

Introduction To The Special Issue: Working Toward A Definition Of Queer Literacies

In our call for papers for this special issue, we—Collin, Wilfredo, and Zarah—solicited the following: “We seek to elevate the queer literacy practices we have overlooked, silenced, erased, and colonized. In this special issue of *Literacy in Composition Studies*, we call upon other LGBTQ+ scholars and accomplices to challenge what we know about queer literacy.” In this call, we sought to intermingle our own investments within literacy studies, queer theory, rhetoric and composition studies, and thrivance and futurity for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), leading to a broad citational constellation that comprised our envisioned scope of queer literacies; we as queer people, after all, are everywhere in the world and doing things.

Of course, we might have taken on too much—as some pointed out—and not have done our due diligence with our citational acknowledgement within the CFP. As Eric Pritchard pointed out in both the original and second CFP, it is necessary that we recognize the people who have done the work for us to be where we are today, doing the work that we are doing. To rectify that, we introduce this special of *LiCS* by working toward a definition of queer literacies that is contextualized within the array of literature across literacy studies and rhetoric and composition. With this issue, we therefore alchemize queer ontologies that have not been included in the popular repertoires of both queer studies and literacy studies or uptaken in the current dialogues propelling queer rhetorical and literacy scholarship. We make no new claim in saying that the queer contingency of rhetoric, composition, and literacy has been mainly white in the spaces we meet and create (i.e., caucus meetings, special issues, editorial boards, etc.). That said, queer of color ontologies are extant within queer literacy studies as an intersection of both fields—as Shelagh Patterson notes in this special issue—and thus, our definition of queer literacy follows this trajectory, beginning in women of color feminisms (e.g. Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, June Jordan, Toni Cade Bambara), following with those who laid down the work for the project of disrupting literacy normativity (Pritchard), continuing with Seth Davis’ work on the embodied literacies of Black queer beingness, Collin Craig’s scholarship on the visibility of Black queer rhetorical practices within the institution, and leading, we hope, to this special issue (Davis; Craig). Still, we need to listen: in Beverly J. Moss’s 2021 essay, “Where Would We Be?: Legacies, Roll Calls, and the Teaching of Writing in HBCUs,” Moss closes her essay on the presence and continual contribution of Black scholars in our field with the following:

[W]e have been here all along, we are still here, and will continue to be. This incomplete roll call is my way of suggesting that HBCU intergenerational exchanges are about how the very existence of those who teach at HBCUs and/or attended HBCUs . . . enter into a long-standing, dynamic conversation that not only strengthens the foundation of composition but also reimagines it. (147)

We take Moss’s position on the viability of acknowledging legacies and longstanding foundations created by Black scholars. Given our lineage, the definition of queer literacy we advance within this introduction *is not new*, or *standalone*. The work queer and/or BIPOC scholars have done has powerfully shaped not only how we conceptualize queer composition now, but composition studies

more broadly. Others have wonderfully done the work of queer literacies for quite some time now: decades worth of scholarship serves as proof, as Patterson unpacks in this issue.

What we intend with this introduction, then, is a synthesis of this work that we hope will 1) contextualize the articles within this special issue, 2) foment further engagement with queer literacy as an interrogative building block for creating just, antiracist worlds, and 3) help future queer scholars of literacy, rhetoric, and composition—the next generation—who might find handy such a definition.¹ We advocate and leverage this definition for world building, survival, and imagining queer futures that account for the voices, experiences, and tactics that are created at multiple intersections.

Finally, we believe that it is necessary to critically interrogate the rhetorical and theoretical viability of “queer” (as Jacqueline Rhodes contended in her keynote at the 2018 Watson Conference). We therefore centralize Black queer epistemologies and consider “quare” as a framework that allows for a speculative analysis of the limitations and affordances of how we define queer literacy. E. Patrick Johnson suggests that we interrogate the limitations of “queer” as an adequate description that fully accounts for the lived experiences and issues faced by lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender people of color who come from racialized communities. His nuancing of the term “quare” as an alternative, culturally specific positionality suggests that we expand our tools “for reading racial and ethnic sexuality” by drawing upon vernacular ways of knowing (Johnson, “Quare’ Studies”).

Although Johnson’s disciplinary call to rethink the discursive limitations of “queer” is situated in performance studies, we see Johnson’s call to “quare” “queer” as laying groundwork for theorizing queer literacy strategies that intentionally center racial and ethnic sexual identities as frameworks for knowledge making. We believe that it calls for us to be imaginative of how queer literacy performances can and should be actualized and where we might locate them, especially as we work toward defining queer literacy in ways that account for the embodied and lived experiences of queer and trans BIPOC. This rendering of literacy primes it as an expansive site, wherein the embodied practices of being in the world count, too, as literacy practices: National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Standing Committee on Global Citizenship, 2020; “Definition of Literacy in a Digital Age,” NCTE, 2019; “Literacy Assessment,” NCTE, 2018. So, in good faith that the definition we offer is “quare,” here is how we are using queer literacy in this special issue.

Locating the Potential of Queer Literacies: Toward Deep Coalition Building

Twenty years after publishing “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?,” Cathy Cohen, in a 2019 reflection piece in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, commented on modern-day queer politics and what remains of their radical potential. Cohen asked that we “use the idea of queer as a *provocation* to imagine how we might organize across varied communities defined as ‘the other’ by the state and/or racial capitalism” (142, italics in original). Core to this coalitional approach is practice—how might we practice queer relationality beyond misinterpreted identity politics and toward the identity politics of the Combahee River Collective? How might we practice deep solidarity with the most precarious of us as a worldmaking project?

Critically imagining deep solidarity suggests that we also imagine, theorize, and practice a queer relationality that is underlined by a close attention to relation building—not just through our textual productions and intellectual agendas, but through our everyday practices and interactions with queer BIPOC and co-conspirators, and perhaps even with the allies that scholars of color remain wary around.

As countless scholars and/or activists have shown us, queer literacy practices are inherently political given that our existence as queer and trans people is political (Ferguson; Alexander; Halberstam). In our CFP, we sought works that imagined these queer politics beyond the dialogics of whiteness and the Other—too often this approach energizes, at best, the trope of multiculturalism (Kynard, “One Mic”), and at worst, the overt pomposity of white culpability (Kynard, “Center”). Rather, we home in on the actionable potential of queer literacy, the manner by which queer and trans BIPOC employ literacy practices that run counter to Western notions of rhetoric, composition, and literacy, which are “deeply mired in the muck of the logic of coloniality” (Powell, “Stories” 393). We upcycle this disengagement with white supremacy, and we seek to break from the dialogics of whiteness to celebrate the rhetorical complexities of queer and trans BIPOC literacy practices (with all their particularities), which are self-apparent for what they are: moves toward full existences in a world where joy can often be in short supply.

Queer literacies are inherently social, either in response to normativity or the learned ways we understand and uptake our queer elders’ practices for survival. Within the uneven occupation of the queer spectrum—ranging from homonormativity to excess—is willfulness and intention and risk; we argue that there are practices the field writ large (meaning the cadre of white and/or straight scholars comprising the bulk of the field) has ignored because, when someone willfully moves against, across, and between normative literacies, they are punished or made to be invisible. That said, Jacqueline Jones Royster writes on how Black women have modeled “the right to narrate our peculiar experiences, to situate them within larger social frameworks, and to enter by these terms into institutionalized discourses, whether those discourses have been designed with our viewpoints in mind or not” (5).

Indeed, the legacies of white supremacy (most readily located in the functional power of literacy normativity) demonstrate the extent to which theories and practices have operated hegemonically and tended to function with a heavy and relentlessly constraining hand. Willfulness is what it means to not go with the flow (Ahmed 82). It is required, Sara Ahmed writes, “in ordinary places” (83). As scholars committed to continuing the groundwork of an anti-racist field, we centralize Royster’s perspectives here, and through these three essays and book review, this collection seeks to provoke readers, queer or otherwise, to make new connections, to undo the notion that excess and homonormativity are in any way related to the networked terms around what it means to be willful (Ahmed gives us stubborn, defiant, rude, etc.), and instead recognize that there are expansive queer literacies that make lives possible across a variety of identive markers, communities, and perspectives that cohere into the broader politics of queerness.

Indeed, if we are to fully engage in a queer politics of the social in regard to coalition building that is viable and transformative, we must consider and interrogate strategies that we use to cultivate

our queer relations as well as literate strategies that we use for relation building. Adela Licona and Karma Chávez, in “Relational Literacies and their Coalitional Possibilities,” compel us to see relational literacies as practices that are “ripe with coalitional possibility as they can open people to new ways of understanding, learning, imagining, and being in relation to others’ stories, interests, and contexts” (96). Practicing relational literacies is about identifying partnerships that foster opportunities for locating new knowledge-making strategies and building “coalitional subjectivities” that account for individual and collective experiences. Coalitional subjectivities can cultivate cross-boundary discourses to where our knowledge making practices “operate kaleidoscopically, thereby permitting interpretation to be richly informed by the converging of dialectical perspectives” (Royster 29). As Powell notes, the converging of dialectical perspectives when energized by an anticolonial intent makes room for multiple ways of knowing, and “recogniz[es] *all* available knowledge-making practices as real options . . . as viable and valid in our classrooms and our scholarship” (“Stories,” 401). Licona and Chavez urge those of us who are doing the work of coalition building in service of disruption to see this as a recursive, ongoing project that is “change-oriented” and committed to seeking new understandings. We believe that this is both actualized and sustained in the context of dialogue with connected knowers and co-conspirators. Validating and recognizing knowledge-making practices within the context of communion with connected knowers and co-conspirators is a dimension of Black feminist epistemology that makes dialogue essential in the knowledge validation process (Collins 763).

Simply put, we locate the radical potential of queer literacies—the ways of building new worlds—in the ontological energy of on-the-ground activisms, projects, and everyday lives of queer and trans BIPOC, such as Darnell Moore’s podcast “Being Seen,” The Trans Literacy Project, National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE), and the Sylvia Rivera Law Project (SRLP) among countless others (Cohen; Smith). With that in mind, we contour the politics of queer literacy with the ways queer and trans BIPOC maneuver, resist, live, and thrive in a white supremacist world, which demands an intersectional rhetorical framing of literacy practices (Craig; Pritchard). To be clear, the bulk of this work has risen from Black scholars (e.g., Moss; Richardson; Gilyard and Banks; Gilyard; Banks; Smitherman, Royster), Indigenous scholars (e.g., Lyons; Powell; Vizenor), Latinx scholars (e.g., Ruiz and Sánchez; Villanueva; Medina and Luna), and AAPI scholars (e.g., Sano-Franchini, Monberg, and Yoon; Mao; Mao and Young; Young) within literacy, rhetoric, and composition studies. People of color in the field have been doing The Work for some time now, and it’s time queer literacy work across literacy, rhetoric, and composition studies responds—it’s time, dear white reader, to stop citing, planning, meeting, talking, writing mainly with your white colleagues, which forecloses the new trails the queer contingent in rhetoric, composition, and literacy studies might follow (Royster).

We do not say this lightly, but rather, our intention with this statement hinges on the simple fact that citations occur beyond the textual domain of scholarly production. Put another way, with our focus on how queer literacy has been defined thus far, we locate its terms within both the citations across queer scholars in the field and the conversations we have with one another that extend queer’s meaning into both the literate and scholarly domain. Take the following example from Wilfredo regarding what happens when whiteness energizes meaning making. Wilfredo helped plan the

CCCC Queer Caucus-sponsored roundtable at the 2021 conference, and he notes the excellent works presented at the roundtable. Drs. Matthew Nelson and Shelagh Patterson spoke about their ongoing anti-racist projects and teaching at their respective institutions, offering a glimpse of what cross-caucus work might look like when the space is made.² After the session, however, work soon began for the 2022 Queer Caucus-sponsored panel, and Wilfredo was told by a senior white queer scholar that although the works presented in the 2021 roundtable were excellent, *they weren't queer*. Antiracist and infused with the potency of social justice, yes—but not queer. These moves—whose problematics lie in the siloing of identity and practice and not on that scholar, as Wilfredo believes—build brick by brick the academic house of queer literacy, wherein anti-racism is excised from the practical underpinnings of queerness. These old definitions arise, we believe, when we fail to look past our prior genealogies.

Throwing Another Brick: Citing Past the Wall of Whiteness

Rhetoric, composition, and literacy studies writ large are not remiss in engaging in exclusionary citation politics, especially within the queer contingent. Arguably, the same white queer scholars continue to be cited because they hold the largest number of publications and, thus, the most disciplinary privilege. When queer BIPOC scholars do get cited, it is often through citation chains meant to do a quick acknowledgement (the so-called drive-by citation), and when there is engagement with their work, it runs the risk of misinterpretation, remaining surface level, or never adequately engaging with the issues at hand. For example, gender and women's studies scholar Keisha Lindsay asserts that when intersectionality is framed simply as a heuristic rather than as a Black feminist theory, it creates situations for broad interpretations of what counts as emancipatory thought and action. Lance T. McCready argues that this runs the risk of divorcing intersectionality from a distinctly feminist agenda and treating it as a normative enterprise (14). Moves like drive-by citation, misinterpreting theoretical concepts, or skimming scholarship do damage. These moves perpetuate the appearance of diverse or inclusive citation without actually building upon the theories, ideas, claims, and stories centered in BIPOC scholarship; this ultimately ensures that hegemonic and white scholarship continues to be centered. Indeed, "Citation is a strategic choice; who is cited and how they are cited are choices reflecting the priorities and values of the author" (Itchuaqiyaq, Renade, and Walton). Of course, we acknowledge that such scholars have done important groundwork for building a door, as it were, in the brick wall that is academia (Ahmed). The academy, for all its supposed liberal sentiments espoused in the mainstream media and by many of its inhabitants, is fiercely queer- and transphobic, and it was even more so just 10–15 years ago. We are thankful for the work of our queer elders. Nevertheless, citation practices also reflect the priorities and values of the field.

Throughout *Living a Feminist Life*, Sara Ahmed refers to the "brick wall" that forms via the "building materials of power," which we extend here to mean the cohering of an academic enterprise via citation and scholarly engagement (91). Taking the simple idea that how we talk, plan, teach, and write create the academic worlds we inhabit via Ahmed's notion that we live within these brick

structures—for example the “tables around which bodies gather”—we propose a deep reflection on the fact that we are making a specific kind of queerness through our interactivity (99). The definitions (or lack thereof) of queerness and its actionable possibilities are likewise implicated in how we talk to and cite one another—including who gets cited. Although relying on the extant queer scholarship as a bridge to expand or nuance theories and methodologies that push us to (re)think queer literacy is viable, we also see this special issue as an opportunity to push back against normative citational practices and definitional norms and to consider alternative citational approaches—a chance to throw another brick gathered while dismantling this wall. Ahmed writes that citations are the materials by which we create these “dwellings,” and we argue that our interactions as scholars beyond academic production are not much different than citing scholarship. Through planning special issues, conferences, panels, blog posts, and more, we describe—create, even—a world where we are teaching others that some ideas, people, and places are worth engaging with while others should be avoided. When we orient ourselves to compose a lesson plan, a blog post, a chapter, an article, a book, a CFP, we are situated within an opportunity to build an experience wherein queerness is contingent on antiracism and anticolonialism. And we have to keep treating those opportunities as opportunities. We have to remain steadfast and conscious that each 50-minute lesson, each monthly reading group, each paragraph in a manuscript, each Zoom meeting with a colleague, mentee, and/or student is an opportunity.

Together, we’ve thought about how to do the work required of us when we think of the brick wall in this way, and we came away with the following questions that we advance now to you, reader, in the hopes that you’ll grapple with them, too—that you will pick them up as a brick and smash something in the name of a queerness built on antiracist action:

1. How do we use extant scholarship and acknowledge the work that came before as we work to build anti-racist futures, while simultaneously acknowledging that much of what has come before us in terms of queer scholarship has been motivated by and grounded in whiteness—moves that treat white supremacy and queer issues as mutually exclusive and not concomitant?
2. How might non-normative citational practices work as a rhetorical gesture for how we think about and imagine who we want the work of queer literacy to speak to directly?
3. How might queering citational practices, as we leverage extant queer scholarship, function simultaneously as self and group preservation while not deliberately excluding community members who have produced queer scholarship that is foundational to building a queer literacy project?
4. How do we contend with citational chains within queer literacy scholarship that are engendered by whiteness and foreclose otherwise possibilities?

The works in this special issue, we think, attend to these questions, all of which are vital to how queer literacy studies moves forward in terms of centering the joy and thriving of BIPOC. To be clear, when we say “joy and thriving,” we seek to chain the practical work of queer literacies (or how academicians do research with queer literacy in mind) to the definitions of queer literacy that activate our work. We seek to move past the center of literacy normativity—whiteness (Kynard, “Center”)—

with our definition of queer literacies, a move that foregrounds community, deep listening, and active, anti-racist action beyond writing. Actions, as they say, speak louder than words. Royster writes that “critical engagement requires a transformative vision, one that imagines the possibility of things currently unseen” (9). She writes that there is a difference between seeing, knowing, and *noticing* the experiences and knowledges of others, specifically, Black women: “I recognize, especially in cross-disciplinary work, the importance of mechanisms, including narratives, that permit knowledge to be amplified. With amplification, knowledge can be perceived as significant, understandable, *and* believable across multiple audiences” (13, italics in original). But now, 15 years after *Calling Cards* was published, we still aren’t seeing the kind of engagement with Black and Brown scholarship in queer rhetoric, composition, and literacy studies that we hope for.

The three of us have noticed how Black and Brown scholarship, experiences, and lives are used in ways that only appear to exude diversity perspectives, falling into the multicultural trope. Moreover, too often, citing Black and Brown scholarship is akin to hiring Black and Brown scholars in predominantly white institutions as a rhetorical gesture toward demonstrating equity in hiring practices, without instilling support systems that protect their time or ensure they may continue their exceptional work. The citation/hiring serves appearances without necessarily making a space more inclusive. We have personally heard from graduate students of color who wish to leave the field because they, too, recognize the pattern and do not see a space for them. The queers in the field build the same brick wall over and over again. Changing the pattern, however, does not mean we aren’t building the same wall. If we truly looked at, *noticed*, the ideas, perspectives, and experiences of Black and Brown scholars, we might not build a wall; instead, we might build a new trail.

Queer Literacy and the Ways it Plays out in the World

Eric Pritchard expanded definitions of queer literacies, focusing specifically on how literacy practices are not necessarily tied to alphanumeracy. Literacy practices defined as reading and writing eschews the fact that we read each other and write ourselves in embodied experiences. We learn from young ages what it means to read a body. Whether this involves what our bodies are allowed to do, how we can move our bodies, how people speak to (or about) us; whether this is more how we are taught to view other’s bodies—with the tightening of our mother’s hand around ours as we pass someone, or someone declaring another “lazy”; whether we are given trucks or dolls; whether we are dressed in pink or blue; whether we are allowed to play with someone. How our bodies are directed (or not) determines what we may need to undo, or what we will continue to teach others in the future.

In Black queer culture and some other communities of color, getting read, reading others, reading and writing ourselves is instrumental to performing and fortifying our identities, both individually and collectively. Moreover, Julia Serano writes that passing and passing centrism originated in discourse surrounding race (e.g., “passing as white): “Passing’ is typically enabled by unmarked assumption, and may allow one to access privileges associated with the dominant/majority group . . . although this often comes at a price” (underlining in original). Writing primarily about passing in

the trans community, Serano asserts that to “pass” is misleading, as it assumes deception is embedded within how someone presents. This is all to say that how or whether one is read, along with the act of reading others, isn't just something we learn in childhood (whether queer identifying at that point or not). It's something we continue to do, learn, unlearn, and witness throughout our lives, as Beth Buyserie points out in this special issue.

In queer literacy practices, legibility is complicated. Our bodies determine whether or how we are legible both within, between, and outside of queer and straight communities. On the one hand, some of us want desperately to be read as queer. We make assertions through our hair, our clothing, our possessions, and our movement. We experiment. For example, in undergrad, Zarah would wear men's clothing and tuck her hair into a beanie so that when she entered the gay bars in downtown Grand Rapids, MI she might be read. But this didn't feel like her; so during her MFA, she went ultra femme in high heels and tight dresses. As the only out queer in her program, she took pride in coming out in her poetry and to her students. Over time, she learned that challenging normative notions of queer, both within and outside queer communities, was critical—over time, she learned to simply be her “passing” self but to use her voice. In other words, her experimentation with dress and movement with her body helped her understand that she could challenge what it means to be read.

Voice is another means by which queer people write themselves and read each other. Through inflection, volume, and flair, we use our voices to assert our identities. It's not just what we say, but how we say it. Writing one's voice may be a fleeting moment in a conversation where we may otherwise pass, a means of testing whether someone could accept this part of our identity; or, this may be the dominant means by which we communicate our queerness in the world.

Our values also exude queer literacies. For example, how you engage in politics: many would call someone a “bad gay” for voting for Trump. Others might be named a “bad gay” for not watching *RuPaul's Drag Race* (or not following all of its iterations beyond the main show). If you are coupled and you decide to have children (because you can afford to), you may be read as “successful” within homonormative lenses but a sell-out in other circles. If you are trans and change your name but choose not to (or can't afford to) make any physical or biological changes to your body, your cis peers read you—publicly, privately, internally. When we note through conversation, interactions, and observation what actions queers are taking, we engage in a kind of literacy practice that is gauging how well someone has made themselves legible and (too often with judgement) acceptable. Within queer communities we are constantly pushing what it means to be read, who gets to read us, and whose reading matters.

The ways we read our own and others' bodies are wrapped up in policing and legibility. Take the Trump Administration's HUD Proposal for homeless shelters and trans people, which presupposes a shelter worker can determine whether a person is a man or woman (whatever that means) and should gain admittance to the shelter: “The Proposed Rule renders trans people as objects their nontransgender counterparts (shelter workers) must orient toward” (Moeggenberg, Edenfield, and Holmes, in press). For another example, in the state of Minnesota, if someone with a uterus wants to be a surrogate for someone, they have to have birthed their own child and kept it. Further, if one is legally married, even if the egg and sperm are not those of the carrier or their legal spouse,

their spouse has to sign off on their rights to the fetus. Policing legibility occurs at the local, state, and federal level. It is quite literally written into law. Federal money is also allocated to foster and adoption agencies that discriminate against LGBTQ people from building families. Thus, institutions inculcate publics to engage in literacy practices, however harmful they may be.

There is also policing that happens in media, in publics, on the street, and in small circles over PBR or fancy cocktails. We saw the policing that occurred with trans women in the 2000s with popular talk show hosts. We saw what types of queers were allowed in television and movies then, too: *The L Word*, *The Hours*, *Brokeback Mountain*, *Milk*, *Transamerica*, etc. Few of these centered on race until the 2010s.

And there are small moments of literacy practices that we internalize, too, where someone calls you “faggot” from their apartment window or out of a car window (Wilfredo has had this happen to him three times) while you’re walking to work. Where someone says you haven’t had the right kind of fuck to know if you’re really gay (Zarah has had this happen several times). Where someone says they’d “never guess” you were queer (Collin has had this happen more than a few times). Where someone uses the wrong pronouns repeatedly. Where someone says you’re in the wrong bathroom. There are moments where you read yourself, too. Where you’re standing in front of a mirror and wondering if your body is small enough, big enough, butch enough, femme enough, tough enough, fierce enough.

Legible.

Being legible or not. Being seen or not. The practice of moving between these spaces. Enjoying the in-betweenness of legibility—these moves are valuable not just for finding, knowing, and building community with one another. These moves are also about survival. And our field has been good about making queer practices more legible for a predominantly white, cisgender, able-bodied audience. We have moved from the debate about whether to discuss anything queer in the classroom at all to seeing how queer can be a methodology that creates an inclusive classroom, period. But much of this has been steeped in white, lesbian, and gay logics, with little attention to BIPOC, transgender, and bisexual literacies. As Pritchard argues in “Black Girls Queer (Re)Dress: Fashion as Literacy Performance in Pariah,” if literacy work “includes the creation and affirmation of the self, the construction and sharing of knowledge, and critically questioning, resisting, and disrupting regimes of power, domination, and literal and symbolic violence in everyday life” (129), then there is a great deal within queer literacies we have failed to attend to.

Overview of the Articles and Book Review

The scholarship that follows our introduction engages in the work of fucking with our notions of queer literacies. Each piece has moved the three of us—Wilfredo, Collin, and Zarah—to resee queer literacies in new ways. Moreover, as we sent drafts to reviewers and reviewed revisions ourselves, we found ourselves getting something more each time. Perhaps that’s what we want out of this issue: for you, reader, to get something more each time. We want you to engage deeply and to cite with intention. We believe that each contribution offers intimate portraits of how community, the body,

and situating oneself among the voices of others is what queer literacies are all about.

In “Does Every Lesbian Have a Superpower that Makes Them Out and Not Dead by Suicide?: A Poetics Against Standardizing Literacy Narratives,” Shelagh Patterson narrativizes the embodied possibilities of the literacy narrative, gifting us a poetics by which we might reframe the genre as, in fact, genreless. Through a tripartite structure—literacy narrative, historicization, and archival gift—Patterson attunes us both to the transformative power of US third world feminist praxis (via Lorde, Rich, Sandoval, Bambara) and its oft foreclosure in professional settings that require such work (the first-year writing curriculum, for example). Uptaking archival work centered on US third world feminists teaching of writing in the City College of New York (CUNY) from the 1960s–70s, Patterson weaves together two historical oversights: 1) the erasure of US third world feminist thought within popular feminist discourse (read, white feminism) during the 1980s and 90s and 2) the overlooked popular history of rhetoric and composition as tied to Black struggle and activism across varying contexts in the US. As Patterson notes, “Damage is done when we lose sight of how university administration dictates what college writing is, how the social and political moment creates different possibilities for student consciousness, and how a diverse polyphonic faculty engaged in social justice education with their students shaped the direction of writing pedagogy and university policy” (5). Perhaps more incisively, Patterson contends that “damage [is done] to our field due in the erasure of the identity of third world feminists while we practice and present their ideas” without talking about where we got those ideas—such as the literacy narrative as a popular genre in first-year writing (5). The two historical facts entwine, and so Patterson calls us to remember that the genre constraints of the literacy narrative exist only insofar as we allow them to remain; re-remembering our history as a field and centering the praxis of US third world feminists shifts us toward a poetic capaciousness beyond genre.

In “Reading Yourself Queer Later in Life: Bisexual Literacies, Temporal Fluidity, and the Teaching of Composition,” Beth Buyserie disrupts the temporal qualities we too often ascribe to sexuality. She reminds us of the more tangible ways in which we are read by others. “How long have you been out?” is a question we ask each other when we are in our early 20s. “Are they out?” is a question we might ask a friend going on a date. The answers to these questions impact our perceptions of how comfortable and how “put together” another queer is. They affect whether we accept each other and whether it is worth building community. Buyserie troubles these questions, perhaps even pointing to their damage, if not their irrelevance, especially for bisexual people. She traces how finding oneself in queer texts is complicated: those texts simultaneously provide a refuge and resource while challenging positionality. Using autoethnography and literacy scholarship, Buyserie describes (and demonstrates) how coming out later in life is a profound and painful literacy practice. A small card on her office door, a graduation cord, and scholarship—Kendi Yoshino, Sarah Ahmed, Karma R. Chávez, Julia Serano, for example—these are things that are slippery.

Rhetorics of coming out are steeped in gay and lesbian ontologies and leave little room for what is otherwise perceived as deviant: bisexuality. Buyserie builds her literacy narrative toward how we might see bisexual literacies within composition. She asks, “What if instead we read the term “bisexual” as those who challenge binaries? What if we relied on the expertise of those people who are constantly navigating between two or more worlds?” Her article powerfully positions

us as pedagogues to realize that the multifaceted challenges in our lives can be great sources of ethos, of strength. When we read Buyserie's essay, we are taken on a journey that is beautiful, raw, painful, and profoundly honest. She reminds us that queer literacy studies is just getting started.

In "Trade: Sexual Identity, Ambiguity, and Literacy Normativity," Seth E. Davis centers the literacy narratives of Black queer people attending Harlem Pride in order to investigate discourses that are constructed around trade in the Black queer community. Davis defines trade as a term used by Black queer people to identify the sexually ambiguous behaviors and identities of men who resist "femme, bottom, or queer personas in casual and professional spaces for fear of being harassed, ostracized, or not seen as sexually attractive" (49). His ethnographic exploration situates trade within a queer literacy paradigm, highlighting ways that his participants engage in "reading" and "pulling" trade as a sexual literacy. These literate behaviors, what Davis identifies as a subset of "fierce literacies," are situated within a broader repertoire of community-oriented, Black vernacular queer literacy practices. Davis deftly reveals an intersecting dynamic between practicing Black queer literacy and interrogating heteronormative Black sexual politics. The acts of reading and pulling trade that are identified in his chosen literacy narratives are underlined by and through how trade is read, who gets to participate in the literacy event of reading, how reading functions as a way of constituting trade, what these readings mean for the conditions of legibility for trade, how these readings might dictate the discursive possibilities of queer living for trade, and if those who live in cisgender bodies that are identified as trade get to play a role in their naming. Davis astutely calls for us to both consider and interrogate ways Black queer literacies are used to read words, worlds, and bodies queerly, and how those readings can be informed by the bodies that we live in as well as bodies that we externally identify, name, and designate for pleasure. Furthermore, ethnographic analysis centers fierce literacy practices to engage and problematize trade as a site of exoticized Black sexual conquest, Black hegemonic masculine agency and dominant heteronormative scripts about sexuality.

Finally, Ruby Mendoza provides a salient review of Karma Chávez's new book, [The Borders of AIDS: Race, Quarantine, and Resistance](#), contextualizing the book within the disciplinary purview of rhetoric and composition. As Mendoza astutely posits, we can glean much from understanding the rhetoricity of HIV/AIDS in the context of another global pandemic, as well as the subsequent implications in how to understand literacy amid the cistem that is white supremacist cis heteropatriarchy.

In sum, we look forward to the coming months and years where we see Patterson, Buyserie, and Davis taken up, as well as what Mendoza will bring to the field. We hope to see the bricks they throw create lots of openings in walls. We want to see more doors and windows, and we are going to follow their lead.

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NOTES

¹ Shout out to Michael Faris and Matt Cox, whose own work building “An Annotated Bibliography of LGBTQ Rhetorics” has also paved the way for future generations of queer scholars within writing and rhetoric. We are indebted to them and their work and have considered the temporal longevity of our own work here because of it.

² CCCC has traditionally grappled with making such space given that most special interest groups and caucuses meet at the same time, meaning those with intersecting identities have a difficult time attending multiple identity- and interest-focused meetings.

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