



Title: Ready for the long and wondrous road ahead: an introduction to issue 2 of constellations

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Ready for the long and wondrous road ahead: an introduction to issue 2 of *constellations*

Alexandra Hidalgo, editor-in-chief

For someone who is not a runner—my knees have resolutely protested any attempt at running since I was 11—I sure keep talking about journals through running metaphors. “Editing a journal is a marathon, not a sprint.” If—or rather when—I say this again at one of our editorial meetings, there will likely be a few chuckles from our brilliant staff as everyone’s inner voices say, “we know” in telepathic unison. My first foray into digital publishing began in the summer of 2009 when a group of fellow graduate students at Purdue University invited me to work on co-founding what became the peer-reviewed publication, *Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society*. A few months later, I cofounded *agnès films: a publication for women and feminist filmmakers* with my dear friend Caitlan Spronk. Both are now a decade old, and they have evolved into thriving digital publications that at once reflect and go beyond the dreams and abstract ideas we discussed during those early editorial meetings.

As they tenaciously place one foot in front of the other during their long existences, journals take copious unexpected and often electrifying turns. They perform some cryptic alchemy, blending the contributions of editors, authors, reviewers, and readers to fashion their own identities and personalities. I see my role as editor-in-chief of a journal as providing the publication with all the freedom and support it needs to forge its own path. Although it seems too early to tell how *constellations* will define its identity, we—the community that produces and reads this journal—value the following practices:

1. Mentorship: When our founding editor-in-chief Malea Powell first developed the idea of the journal, one of her main goals was to create a publishing culture in which editors and reviewers worked together with authors to not only produce thoughtful and impactful scholarship but to also help authors grow as writers and content producers. While this is likely how many journals also express their own mission, most of us in academia have received our share of devastating comments from reviewers that cast our work as abhorrent in one or more ways.

We do eventually get back up from these reviewers’ rebukes, but it takes a lot of emotional and intellectual energy that would be better spent on crafting our scholarship. By seeing our review and editorial processes as mentorship, we at *constellations* provide criticisms in constructive ways that aim to result in excellent scholarship while respecting the amount of effort, willpower, and interminable days of researching and crafting ideas that producing such quality of work requires. Our method for expressing critique seeks to awaken new ideas

and possibilities in the authors' thinking about a piece, not to chastise them for their choices. In order to help authors digest the often complex revisions we suggest, we offer them the opportunity to work with a mentor who aids in the delicate task of interpreting and figuring out how to implement changes in a way that helps authors retain their vision for the piece while incorporating the ideas our reviewers and editors suggest.

2. Collaborative editorial processes: As we figure out how we want to evolve, we welcome the voices of those who are engaged with the journal in providing and evaluating ideas and initiatives. We have biweekly zoom meetings where our nine managing editors, our editorial assistant, our tech editor, our social media manager, and I get “together,” becoming a sea of faces on our respective screens, and discuss how to address the needs of particular pieces currently in the review and publication processes. We also discuss more complex, overarching questions, such as how to guide authors to more deliberately engage with ideas and practices in cultural rhetorics.

Being a nascent field, cultural rhetorics brings authors the opportunity to explore new, exciting territory and help shape what the field itself becomes. However, it is also harder to cite from cultural rhetorics and to fully grasp its immense creative and intellectual potential, as the amount of scholarship published in it is comparatively small. After seeing so many authors who submit their work to us struggle with that conundrum, we crafted a number of suggestions for cultural rhetorics scholarship that we added to our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page. As we mention in that text, if you have cultural rhetorics scholarship that you think fits within the parameters we are suggesting, or if you'd like us to rethink those parameters, please let us know. The same goes for whether you have questions you'd like us to answer in this page.

We also redesigned our website and logo in a collaborative manner over the last year. While Jeff Kuure, Lauren Brentnell, and I worked together on the actual design, we asked fellow members of the editorial team to provide extensive feedback and vote on every iteration of our process. The resulting website still needs a substantial amount of work to get to where we want it to be, but we will get there in time as we continue running our journal marathon.

3. Fostering diversity in every aspect of our publication: In academia, as in practically every other cultural production system, how diverse the gatekeepers and decision makers are tends to have a direct effect on how many diverse voices are featured in that particular system's output. In other words, the more diverse those selecting who gets to be heard are, the more diverse the voices speaking will be. Having a diverse editorial staff and review board is something we have been committed to from the start. Our managing editors represent a group of scholars who are all diverse in at least one—but generally multiple—categories in terms of gender, race, sexuality, ability, and social class. Our

review board is similarly diverse, and as a result so are the authors whose work we are featuring and the topics they are exploring in their work.

4. Publishing scholarship from historical, archival, and multimodal

methodologies: Besides exploring diverse cultural practices, the scholarship we publish uses a rich methodological approach. Issues 1 and 2 explore cultural ideas from historical perspectives—from how ancestral rhetorical practices affect Botswana's democracy today to the ways in which students at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School resisted their teachers' racist practices in the late nineteenth century. Issue 2 features archival research at the Carlisle School Archive and at the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley Archive, interpreting the information they unearth from innovative perspectives. Our authors across both issues also create and feature original video essays, photography, and Tweets to make the sorts of rhetorical arguments that those modes of communication are particularly well suited to bring to life and that our journal seeks to explore in relation to how they help us expand our understanding of cultural rhetorics.

5. Storytelling: I'd argue that one of the most compelling aspects of cultural rhetorics is its emphasis on the vital role storytelling can play in making scholarly arguments that connect with readers at a deep, personal level. Stories provide the backbone of the work we publish, from two Latinx authors coming together to honor the love, struggles, and accomplishments of their migrant mothers, to a group of queer scholars analyzing queer sexuality through their reactions to an art student's performance piece, to a German filmmaker's meditations on how women approach travel as she crosses three continents with her Argentinian friend and fellow filmmaker.

As *constellations* continues to define its own identity while traversing the streets of our academic world surrounded by older, more established journals and by the new journals that will emerge, these characteristics may remain part of its identity, or they may evolve into something different. I have countless ideas for how I would like us to grow. However, the beauty of our *constellations* system is that my role as editor-in-chief means being part of a group of decision makers who don't always agree on what new directions we should pursue and who come to consensus through conversation. Whatever the journal's trajectory looks like in the future, I have no doubt that it will involve diverse perspectives coming together. I can't wait to see what established paths we choose to wander down and what new paths we choose to create for ourselves.

Our second issue has been made possible through the tireless labor, patience, and innovative ideas of managing editors Ana Milena Ribero, Candace Epps-Robertson, Daisy Levy, Jo Hsu, Kimberly Wieser, Lauren Brentnell, and Sonia Arellano; assistant editor Catheryn Jennings; mentors Steven Alvarez, Lisa King, Emily Legg, and Kate Vieira; reviewers Christina Cedillo and José Cortez; tech

editor Jeff Kuure; social media manager Jessi Wright; Pedagogy Blog editor Andrea Riley-Mukavetz; and copyeditors Jessica Gibbons and Sophie Schmidt. As you look over our scholarship, it will be clear just how powerful their voices and ideas can be as we work with our authors to produce thoughtful and daring work.

Our issue opens with Sarah Klotz's "The Historical Work of Cultural Rhetorics: Constellating Indigenous, Deaf, and English-Only Literacies." In this powerful piece, Klotz uses archival letters, teaching manuals, and instructor accounts of their work to examine the ways in which the American Indian students, who were forced to attend the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in the late 1800s, were taught English through methods used to teach deaf students. The faculty did this because they believed their native tongues were so inferior that "all tribal language features must be extinguished" in order for the students to learn English. The piece showcases the ways the students used survivance to battle this brutal practice and maintain aspects of their linguistic and cultural identity in the midst of such a destructive educational environment.

In "The Dirt Under My Mom's Fingernails': Queer Retellings and Migrant Sensualities," Alejandra I. Ramírez and Ruben Zecena travel through their own and their mothers' histories to create loving and profound portraits of what Latina migrant women offer to their families and to American culture. As Ramírez and Zecena explain, their mothers' stories are particularly vital at a time when our political and media cultures seem determined to paint Latinxs as threats. As they explain, "Through our discussion of the body as a story, we posit that a rhetorics of the flesh reveals traces of violence on the migrant body." Yet, as the essay shows, their mothers took that violence and turned it into love for their family. For me, it is that love that makes this such an impactful and important piece in today's combative global climate.

Shersta Chabot's "Performing Gender Asymmetry: Material Rhetoric and Representation at the National Museum of American History" takes us through a tour of that museum's problematic representation of women. As Chabot walks us through three exhibits—American Enterprise, American on the Move, and The First Ladies—she uses original photography and nuanced analysis to show that although women are indeed present, they are represented as "ornamental or inessential" to the very history of the United States. Women's accomplishments are vaguely and confusingly represented and the featured artifacts and representations focus on gowns and china and on their roles as mothers and caretakers. This is particularly alarming because as Chabot argues, women's "hold on public space remains tenuous, always under pressure to regress by patriarchal practices." In other words, not only are the current representations dangerously inaccurate, we may slip backward instead of toward representing women's contributions in all their vitality and richness.

Cassidy Hoff's "The University of Utah 'Utes:' Towards Increased Rhetorical Sovereignty" analyzes how the Utes team she rooted for since she was a girl is a form of modern colonialism, in spite of claims to the contrary by the university's administration. As she writes, "During my childhood, I always believed I was part of the sports team—one of the 'Utes.' Yet, this assumed identity colonializes the Ute Tribe, as they are separated from tradition, language, and culture while under the umbrella of the 'Ute' brand." As Hoff analyzes the history of the university and the Ute Tribe's relationship with each other and the current media guides the university provides for usage of the Ute name, she finds that the university's claim to be using the Ute name for athletic purposes is an empty gesture. Instead, students and sports fans end up imitating the Ute Tribe in unsettling ways as they attend games and perform various forms of sports fandom. Through her nuanced study of the situation, Hoff makes a compelling plea to fans and the university's administration to give up the name and develop a more ethical identity for the university.

In "A Settler Archive: A Site for a Decolonial Praxis Project," Romeo García uses the artifacts he finds inside the Harlingen Texas box at the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley Archive to critique the ways in which settler colonialism portrays history in inaccurate and racist ways with repercussions that are still palpating today. As García argues, the settlers create a dualism between modernity/rationality represented by themselves and nature/irrationality represented by the cultures colonized, whom they pejoratively refer to as "The Indians" and "The Mexicans." As García shows, however, the settlers were not the only ones keeping track of unfolding events at the time. Through corridos, the populations whose rights were being violated, recorded their own accounts of cruelty and mendacity on the settlers' part. As García writes, through this analysis and by coming to terms with our colonial past "my hope is we can all learn how to address ourselves to hauntings, a possible stepping-stone towards decolonization and pluriversality." Given the current conflicted state of American politics and of academia itself, this is an essential call to make right now.

I hope you enjoy this multilayered and defiant collection of arguments, ideas, images, and dreams for a more equitable future. It has been an honor and a transformative learning experience to be part of the *constellations'* journey so far. I am very thankful that it is a marathon and not a sprint so that I can continue to run alongside this immensely talented group of creative thinkers a while longer. If you think of new directions we should take, please let us know. We are always eager to hear from you and to listen to your ideas on how we can continue to grow as a publication.

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