conversations,” in *enculturation* (April 2016), <http://enculturation.net/entering-the-cultural-rhetorics-conversations>.

<sup>ii</sup> See especially, Powell et al, “Our Story Begins Here: Constellating Cultural Rhetorics,” in *enculturation* (October 2014), <http://enculturation.net/our-story-begins-here>.