



Title: Welcome to constellations: a kind of storied introduction

Authors: Malea Powell and Alexandra Hidalgo

Issue: 1

Publication Date: April 2019

Stable URL: <http://constell8cr.com/issue-1/introduction/welcome-to-constellations-a-kind-of-storied-introduction/>

Welcome to constellations: a kind of storied introduction

Malea Powell and Alexandra Hidalgo, Editors-in-Chief

May 2018

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 [i] and about cultural rhetorics as a practice [ii], 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 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.

And the story continues

By Alexandra Hidalgo

April 2019

Stories are about time and transformation, about starting in one place and ending somewhere else and what we feel and learn as we take that journey. In our case, the journey of *constellations'* first issue spanned the transition between Malea, our founding editor-in-chief, and myself, who inherited the position from her very capable hands. The change came about because Malea was selected to be the new editor-in-chief of Rhetoric and Composition's flagship journal *College Composition and Communication*. Since I had been part of *constellations* from its inception, she invited me to be her successor, and I was eager to continue the work of the journal in this new position and to complete our first issue. Because the philosophy of *constellations* is so firmly positioned in collaboration, it is only fitting, I believe, that its first issue should be the result of the vision of two editors-in-chief. I want to thank Malea for her leadership in beginning the journal and developing and nurturing its ethos and for trusting me to guide the publication's evolution in the coming years. I also want to thank the brilliant managing editors who have recently joined us—Candace Epps-Robertson, Ana Milena Ribero, and Andrea Riley-Mukavetz. Their intelligence and commitment to the journal takes the publication in innovative and exciting directions. Lastly, Jessi Wright has been instrumental in developing an inventive social media presence for the journal that supports and celebrates not only our authors but daring scholarship in our field as a whole.

I had the fortune of overseeing the addition of three articles to our first issue. Megan Schoen's "Toward a Rhetoric of Kasigo: Rhetoric and Democracy in Botswana" is an in-depth historical analysis of Botswana's discursive practices and how they have helped the country retain a strong democracy after liberation from Britain's colonial hold. As Schoen argues, "Tswana praise poetry, Tswana proverbs, and oratorical education offer compelling evidence that the Tswana had a rhetorical tradition in which discursive dissent was not only permissible but essential to the indigenous political system." Using and analyzing examples from Botswana's cultural heritage, she makes a compelling argument for the long-standing practice of dissent in

the culture and how it has prepared Botswana to embrace democracy in the astute ways they do today.

Anne von Petersdorff's video essay "Embodied Encounters: A Case for Autobiographical and Haptic Filmmaking" invites viewers to join her and fellow filmmaker Maria Pérez-Escalá as they travel from Egypt to Germany, crossing 14 international borders through land and sea. In her mesmerizing video essay, von Petersdorff brings to life the perspective of women travelers and theorizes how autobiographical filmmaking can provide extremely rich experiences for viewers and filmmakers alike. As she analyzes the experience of filming and editing her film alongside Pérez-Escalá, von Petersdorff unveils theories about what moving images offer our understanding of gender and culture, arguing, "Throughout the editing process, I learned that working with film can expand our understanding of how the self is created and mediated in spatial ways." Not only do we hear her explain intriguing findings like that one, but we see and hear them unfold on the screen as we watch her work.

In "The Struggle Is Real: Whiteness Studies, Hip Hop Pedagogies, and the Rhetorics of White Privilege," Jill McKay Chrobak proposes pedagogical approaches for critically challenging racism in our composition classrooms. As she shows, her approach includes drawing from Hip Hop lyrics and asking students to analyze and question the rhetorical strategies used by those who feel that whiteness is under attack. As she writes, "While their struggle may be real to them (and I assure you, their anger is), I argue that the actual struggle is ours—the struggle to dismantle the acceptance and perpetuation of white privilege rhetoric. As a white, heterosexual female ally, I believe this struggle is mine." She invites and inspires readers to also make it *their* struggle in this thoughtful piece.

I have no doubt that I speak for the whole *constellations* team when I say that we couldn't be prouder of the work we have published in this inaugural issue. Our authors and the topics, methodologies, genres, and media they utilize are diverse and deeply resonant at a time when conservative forces seem to be experiencing a global resurgence. As a cultural rhetorics publication, we aim to provide alternative ways of being and making in the world, and with this first issue, we have done exactly that. We invite you to join us as the work we nurture and publish grows and evolves over the many issues that will come.

Notes

[i] 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>.

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