Cassius Adair and Lisa Nakamura

The Digital Afterlives
of *This Bridge Called My Back*:
Woman of Color Feminism, Digital Labor,
and Networked Pedagogy

Abstract This article traces the publication history of the canonical woman of color feminist anthology *This Bridge Called My Back* through its official and unofficial editions as it has migrated from licensed paper to PDF format. The digital edition that circulated on the social blogging platform Tumblr.com and other informal social networks constitutes a new and important form of versioning that reaches different audiences and opens up new pedagogical opportunities. Though separated by decades, Tumblr and *This Bridge* both represent vernacular pedagogy networks that value open access and have operated in opposition to hierarchically controlled content distribution and educational systems. Both analog and digital forms of open-access woman of color pedagogy promote the free circulation of knowledge and call attention to the literary and social labor of networked marginalized readers and writers who produce it, at once urging new considerations of academic labor and modeling alternatives to neoliberal university systems.

Keywords digital pedagogy, social media, free labor, publishing, open access, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga

Despite encountering the book more than two decades apart, both authors of this article view the edited collection *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981) as a cornerstone of our feminist consciousness. Perhaps this is not surprising: published in 1981 by the collectively run woman of color press Kitchen Table, *This Bridge* is now countercultural canon, one of many radical interventions into white feminist theory that now undergirds much intersectional work on gender, race, class, and homophobia. What is striking, however, are the stark differences between the pedagogical contexts in which each author first read *This Bridge*. Lisa encountered the book as a teacher

of English composition and postcolonial studies in the 1990s and acquired it as a desk copy after assigning it to her students as a required text through Sonoma State University's campus bookstore. Cass's first copy of this book was, arguably, not a book at all but instead an illegally shared file into which some anonymous readers had merged various scanned chapters into a single PDF. Encountering the file on the social blogging website Tumblr.com eventually led Cass into a network of online woman of color feminism, a community of learners and vernacular educators who were dedicated to enacting social justice by sharing radical texts and engaging in long, written debates about them. This digital consciousness raising on Tumblr was Cass's first feminist classroom but one in which nobody—not the authors of *This Bridge*, not the unknown laborers who scanned and uploaded hundreds of pages, not the feminists of color writing and critiquing the work online—was compensated for providing his education. Nobody, that is, except the media corporation Yahoo, which owns and sells advertising space on Tumblr.

To contrast these two pedagogical scenes is not just to make an argument about technological change between the 1980s and today. It is also to bring a critical function of *This Bridge*—its capacity to represent and interpolate a network of socially engaged readers and peer educators—into conversation with scholarly debates about digital pedagogy and academic labor. By looking at *This Bridge*, in both analog and digital forms, as a networked pedagogical object, we trace how it calls attention to the social conditions of its production as part of its larger argument about the importance of circulation and connection for "third world" women's narratives. *This Bridge* invites readers to become vernacular educators, prefiguring the world of digital pedagogy by invoking the power of networked learning for minoritized reading communities. At the same time, both the legally distributed book and the pirated version online raise ethical concerns about the uneven distribution of work, ownership, and social power in pedagogical spaces. For scholars and teachers thinking through the transformative potential of digital pedagogy, an examination of *This Bridge* and its attendant social networks calls us to construct new norms of consent, citation, and remuneration for women of color doing unpaid educational labor online.

Such a conversation is overdue, in no small part because many of our students engage with literary and cultural critique on the Internet.

Media scholars such as Henry Jenkins (2006) have long studied how the "convergence culture" of engaging analog texts in digital contexts constructs networked communities and remixed texts. Other scholars have zeroed in on how this vernacular textual engagement online mirrors scholarly and pedagogical labor. In her analysis of Sherlock Holmes fans on the early Internet, for example, Roberta Pearson (1997) identifies how users on online message boards used networks to produce and share "Sherlockian scholarship" or "Conan Doyle scholarship," as well as building "personal connections" to the characters (some even romantic in nature) and with other readers. Lisa herself (Nakamura 2013) has published previously on how online discussion and curation of analog books on social networks like GoodReads .com blend literary peer education and social play. Such work importantly extends earlier discussions of the role of textual circulation in the constitution of vernacular reading publics, as theorized by scholars such as Stuart Hall and Janice Radway, into digital spaces.

The evidence that readers engage passionately with both peers and texts online is clear. What has been less clear is what these networks of informal education mean to teachers in university classrooms. For many, seeing vernacular engagement with literary work online has fueled a hunt for the sorts of interactive pedagogies that can, as Michelle D. Miller (2014, xii) has written, "connect students *socially* and fire them up *emotionally*." Since at least the 1980s, when experimental pedagogues began workshopping student paper drafts over shared computer terminals on campuses, educators have noticed that the teacher-student and student-student interactions afforded in networked environments could be both productive and progressive. Presaging contemporary proponents of networked pedagogy such as Cathy Davidson (2012) and Jeff Jarvis (2013), Edward M. Jennings (1990, 47) wrote, "Classrooms imply, but do not demand, norms and simultaneity and hierarchy. Networks foster, but cannot guarantee, individuality, unpredictability, and horizontal relationships." Like the Sherlockians in Pearson's study, who constructed elaborate communal historiographies of Victorian London while obsessing over their favorite mysteries, Jennings observed that students in his early "networked" writing class learned through reading and commenting on each other's work in progress online, upending the "writer-mentor" relationship of the traditional classroom. In optimistic accounts of early networked readers and writers like these, the digital space was

imagined to be a nonhierarchical and peer-driven sociality that would ultimately lead to more student participation and learning. Today, even though scholars of race and gender have rebutted the "nonhierarchical" thesis, it seems probable that there is important pedagogical potential in the "interest-driven participation" fostered by digital social platforms (see Ito et al. 2009, 10).

Although a desire to leverage social networks for learning has certainly attracted corporate profiteers, it has also produced a new level of interaction between university spaces and nonacademic communities. As digital education scholar Bonnie Stewart (2013) claims, arguments around networked pedagogical spaces are often falsely represented as a binary, representing, on the one hand, profit seekers and cost cutters rushing to capitalize on digital pedagogy by constructing nominally educational products such as Udacity and Coursera, and professors launching a surge of critique of those neoliberal projects, on the other. Outside this binary, humanist pedagogues have in fact produced an extraordinary literature about harnessing the network for university teaching and learning, understanding digital classrooms as potentially *more*, not less, socially engaged. A new born-digital publication from the Modern Language Association (Davis et al. 2016), for example, curates case studies, theoretical provocations, and experimental texts about digital pedagogy under a set of keywords that range from *access* to *video*. The work is collaboratively authored, as are many of the featured objects: the crowdsourced #BlackLives Matter syllabus, which brings together lists of texts and articles from academic and nonacademic experts using Google Docs, is just one example. Importantly, for the purposes of our essay, many of those keywords explicitly focus on the intersection of identity categories such as race, gender, and sexuality with digital pedagogy methods, pointing out the coconstitutive nature of technology, identity, and the social space of the learning environment. In addition, a recent issue of the *Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy* collected a wide-ranging group of digital-analog–hybrid pedagogy experiments, including Jen Jack Gieseking's (2014) "Notes from Queer(ing) New York" and Edwin Mayorga's (2014) "Toward Digital, Critical, Participatory Action Research: Lessons from the #BarrioEdProj." Projects like these are explicitly motivated by social justice aims, inspired by queer and antiracist activist frameworks to use the digital to bridge institutional and community knowledges. In their introduction to

the projects, Jessie Daniels and Matthew K. Gold (2014) distinguish CUNY's community-oriented "participatory, open online course (POOC)" model from corporate digital education, which, aside from being seen by some as mere "revenue generation," also has produced learning outcomes that are mixed at best. On a larger scale, national and international networks like FemTechNet and HASTAC are also on the forefront of making connected and social models of research and learning work for students and teachers, not just for those seeking to cut university labor costs.

As described, the energy behind these projects is often framed as a reaction to the perceived threat posed by MOOCs to the more radical potential of the humanities classroom. However, we join Stewart and others in pointing out that, in protesting the disruption of corporate digital pedagogy, critics often invoke an "idealized" university, one that obscures the labor and identity inequities that have long existed in analog classrooms. Indeed, the "traditional" classroom has not traditionally been a welcoming or socially dynamic place for women of color, many of whom have been formally locked out of higher education until well into the twentieth century and who continue to face enormous informal barriers. The concept of networked pedagogy that we see in *This Bridge* is a reaction to the sexist and racist norms in the *predigital* information and educational economies, material dynamics that existed long before the MOOC. Radical women of color posited the circulation of critical texts and communal dialogue as ways to teach and learn outside the academic settings that excluded them (or, even for those who worked in universities, perpetuated exclusionary social norms), a set of tactics that contemporary learners have adopted to informal digital spaces like social media.

This Bridge offers an alternative genealogy of networked pedagogy, one rooted in the use of communication and social networks to feminist and antiracist ends. In order to articulate this claim, we, like the authors of *This Bridge*, define *pedagogy* broadly. In their work on liberatory teaching, Dalia Rodriguez and others (2012) assert that woman of color feminist pedagogy is a broad field of knowledge creation and circulation, constituted by a set of relationships between student and teacher, between students and their peers, and between academic concepts and community praxis. Pedagogy is differentiated from mere learning, then, in that it is fundamentally interpersonal; instruction flows from person to person, group to group. Another way to

think about pedagogy itself, then, is as the construction and mainte-
nance of a social network. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa's
(1981, xlvi) preface to *This Bridge* reflects the intimate interrelation
between text and network, in-class and off-campus education:

> We envision the book being used as a *required* text in most women's
> studies courses. And we don't mean just "special" courses on Third
> World Women or Racism, but also courses dealing with sexual poli-
> tics, feminist thought, women's spirituality, etc. Similarly, we want
> to see this book on the shelf of, and used in the classroom by, every
> ethnic studies teacher in this country, male and female alike. Off
> campus, we expect the book to function as a consciousness-raiser
> for white women meeting together or working alone on the issues
> of racism. And we want to see our colored sisters using this book
> as an educator and agitator around issues specific to our oppression
> as women.

This Bridge's pedagogy imagines the book as a consciousness-raising
and community-building object. Although the figure of the "ethnic
studies teacher" plainly evokes traditional pedagogical relationships,
the "white women meeting together" or the "colored sisters" are fig-
ured as peer educators. At least within this imagined sisterhood, the
text—itself a collection of geographically distant women across racial
and sexual identity categories—has its own pedagogical authority.
Sharing a copy of *This Bridge* outside of women's studies or ethnic
studies classrooms is not imagined to diminish the book's role as edu-
cational material; instead, it seemingly elevates the book as its own
teacher. Within such a paradigm, creating access to the educational
material, even without a formal instructional model, is itself an educa-
tional method. The book itself, in this figuration, is the central node in
the creation of a social network of learners who will use the text as an
object to create a new world.

   The problem with this understanding of pedagogy, however, which
the justice-oriented digital pedagogies such as the ones we describe
above have largely adopted, is that (as the language implies) "construc-
tion" and "maintenance" are hard work. In an environment where teach-
ing and learning are no longer considered siloed roles, it is critical that
networked pedagogy, especially learning that takes place outside uni-
versity contexts and yet still dynamically affects our classrooms, avoids
reproducing unpaid burdens on women of color peer educators.

Women of Color Networks at Work

Both at the time of its inception and in retrospect, the authors and editors of *This Bridge* understood the text as a communications network. For one thing, the text itself, in the form of an anthology, is a sort of networked object. Barbara Smith (phone interview with author, January 9, 2015) explained how contributing to and reading woman of color anthologies such as *This Bridge* created vital linkages among a community of feminists. As she said of the work published by Kitchen Table Press: "These books were lifelines for people. They were absolute lifelines. This was before, of course, there was an Internet, and social media, et cetera. People can connect to each other in a way that was not available until probably the late 1990s." Smith's words echo the technological metaphor from the book's original forward (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981, vi), in which geographically distant women of color artists and writers work outside or on the margins of the academy: "Sisters of the yam Sisters of the rice Sisters of the corn Sisters of the plantain putting in telecalls to each other. And we're all on the line." Nellie Wong in Oakland, sisters Barbara and Beverly Smith and Audre Lorde in Boston, and Gloria Anzaldúa in Texas came together both as a publishing collective and as authors within the book's pages. In this sentence, the telecommunications network is figured as something that can bring together women of various cultural backgrounds "on the line," allowing them to overcome together the material barriers that had prevented women of color from collective writing, teaching, and learning.

The idea of *This Bridge* as a place where a collection of women of color were all "on the line" also describes its means of production and distribution, which used the power of social networking to circumvent the exclusionary media channels at the time. After a white feminist publisher Persephone "allowed the book to drop out of print" (Murray 1998, 185), women of color worked together to form Kitchen Table Press, which would distribute the anthology directly to international audiences of people of color. Smith (1989, 11) recounts in a retrospective essay on the (then still extant) Kitchen Table Press that the task was considered "impossible" but still necessary:

> Why were we so highly motivated to attempt the impossible? An early slogan of the women in print movement was "freedom of the press belongs to those who own the press." This is even truer for

multiply disenfranchised women of color, who have minimal access to power, including the power of the media, except what we wrest from an unwilling system. On the most basic level, Kitchen Table Press began because of our need for autonomy, our need to determine independently both the content and the conditions of our work and to control the words and images that were produced about us.

That said, even with a collective distribution of labor, the task of running a niche publishing company depended on an aggressive circulation strategy that eventually strained the capacity of the owner-employees. In the same essay, Smith (12–13) writes: "Because Kitchen Table is the only publisher for women of color in the U.S., and one of a handful of feminist of color organizations with national visibility, we function not only as a press, but as a resource network for women of color worldwide. We must cope daily with the stresses of tokenism, of being the only one—for example, having to handle an inconceivably large and far-ranging correspondence."

For *This Bridge* collaborators, broad circulation was central to the world-making, collective, peer-educational power of their text. However, at the same time as Kitchen Table became a global information network, in large part through the distribution of *This Bridge*, the publishing company also relied on a network of labor to sustain its activities, often tapping into social relationships to make sure the books reached the intended audience of people of color across the United States and transnationally. "When we cannot travel to an event," Smith (12) writes, "we try to send our catalogues and sample copies for display. Sometimes, when we cannot attend, we are able to get friends in other cities to sell our books for us." Of course, we do not equate these acts of solidarity with the exploits of racial capital. At the same time, it is important to note that for marginalized people the labor of knowledge transmission often falls to the social network. As Alexis Pauline Gumbs (2008) has argued, these radical press collectives were acts of "co-productive pedagogy" that emerged from the "alternative modes of invalidated production that women of color had depended on for their self-expression and survival." As women of color feminists who were all too aware of the unpaid burdens of emotional labor extracted from them as teachers of race and gender—after all, Donna Kate Rushin's 1981 "The Bridge Poem,"

which opens the anthology, is an explicit consideration of this theme—it cannot have been lost on the Kitchen Table staff that even "revolutionary" pedagogical networks inevitably reproduce some racial and gendered dynamics of unremunerated work. The problematic relationship between social activity and educational work, familiar to marginalized people both on- and offline, has been studied at length by scholars of digital labor. As these writers have argued, when labor is distributed through a social network, it is often not recognized as labor at all, allowing it to be easily extracted for free and compounding material inequalities between media owners and media users.

Today's digital scholars have argued that the transformation of intellectual production from paid labor into unpaid "content creation" is a normative feature of digital spaces. As Tiziana Terranova (2000, 33–34) has written, even online writing that feels like pleasure or resistance contributes to corporate-owned sites, which in turn produces profitable site traffic: "Simultaneously voluntarily given and unwaged, enjoyed and exploited, free labour on the Net includes the activity of building web sites, modifying software packages, reading and participating in mailing lists and building virtual spaces. Far from being an 'unreal,' empty space, the Internet is animated by cultural and technical labour through and through, a continuous production of value which is completely immanent in the flows of the network society at large."

As the social web has consolidated under fewer and fewer companies, scholars such as Christian Fuchs (2014), Marisol Sandoval (2015), Eran Fisher (2015), and Trebor Scholz (2013) have shown how online human social interactions, including teaching and learning in digital spaces, are being commodified in order to build the data infrastructure necessary for corporate profits. The problem of the capitalization of knowledge is intensified in digital contexts, as Maurizio Lazzarato's (1996, 143) work on "immaterial labor" makes clear, since with additional layers of mediation "communication . . . is invested with industrial production, communication is reproduced by means of specific technological schemes (knowledge, thought, image, sound, and language reproduction technologies) and by means of forms of organization and 'management' that are bearers of a new mode of production." An understanding of communicative and affective labor online as a form of work has led scholars such as Abigail De Kosnik (2013, 99) to "seriously consider the question" of whether vernacular

writers and cultural producers online "should be compensated for their work." Although De Kosnik refers to fan production in particular, this is only one example of how corporate control of digital media makes vital aspects of human connection into a commodity. Even if users seek out networked interactions in order to make affective space for themselves and their loved ones, these interactions are all managed in order to sell users and their "friends" various types of products or to sell the personal data extracted from those networks to other companies. Freely contributing writing, photos, or other organically produced media to those networks, then, not only puts those digital objects into ownership limbo but also allows them to be used as tools to market social networking sites to ad buyers, lining companies' pockets with money made by users' creations.

The unrewarded extraction of communicative labor in digital contexts only accelerates the norms of labor theft under which women of color have long suffered. In her critique of Lazzarato and others, Angela McRobbie (2011) points out that the extraction of "immaterial" labor is a fundamentally gendered process and that women's supposed aptitude for "after-hours networking" is ripe to be commodified in this communication economy. In fact, McRobbie (76) argues, the passionate commitment and long working days with which radical women once operated "feminist publishing houses, 'women into manual trade' co-ops, [or] radical daycare centres for children" are both acts of resistance to capitalism and examples of the "labor of love" ideology that encourages exploitation within today's knowledge economies. Information technology companies increasingly turn human activities such as "the mutual . . . interchange of subjective knowledge," the expression of "feelings of togetherness," and "the collaborative creation of novel objects" (Fuchs 2014, 251)—activities that closely mirror our radical women of color definition of pedagogy—into forms of unpaid digital labor. The construction and maintenance of social networks online have even been described (Fuchs 2014; Mies 1986) as part of the "housewifization" of labor: that is, labor that is not paid, protected, or even recognized as work.

For women of color, the burden of immaterial labor is often coupled with outright abuse. Saidiya Hartman (2016, 171) has shown how the language of the "housewife," while valuable here as metaphor, operates in a wholly different register for black women: in addition to the massive labor theft and dehumanizing project that was slavery,

women in the "house" were "forced to perform the affective and communicative labor necessary for the sustenance of white families at the expense of their own." This legacy has seeped into contemporary pedagogical dynamics, as contributors to the anthology *Presumed Incompetent* (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012) describe at length: women of color professors are often positioned as "mammies" or "servants" in traditional classroom settings too (Lugo-Lugo 2012; Wilson 2012). Combine that already racialized and gendered dynamic with the well-documented hotbed of sexist and racist harassment that is the Internet, and the stakes of doing teaching labor in open digital forums are even higher (Loza 2014). If the vernacular writing and commentary that women of color produce online is not only producing free content for social networks but is resulting in violence being aimed at their persons, then these feminists are essentially *paying* to do what professional academics would consider "digital pedagogy." To argue that these forms of gendered and racial theft deserve remuneration and acknowledgement, then, is not a perpetuation of capital's commodification of everyday life but a resistant reordering of it.

Making present the extent to which knowledge production and social connection online are forms of unpaid labor is an important strategy in both feminist and antiracist movements. It is also critical for the future of an ethical digital pedagogy. By repeatedly reflecting, writing, and speaking about the struggles of producing and circulating *This Bridge*, the members of Kitchen Table Press aligned their emotional, intellectual, and distribution activities as labor. But what happens when *This Bridge* circulates online, as it did in Cass's first encounter with the text, and can be downloaded and shared at no cost? How can digital labor practices, with their disproportionate impact on women of color, become manifest in the vernacular spaces in which today's learners are learning about women of color feminism? And what is the role of university instructors in our roles as, often, coteachers alongside unpaid writers and thinkers online?

Re-Productive Labor: Pirating Women of Color Online

In order to understand the complex politics of digital labor today, we trace the text of *This Bridge* into the digital age. This story cuts across formations of gendered and racial capital first in an analog fashion: for the two decades after the shuttering of Kitchen Table Press, the

anthology struggled to stay in print. In 2002, the feminist press Third Woman issued a twentieth-anniversary edition of the book, but Third Woman also went out of business shortly after. For more than a decade, despite ever-delayed promises that SUNY Press would release a new edition, the book remained out of print and grew increasingly scarce (Moraga 2011, 219n10). As such, assigning the text in a women's studies or ethnic studies class or discussing it in (the twenty-first-century equivalent of) a consciousness raising meant subjecting readers to hyperinflated costs within the rare books marketplace online. By 2014, just before the fourth edition was released by SUNY Press, the cheapest paperback copy available on Amazon was $67.70. During the same period, both unprecedented increases in college tuition and textbook costs and global financial instability left even middle-class would-be readers squeezed for cash, not to mention the working women that Moraga and Anzaldúa hoped would be a primary audience for *This Bridge*. Out of print and thus available only on online marketplaces for exorbitant prices, *This Bridge* could no longer serve as the vernacular pedagogical object it was designed to be.

During the period between 2002 and 2014, however, networked technologies made media piracy increasingly available to the general public, raising new questions about relationships between labor and circulation. Pirate networks offered vast new opportunities for individuals to encounter new media materials, including educational ones, by paying only the indirect costs associated with an Internet connection. On the other hand, content creators whose work circulated for free online risked losing out on even the most basic compensation for their work, compounding the sustained economic crisis for women of color writers and teachers. Today, some feminist legal scholars (Craig, Turcotte, and Coombe 2011) are attempting to bridge this tension by arguing that copyright law itself reflects a masculinist ideal of an autonomous subject and that a more just intellectual property would reflect the feminist notion that "the author necessarily creates from within a network of social relations: she is not individualisable, and her works of authorship cannot be understood in isolation." Certainly, this concept of "relational" authorship is one to which the contributors to *This Bridge* would ascribe. At the same time, this feminist revision of intellectual property is insufficient to address the material needs of intellectuals whose work is not otherwise compensated through wages from academic or other pedagogical professional

positions, nor can it address how the historical extraction of free labor from women of color is reiterated online.

Indeed, a closer analysis of Cass's pirated copy of *This Bridge* displays the tension between the liberatory power of free circulation and the labor politics of unpaid work. A "preface" included as the first page of the illegal PDF of the book reads as follows:

> Notes for the Downloaders: This book is made of different sources. First, we got the scanned pages from fuckyeahradicalliterature. tumblr.com. Second, we cleaned them up and scanned the missing chapters (Entering the Lives of Others and El Mundo Zurdo). Also, we replaced the images for new better ones. Unfortunately, our copy of the book has La Prieta, from El Mundo Zurdo, in bad quality, so we got it from scribd.com. Be aware it's the same text but from another edition of the book, so it has other pagination. Enjoy and share it everywhere! (Anonymous n.d.)

These scanners, editors, and curators reflect on the work of textual reproduction, mirroring feminist desire to make visible other forms of reproductive labor. Readers of this digital file are made aware of the modification of the source documents that was necessary to produce a definitive version of this key woman of color feminist text. The plural voice in the "note" ("*we* got the scanned pages"; "*our* copy of the book") emphasizes this production labor as the work of a collective, just as the introductions to the print *This Bridge* take care to describe the means of production and multiple authorship of the anthology form. As Anna Lauren Hoffmann and Raina Bloom (2016) argue in their critique of Google Books, digitization too often obscures both the knowledge work of librarians and curators and the manual labor of workers who scan and compile digital texts. Access, as Hoffmann and Bloom make clear, is not a neutral concept in digital contexts but one that can be ideologically deployed to undermine the rights of content creators and workers. By revealing that the digitization of *This Bridge* was produced by a collective group of workers and curators, this "note" positions itself as an act of resistant piracy, not extractive theft, redistributing copies to those readers who could not afford to purchase a price-inflated copy. Readers' powerful responses to the sudden availability of *This Bridge* indicate that many of them understood this piracy as a gift, echoing Ted Striphas's (2009, 173) finding that pirated books can be "objects that at some level [readers] feel are

vital to their well-being." One anonymous Tumblr user (Anonymous 2012), for example, posted, "I was so happy to find a DL [download] of This Bridge Called My Back. I've been looking for a copy that I can actually afford for years." In this way, the digital laborers who scanned, compiled, and "shared" *This Bridge* "everywhere" were able to keep alive the original editors' hope that the book could help constitute a "resource network for women of color worldwide" at a time when economic conditions made the text otherwise inaccessible.

However, merely making visible the invisibilized labor of digitization and circulation, even in the context of a larger academic conversation about the racialized and gendered aspects of this labor, does not sufficiently account for the knowledge work that groups of vernacular learners and teachers are doing on sites like Tumblr. In her critique of "fan volunteerism" and her provocation to professionalize fan production, De Kosnick (2013, 99) shows how writing and creating cultural work online are forms of "active production," not mere reception, and that they add value to the cultural object that is modified. On Tumblr, not only have hundreds of posts been written and tagged #ThisBridge-CalledMyBack, but an uncountable number of posts have taken up the woman of color ideas and reposted, questioned, debated, and taught them (personal communication with Tumblr user lightspeed-sound, June 13, 2015). This expansive new archive of intellectual work expands on *This Bridge* (or #ThisBridge), extending the reach of its social network but also promoting the text and adding to its canonical status for a new generation of antiracist feminists. Although this might seem at first like mere chatter, when considered in the context of adding commentary to and facilitating discussion around a cultural text, this is not dissimilar from the work of professional literary critics and classroom teachers. If *This Bridge*'s pirated circulation on Tumblr risks flattening the book into one of many illegal downloads that users might randomly encounter online, it is the work of these unpaid bloggers (many of them women of color) that intervenes to reinflate it. Doing the work to position *This Bridge* in its intellectual context allows digital woman of color feminists to link Adrienne Rich's (1994) "politics of location" into the distributed, multiply networked present. Expanding the role of woman of color feminism on Tumblr fulfills Moraga and Anzaldúa's desire for the text to be a "consciousness-raiser," "educator," and "agitator" in multiple contexts and makes clear the importance of *This Bridge* as both a historical and a

contemporary node in imagining a networked feminist pedagogy. That said, on Tumblr, the value added by this contemporary connection does not just move horizontally, contributing to *This Bridge* itself, but also flows into Yahoo's cash stream. Unlike the laboring fans in De Kosnik's study, who do not see themselves as doing work, women of color on Tumblr are all too aware that they are contributing labor to a system that does not necessarily benefit them.

Here, the question of digital labor and women of color feminism dovetails with questions of consent. Even as the no-cost book fulfilled a critical intellectual need for its marginalized readers, *This Bridge* circulated online without the consent or knowledge of the women who had produced it, women who had gone so far as to create their own publishing company in order to protect their content and their labor. The contradictory role of *This Bridge* as a pirated digital object mirrors the larger contradiction of Tumblr and other vernacular forms of networked pedagogy; bringing critical education to those locked out of mainstream classrooms also means extracting labor from those same marginalized groups. Especially when individuals do not consent to be treated as de facto teachers, then, the power of the social network to construct intimate, empathetic, and dialogic learning can look instead like the most exploitative forms of free labor: on Tumblr, the social network risks becoming, to paraphrase Scholz (2013), both "classroom and factory."

The Social Network as Classroom and Factory

The problem of marginalized users on social networks doing pedagogical labor without pay or even consent is not unique to Tumblr. However, Tumblr's status as an activist platform for emergent antiracist feminism means that this issue is especially acute on the site. In the wake of street-level uprisings to protest antiblack racism in 2014, the *New York Times* deemed the moment the "Age of Tumblr Activism" (Safronova 2014). Numerous academic media scholars (Fink and Miller 2014; Renninger 2015; Oakley 2016; Dame 2016) have shown how Tumblr operates as a social counterpublic for spreading information about alternative sexual and gender identities, often in the context of these identities' intersection with race and ethnicity. The site's ease of use, multimedia hosting capacity, open-ended space for including (or not) identifying information, and minimal censorship

of pornographic material have all been suggested as reasons that young marginalized people, including a disproportionate number of women of color compared with other social networking platforms, have found an intellectual and interpersonal home on the site (Fink and Miller 2014; Guillard 2016; Oakley 2016).

Perhaps because the street-level activist and social-support aspects of the site are highly visible, most scholars have not situated Tumblr specifically within the frame of digital pedagogy. One notable exception is Julianne Guillard (2016), who integrated the site into her introductory courses in women, gender, and sexuality studies by asking students to read and write blog posts related to intersectional feminist content. Guillard's (616) research found that students who engaged with each other and larger activist communities on Tumblr reported both "increased comprehension of course topics" and felt "connected . . . more strongly to environments and people outside of their immediate campus setting." These findings dovetail with the optimistic, boundary-breaking aims of participatory digital-analog classes like Gieseking's and Mayorga's mentioned above. Tumblr's function as a dynamic, activist-driven site seems to create the conditions for vernacular peer education about women of color feminist topics, just as participatory, activism-oriented university courses extend the capacity of networked pedagogy beyond the corporate and commercial.

What, then, are feminist and antiracist pedagogues to do with Tumblr, which is both activist in its user base *and* corporate in its structure? And how should we consider the difference in positionality between professional educators like Guillard and the bloggers producing content for free? Tumblr's social network is a rich, even redistributive space for both textual circulation and feminist knowledge making, but the politicized bloggers on the site have no illusions that Tumblr is an online Kitchen Table. In fact, writing just in the wake of the 2013 buyout, Fink and Miller (2014, 616) speculated that the site's most marginalized networks, including those of trans and queer people, would not "survive" Yahoo!'s monetization, as advertising and mainstream exposure could drive the site to downplay material seen as transgressive or controversial. Even as Tumblr can provide students, both enrolled in college and other learners, "an education on topics that aren't explored deeply in standard school textbooks, like African-American history or colonialism" (Moya Bailey, quoted in

Safranova 2014), the site also represents a congealment of the racial and gendered dimensions of digital and pedagogical labor extraction.

In response, a number of unpaid pedagogues on Tumblr have taken steps to take control their labor. The examples we include here strike us as part of the ideological heritage of *This Bridge*. We know it is not possible, or even desirable, for all unpaid writers and educators online to construct networks outside the corporate structures that connect audiences and community members across distance. It is also true that the hyperconsolidated media landscape makes it hard to articulate independence from a complex web of digital capital. That said, just as Kitchen Table Press carved a small alternative space of production and distribution that centered the economic and social needs of women of color content creators even while expanding their network of readers, some women of color on social networks are building platforms through which they can argue that communicative and pedagogical labor deserves reciprocity. Because these social media tactics resist the racist and sexist logics of free labor, they all resonate with us in another way: as disruptions to the normative logics of intellectual and pedagogical labor under neoliberalism, whether that labor takes place within academic spaces or outside them.

One prominent Tumblr user and self-identified Womanist, who writes using the name Trudy, innovated a tactic that may seem especially strange for academic readers: requesting that readers limit their quotation of her work. In a note on her blog, Trudy (2015) asks that student writers quote no more than a paragraph of her writing and others refrain from doing so without her consent. (Cass's choice to minimize direct quotation in this section reflects Trudy's request.) Although acknowledging that legal "fair use" technically allows anyone to use her words in any context, Trudy appeals to the moral and political conscience of her readers, writing, "Black and other women of colour have had our labor exploited for too long and policies like this are needed." This strategy may initially seem to contradict the arguments by the editors of *This Bridge* that networking and the broad distribution of radical work are potentially liberatory practices. The distinction that Trudy's note proposes, however, is for consensual interactions with readers and interlocutors, on her terms rather than on the terms of those who would press her into performing knowledge work without her permission. When professors assign her essays without her knowledge or consent, she has noticed, academics

may be helping sympathetic students tap into woman of color social networks, but meanwhile hostile students who would not dare push back in class might siphon abuse to her instead: bloggers "receive the trolling, threats and abuse [from racist or sexist readers] that [professors] do not." Without a permissions structure worked out by a journal or the basic rights of employment afforded to hired teachers, Trudy is paying to teach these students. By putting her work behind a rhetorical firewall and appealing to her right to control the circulation of her writing, she is staging an argument with the extractive logics of the social network and asking professional teachers to join her in this assertion of an innovative form of ethical, rather than material, intellectual "property."

A different strategy for constructing an ethical labor practice in vernacular digital pedagogy is also surprising in an era of open access: turning widely circulating Tumblr posts into a physical book. When she released a book in 2014 titled *Black Girl Dangerous: On Race, Queerness, Class, and Gender*, Mia McKenzie echoed the creation of Kitchen Table by self-publishing under her own label, BGD Press. McKenzie's writing both marvels at the power of wide circulation and laments the burden it has placed on her and other bloggers. In her introduction, she (2014, 1) writes: "As I write this, Black Girl Dangerous is two years and a few months old. When I started the little Tumblr page that would eventually become a multi-faceted forum featuring nearly 100 writers from several countries and millions of readers for every populated continent on earth, I had no idea what I was getting myself into." At the same time, writing in plain, accessible, clear, and passionate language on the Internet about race, gender, and privilege has made her a bridge between white women and women of color in uncomfortably immediate ways. As McKenzie (135) relates, "A few weeks ago, a friend reminded me that many, many black women bloggers have stopped writing because the sheer volume of racism and misogyny directed at them was just too much for any person to handle." While the Internet's self-serve pedagogical model has allowed woman of color texts such as *This Bridge* and its genealogical descendants to be revived and thrive, McKenzie's decision to publish and sell her writing is an acknowledgment of the fact that the proceeds from a physical book may be the only way she is paid back for having been positioned as a public educator on race and gender. While commodifying her previously free writing in book form

might seem anathema to the anonymous scanners who illegally uploaded *This Bridge* to a Tumblr site called Fuck Yeah Radical Literature, McKenzie's assertion of the value of pedagogical and digital labor by women of color is also a radical act. Publishing work under BGD Press also signals a possible turn toward alternative venues for radical work, one that diminishes the reliance on a Yahoo!-owned platform for women of color networks.

The last tactic of protest against unpaid digital labor is familiar in traditional labor contexts: it mirrors the form of a strike. In a letter posted to Tumblr (later removed and reposted elsewhere), a collective of women of color social media users (Collected Authors 2014) wrote that they were engaged in a "social media Blackout." In language explicitly connecting digital labor theft and a long history of racist and gendered abuse on- and offline, the authors call for understandings of violence to include the very forms of harm that occur in settings where online "teach-ins" and "hashtags" are not taken seriously as work: "plagiarism, harassment, gaslighting, emotional abuse, ableism and exploitation of labor." In intentionally deciding to temporarily stop discussing race and gender on social media, these often-unwilling, always-unpaid teachers reveal their centrality to national and international discourse on these subjects. The essay is a "Bridge Poem" for the digital age, a textual space in which "turn[ing their] phones on silent" (Collected Authors 2014) is a way for today's marginalized pedagogues to show that they are "sick of being the damn bridge for everybody" (Rushin 2014, xxxiii). As academic writers ourselves, we were well into writing this article when these social media knowledge workers published their antiexploitation manifesto online, but we were still struck by the title they had given it: "This Tweet Called My Back." Seeing the deep genealogical linkage between these two refusals to be burdened by pedagogical labor, both analog and digital, "on the line" and online, speaks to the longevity of resilient intellectual work by women of color. It also shows the continued abuse of these women's immaterial labor.

Conclusion: "Evolve or Die"

In an era when contingent labor and the neoliberal university are objects of concern in academic spaces, *This Bridge* and its digital afterlives can offer insights into how sexism and racism devalue all forms

of communicative and pedagogical work. This genealogy also asks academics to take seriously how networked pedagogy can be performed with nonacademic teachers as equal partners, rather than as enlisted native informants (or, worse, punching bags for dissatisfied students). It demands a reflection on how unpaid digital labor structures our and our students' intellectual lives outside the classroom and how the seemingly "open" world of Internet discussion and discourse can feel like hostile exposure to teachers without institutional backing or teachers who did not set out to teach at all. Many woman of color feminist scholars today would understand *This Bridge* and its distribution network Kitchen Table Press as critical moments in literary and cultural history and yet also understand the limitations of feminist presses as a revolutionary strategy in neoliberal times. Likewise, the expansion of digital access means that subsequent generations of women of color no longer face the same barriers to publishing and distribution as their forebears and yet must face an even more extreme transformation in the meanings of labor and compensation in the twenty-first century. Although we write from the relatively secure standpoint of university workers and therefore receive compensation for writing and teaching, comparing our first encounters with *This Bridge* revealed how the devaluation of teaching and learning is the mere extension of a norm that has long adhered to the pedagogical labor of women of color in the United States and transnationally.

Following the example of the writers above who have attempted to remap scholarly and pedagogical norms in the aim of labor justice, we see the current academic environment as one in which revaluing the pedagogical labor of all women of color—online, in the classroom, or both—is central. Depending on the context, such work may come in different forms. Feminist literary and media scholars could work alongside content producers to develop an alternative model of citation and circulation, one based on a feminist politics of consent and safety, rather than on legalistic notions of "fair use." Teachers could explicitly instruct students to look for how both born-digital and digitized texts are produced and how this might shape the form of the objects they encounter in the classroom. When constructing digital assignments, teachers, students, and community members might coconstruct norms of interaction that value community members as instructors, petitioning institutions for just payment for that work or collaborating to build alternative models of compensation. Academics,

students, and writers can imagine and even build digital platforms that do not lend themselves to harassment, that do not subsist on data extraction, that pay writers, and that do not sell advertising. Teachers can, as well, simply refuse to assign free personal writing as classroom texts, thus preventing their fellow pedagogues from being unduly harassed without pay. As concrete measures, some of these are easier to enact than others. And yet, despite the complexities that this article lays out, *This Bridge* and its digital afterlives also teach us that there is truly transformative potential to be gained from pedagogical and intellectual labor undertaken as a collective. In a digital intellectual economy that is both increasingly decentralized and stubbornly divided by gender and race, it is critical that American literature classrooms play a role in changing how texts circulate, what types of knowledge work they validate or erase, and who benefits from producing them.

Cassius Adair is a James Winn graduate fellow at the University of Michigan and a PhD candidate in English language and literature, specializing in trans/queer studies, digital culture, and ethnic studies. His work also appears in *Transgender Studies Quarterly.*

Lisa Nakamura is the Gwendolyn Calvert Baker Collegiate Professor in the Department of American Cultures at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She is the coordinator of digital studies at the University of Michigan and serves on the steering committee of the FemTechNet Project, a network of educators, activists, librarians, and researchers interested in digital feminist pedagogy. She has written about digital media since 1994.

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