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WRITING EDUCATION ACROSS BORDERS, AN ANTI-ISOLATIONIST PROJECT

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Around the globe, nationalist rhetorics and isolationist policies reemerged in early twenty-first-century mainstream politics. We see this in the European and US backlash against Syrian refugee migrants beginning in 2011, Viktor Orban's reelection as Hungary's prime minister in 2014, Narendra Modi's election as India's prime minister in May 2014, the UK Brexit referendum vote in June 2016, Donald Trump's election as the president of the United States in November 2016, and Jair Bolsonaro's election as Brazil's president in 2018. So-called populist politicians won elections throughout the world, and autocratic politicians consolidated power in China, Russia, and elsewhere. In the US, the 2016 presidential campaign rhetoric turned into administrative policies that resulted in, for example, bans on Muslims entering the US, family separations at the US-Mexico border, violent provocations by white supremacists, withdrawal from climate agreements, renegotiation or withdrawal from global trade agreements, and the extension of physical walls between the US and Mexico. The impact of such isolationist leaders and policies is also seen in higher education, as US-based transnational faculty and students have been caught up in immigration bans (Redden 2017), undocumented students have faced deportation (Plevin 2019), and future international student visas have been increasingly uncertain (Jung 2019). With each example, there are clear displays of xenophobia, cynicism, and distrust. The COVID-19 global pandemic added new fear, prompting the closing of borders, offices, restaurants and schools; sending workers and students online; and forcing millions of people to watch news reports of community members and loved ones suffering alone or in the care of health-care workers with their pictures pinned to their personal protective equipment. In the US, the murders of Ahmaud

Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and Tony McDade and the recorded murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis ignited these tensions and destroyed any false sense of unity across racial, class, or national differences. Even so, despite pandemic fears and in spite of significant military and police intimidation, demonstrators reflecting unity of purpose across racial differences put on protective masks to protest ongoing policy brutality of men, women, and children of color across the US and around the world.

How did we arrive at this moment in history? Journalists, historians, politicians, neighbors—all have theories. Of Donald Trump's election in the US, Matt Flegenheimer and Michael Barbaro (2016) of the *New York Times* posited "a decisive demonstration of power by a largely overlooked coalition of mostly blue-collar white and working-class voters who felt that the promise of the United States had slipped their grasp amid decades of globalization and multiculturalism" (para. 4). When people feel that their economic and social well-being is precarious, engagement with the broader world through globalization and multiculturalism becomes an easy scapegoat for voter distress, rather than offering benefit. In the US, Donald Trump's election signified that a part of the electorate, though not a majority, wanted "America First," or limits on US involvement abroad and a singular focus on national well-being.

Isolationism, as one way to describe such a singular focus, is typically a term used in relation to governmental foreign and economic policy. Discussions about isolationist policies usually reach a fever pitch around times of war and economic hardship. Recent examples in the US include the debate regarding intervention in Syria following the 2008 global recession, and the executive orders initiating a trade war with China in 2019. But an earlier example, again in the US, addressed whether or not the US should enter into World War II. High profile, celebrity spokespeople like Charles Lindbergh (1941a) made emphatic arguments against the US becoming involved in the war that was igniting in Europe: "I now oppose our entry into the war because I do not believe that our system of government in America can survive our participation or our way of life can survive our participation" (para. 9). The sense of vulnerability that Lindbergh expresses provides some clarity about the conditions that may lead to isolationist viewpoints and arguments. As a member of the "America First" Committee, Lindbergh's speeches resonate with the contemporary rhetoric of Trump's "Make America Great Again," where specific populations were identified as posing threats to the social, economic, and political success of "America." For Lindbergh it was "the British, the Jewish, and the Roosevelt Administration" (1941b); for Trump it was Mexicans, Muslims, and the media. The racism behind

both men's positions cannot be denied. In his "Make America Great Again" rhetoric, Trump boasted about the superiority of white people and, by extension, the white United States. Given the history of racism in the US, those racist overtones should not be surprising.

Immigration and naturalization law in the US, for example, is wrapped up in the legacies of colonialism, slavery, and exceptionalism. In 1790, although the "founding fathers" had envisioned open immigration, the US Congress limited naturalization to "free white persons" only, a racial qualification that remained legitimated by law well into the mid-twentieth century (Smith 2002, para. 9). Until 1882, with the Chinese Exclusion Act, immigration law and nationality law were not explicitly coordinated and rarely referenced one another. Though primarily an immigration law, the Chinese Exclusion Act did include a section on citizenship, which stipulated that "hereafter no State court or court of the United States shall admit Chinese to citizenship; and all laws in conflict with this act are hereby repealed" (Smith 2002, para. 10). Conflating race and nationality is only one of the ways that this law and others like it have highlighted isolationist viewpoints and encouraged race-based interpretations of who belongs in the US and who can become a citizen.

In 1941, the rhetorical wall that the isolationist "America First" argument was meant to build crumbled when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7. Just two months later, however, new, more material fences were built when President Roosevelt signed an executive order on February 19, 1942, that allowed the Secretary of War to use the military to detain and forcibly relocate all persons of Japanese descent to inland internment camps. Thus, while isolationist policies may be vulnerable to events, isolationist ideologies are adaptable. Since the election of Joseph Biden as president of the US, for example, the "Big Lie" that the 2020 election was stolen, perpetuated by 147 US representatives such as Marjorie Taylor Greene and Kevin McCarthy and 8 US senators including Josh Hawley and Ted Cruz, has created new opportunities for isolationist beliefs to be codified in state laws. According to the Brennan Center for Justice (2021), as of April 1, 2021, state legislators had introduced "389 bills with restrictive provisions in 48 states." Largely understood as a response to effective voter registration and turnout efforts in communities of color, especially in Georgia where Democratic senate candidates Rev. Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff defeated two Republican incumbents and created an evenly split US Senate, these voter restrictions, denounced as "Jim Crow 2.0" (Ward 2021), are erecting unabashedly racist limits to voting in an attempt to further isolate people of color within their own country.

As history demonstrates, isolationism can be associated with xenophobia and nativism, reluctance to engage in other people's civic and communal affairs, cynicism and pessimism, and a strong sense of independence and self-reliance. Isolationism is historically associated with racism as well, reinforcing racial divisions and working to marginalize people of color within the US. Supported by such beliefs, isolationism creates rhetorical, psychological, and material walls, fences, and borders. Ideologies that tend to counter isolationism, however, are galvanized by idealism and desire for connection and growth, and they share a sense of interdependence and responsibility for others. Adopting such beliefs positions writing teachers to break down walls, dismantle fences, and reach across borders. Writing teachers commonly endeavor to create meaningful relationships with and to support the diverse students in our classes and colleagues who teach alongside us. Writing teachers dedicated to justice seek opportunities to cultivate cosmopolitan, antiracist attitudes that may substantively counter xenophobic ideologies and enable students, international and domestic, to work across national and political borders as well as social, racial, economic, religious, and linguistic ones.

In his work *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, Timothy Snyder (2017) offers instructive lessons learned from democratic opposition to fascism, Nazism, and communism:

> In fact, the precedent set by the Founders demands that we examine history to understand the deep sources of tyranny, and to consider the proper responses to it. Americans today are no wiser than the Europeans who saw democracy yield to fascism, Nazism, or communism in the twentieth century. Our one advantage is that we might learn from their experience. Now is a good time to do so. (13)

Snyder explains that both fascism in Europe and communism in the Soviet Union were responses to globalization in the twentieth century (12). The current responses to globalization come at a time when two anti-historical ways of considering the past threaten to produce complacency and cynicism: what Synder terms a "*politics of inevitability*, the sense that history could move only in one direction: toward liberal democracy" (118), and a "politics of eternity, [in which] the seduction by a mythicized past prevents us from thinking about possible futures" (123). While Snyder never addresses the dark history of racism in the US, a significant omission in his pocket-sized book, he advocates an appreciation of history that "allows us to see patterns and make judgments," to see "the structures within which we can seek freedom" (125). Referencing Polish poet Czesław Miłosz, Snyder encourages readers to "be responsible: not for everything, but for something" (125). Following such a view of

history, this present collection offers chapters that identify patterns of interaction and create educational structures that foster both freedom and opportunities for us all to take responsibility for each other. The collection does not offer a singular ideological resistance to isolationism. Instead, the collection joins distinct threads of research, pedagogy, and ideological commitments together to resist isolationist tendencies in our work and create multiple paths for building connections across borders.

Based upon presentations given at the 2019 Writing Education across Borders Conference, the chapters in this collection reveal how writing teachers—often working directly with students who are immigrants, undocumented, first-generation, international, or students of color—strive to embody ideas that counter isolationism. Each chapter shares a profound hope in the promise of literacy education broadly conceived. They describe a range of literacies, pedagogies, relationships, and the practices that emphasize diversity. The essays foreground commitments to, for example, cosmopolitanism (You 2016, 2018); translingual education (Canagarajah 2013; Horner and Tetreault 2017; Bloom-Pojar 2018; Frost, Kiernan, and Malley 2020); critical engagement with transnationalism in curricula, teaching, research, and administration (Payne and Desser 2012; Thaiss et al. 2012; Martins 2015; Rose and Weiser 2018); and the design of globally networked learning environments (Starke-Meyerring and Wilson 2008; Tcherepashenets 2015; Rice and St. Amant 2018). Focused in this way, much of the work presented here highlights national and linguistic borders. But this collection is not focused solely on the experiences of students from other countries studying in the US. Chapters addressing community-based literacy initiatives as well as racist and colonial legacies, for example, also exemplify projects that are both antiracist (Inoue and Poe 2012; Inoue 2015; Hammond 2019; Perryman-Clark and Craig 2019) and decolonial (Ruiz 2016; Ruiz and Sánchez 2016; Garcia and Baca 2019). All of these approaches, as reflected in writing scholarship and pedagogy, have helped to bring connection, appreciation, recognition, and accountability into the lives of the people in our diverse communities, and provide a creative and enriching outlet to express and give meaning to experience. Although some essays focus more directly on the experience of isolationism than others, each acknowledges the challenges isolationist tendencies pose to the kind of literacy education proposed.

The title of the collection, *Writing on the Wall*, serves as a productive metaphor for the creative, direct action we believe writing education can engender. For us, *Writing on the Wall* is a way to build on studies of how people, ideas, and texts can cross borders, by calling attention to the

borders themselves and then repurposing those walls—or finding ways around and past them. We take inspiration from such works of protest as those that have turned a national border fence into a site of play in the form of a transnational teeter-totter, a site of art in the form of murals depicting the very people shut out by the walls (see Kroth 2019), or a site of protest in the form of posters that adorn fences meant to limit dissent (see Cascone 2020). Our title invokes the many ways people have (literally) inscribed their refusal to accept the isolationist worldview that separates people from one another. We hope that the chapters in this collection strengthen existing efforts and inspire new programs, pedagogies, and research agendas that resist racism, linguistic discrimination, and isolationism. Simply stated, "writing on the wall" implies a reimagining of border spaces as sites of identity expression, belonging, relationship, and resistance.

Thus, with a desire to resist isolationism, and inspired by reimagined possibilities, this collection connects transnational writing education with the fight for racial justice in the US and around the world, a connection that prior studies have not always made or made explicitly. In this way, the collection extends existing research that grapples with the following questions: Historically, how have racist and colonial rhetorics impacted writing education? What impact do translingual, transnational, and cosmopolitan language ideologies have on student learning and student writing? What role can international educational partnerships play in pushing back against isolationist ideologies? To provide a range of responses to these questions, the collection is organized around three themes: (1) "Negotiating Legacies: Racist, Colonial, and Material Antecedents," (2) "Resisting Ethnolinguistic Stereotypes: Community-Engaged Literacies and Pedagogies," and (3) "Building Transnational Connections: Partnerships and Cosmopolitan Dispositions."

NEGOTIATING LEGACIES: RACIST, COLONIAL, AND MATERIAL ANTECEDENTS

The four chapters in part 1 highlight the racist, colonial, and material antecedents to contemporary assumptions and beliefs that continue to shape writing administration, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment as well as student admissions. Each chapter shares a commitment to prioritizing issues of power—racial, colonial, economic, and political—in the analysis and consideration of writing and writing education.

Although writing scholars have often discussed the impact of race, we have not always explicitly named "white nationalism" and "white

supremacy" as the underlying problem. Recent work, however, has been more direct. For example, James Rushing Daniel (2017) advocates for "a precariate approach" to writing pedagogy that would enable students to analyze critically emergent voices expressing "the white nationalism of the alt-right" (81). Laurie Gries and Phil Baratta (2019) develop a "racial politics of circulation" that deepens our understanding of "how whiteness, nationhood, and doxa intertwine to reinforce and amplify white supremacy" (417). Asao B. Inoue (2019), during his 2019 CCCC Chair's Address, challenged writing teachers to address "the conditions of white language supremacy, not just in our society and schools, but in our own minds, in our habits of mind, in our dispositions, our bodies, our habitus, in the discursive, bodily, and performative ways we use and judge language in the writing curriculum" (357). For his contribution to this collection, "On the Semantic Borders of White Nationalism," Keith Gilyard travels to Wakanda and beyond to trace the harmful implications of how white nationalism has been defined inaccurately as a parallel to Black nationalism. Gilyard draws lessons from critical race theory on how to create a pedagogy that enables students to do the rhetorical work of dismantling racist argumentation. The chapter, then, is Gilyard's effort to *historicize, contextualize, and problematize* the term "white nationalism" for writing teachers and students.

Teachers and researchers who have worked to historicize, contextualize, and problematize racial, colonial, and material legacies in writing education have long focused on the effects of specific pedagogical strategies on particular student populations in localized contexts. Research has focused on the role of ESL education in relation to national education projects (Ray 2013; Ullman 2010), the impact of writing education on students in colonial education systems (Jeyaraj 2009; Legg 2014) and refugee communities (MacDonald 2017), and also forms of resistance, made visible in writing, to ethnic incarceration (Shimabukuro 2011) and apartheid (Trabold 2006). For her chapter, "Strangers in a Strange Land: 'The Foreign Student' at US Universities after World War II," Amy J. Wan traces the rhetorical construction of "foreign" students in the post-WWII project of higher education, which aimed to cultivate American citizenship. Wan examines the logic behind recent public messages communicated to international students, by connecting contemporary examples of racialized judgments around language to a longer history of international students and anti-Asian sentiment in the United States. Wan argues that knowing how the mid-century expansion of higher education established many of the current administrative structures, as well as assumptions and beliefs about international students, will help writing

administrators and teachers to dismantle the ideologies that continue to dominate institutional understanding of international students.

In "'To Supplant Ignorance Requires Instruction': Literacy as Transnational Racial Project in the Colonial Philippines," Florianne Jimenez Perzan addresses literacy education in English as a part of the American colonial occupation of the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century, examining how a student writer negotiates discourses of American colonial policy, Filipino elite ideology, and the myth of literacy as social equalizer. Adding a transnational perspective to scholarship on race and literacy education, this chapter argues that literacy education in English is implicated in the formation of racial and class hierarchies.

In the final chapter of the first section, "Scaling Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Precarity," Tony Scott calls for a more robust scholarly focus on the professional mechanisms that sustain connections between scholarship and practices, and which have been steadily eroded by austerity economics as well. Scott presents a case study drawn from an ongoing qualitative research project on the uptake of research in rhetoric, composition and writing studies by faculty hired to teach first-year writing, and considers how cosmopolitanism, as part of an emergent disciplinary discourse, can be scaled across institutional sites and courses.

RESISTING ETHNOLINGUISTIC STEREOTYPES: COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LITERACIES AND PEDAGOGIES

Throughout this second section, the authors present research conducted beyond the classroom in order to understand the impact of literate activities in the lives of people negotiating multiple borders, languages, and identities. Questions concerning "translingualism" and "translanguaging" have been increasingly a focus of disciplinary interest. What started as a project to identify and then challenge monolingual ideologies of language prevalent in US education (see Horner and Trimbur 2002; Spack 2002; NeCamp 2014; Wan 2014), translingualism (see García 2009; Blackledge and Creese 2010; Horner et al. 2011; Canagarajah 2013; Jordan 2015; Frost, Kiernan, and Malley 2020) has taken on a transformational role in writing research, scholarship, and teaching. In the tradition of Deborah Brandt's literacy research (2001, 2014), the first two chapters in this section draw from interviews and analysis of artifacts from writers, to understand more clearly the experience and practice of literacy in people's lives.

Through her chapter "Writing to Mend Literate Fragmentation," Rebecca Lorimer Leonard describes a partnership between an

undergraduate literacy studies course and a community language school, showing how the writing undertaken during that collaboration enhances multilingual writers' understandings of their own critical dispositions regarding cross-border language and literacy practices in nationalist times. Tracing students' writing about language and identity during the project, Lorimer Leonard details the ways that its nationalist political moment shapes writers' literate awareness, helping them reconnect with the literate selves that political or educational contexts seek to actively separate them from.

Analyzing the multilingual literacy practices of an undocumented South Korean student's advocacy work and poetry, Sara P. Alvarez demonstrates how multilingual writers explicitly contest monolithic views of language, nation, belonging, and academic writing, in "Multilingualism beyond Walls: Undocumented Young Adults Subverting Writing Education." Alvarez argues that the practices of racialized immigrant writers cultivate a multilingual language ideology that is more conscientious of how citizenship and immigration impacts people's literacies, highlighting the imperative to (re)think the role of writing as a set of practices shaping and impacting life—beyond the classroom setting—while also posing implications for writing education.

Scholars have also focused on the literacy practices located at the US-Mexico border (see also Meyers 2014; Ruecker 2015; Thatcher, Montoya, and Medina-Lopez 2015). In the third essay, Layli Maria Miron offers examples of public pedagogy and embodied learning in "Public Pedagogy and Multimodal Learning on the US-Mexico Border." Analyzing examples of multimodal public pedagogy (a comic book and an immersion program) used by an organization dedicated to the rights of undocumented immigrants, Miron highlights three strategies that encourage US audiences to rethink undocumented immigration: humanizing, accompanying, and complicating. These strategies, Miron demonstrates, can promote embodied learning and lead to new practices for college writing classrooms.

BUILDING TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS: PARTNERSHIPS AND COSMOPOLITAN DISPOSITIONS

In the final section of the collection, Olga Aksakalova and Tuli Chatterji, Joleen Hanson, and Brooke Schreiber and Brody Bluemel provide strategies for designing, implementing, and responding to transnational partnerships that aim to cultivate a cosmopolitan disposition in students. As with other scholarship on globally networked learning

(see, for example, Starke-Meyerring and Wilson 2008; Charry Roje and Martins 2015; Moore and Simon 2015; O'Brien and Alfanso 2015; Starke-Meyerring 2015), the three chapters of this section discuss the challenges to international collaboration, along with evidence of the high impact such partnerships can have on student learning.

In "Combating Isolationism through COIL Virtual Exchange: Programmatic and Pedagogical Perspectives," Olga Aksakalova and Tuli Chatterji examine how collaborative online international learning (COIL) and other transborder pedagogies can work to critique isolationist national policies beyond the US. The authors first detail the development of COIL at LaGuardia Community College as a subset of a movement towards global learning, considering practical strategies for professional development and logistical and technological support for faculty implementing COIL. They then provide a case study of a collaborative project in a world literatures course addressing the partition of India, illuminating the potential of this transnational pedagogy to counter xenophobic perceptions and rigid portrayals of state borders as firm entities separating homogenous, inherently antagonistic groups of people.

In her chapter "Fostering Cosmopolitanism: International Educational Partnerships in a Professional Communication Course," Joleen Hanson explores her experiences conducting transnational pedagogical activities as a member of a worldwide network of college instructors called the Trans-Atlantic and Pacific Project (TAPP), working with a local student population of primarily white, monolingual students with limited international experience. Hanson illustrates how, as they negotiate communication norms with international partners, students become aware of language conventions and choices and show evidence of developing cosmopolitan perspectives, ultimately coming to see themselves as simultaneously members of both local and global communities.

Based on surveys of administrators and institutional websites, "Smoothing the Path: Chinese-American Joint-Degree Programs as Resistance to Nationalism" considers what role Chinese-American joint-degree programs are playing in keeping educational pathways open for Chinese students in the US, and how that role can be bolstered by improving the practical implementation of the programs at the administrative level. Brooke R. Schreiber and Brody Bluemel argue that these programs can serve as a potential point of resistance to nationalist and anti-Chinese policies within the US, and to anti-American sentiment in China—but only if implemented with an eye towards ethics as well as thoughtful attention to a range of issues such as assessment, placement, curriculum equivalency, and cultural difference.