

(IN)EQUITIES IN THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY: THE POLITICS OF  
REPRESENTATION

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## ABSTRACT

### (IN)EQUITIES IN THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY: THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION

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This project contains an overview and key introductory sections of an intersectional, equity-based literary publishing course textbook. The full-length edited collection, currently under external review for publication, seeks to rectify long-held disparities of the publishing industry in regard to hiring, acquisitions, developmental editing, and considerations in audience, readerships, and marketing. Each chapter examines the ways that racism, ableism, heterosexism, and cisnormativity, operate in the industry, limiting who is represented at an editor's desk and in the pages of published books. The collection is intended to be utilized in upper-division and graduate-level literary publishing courses. This project is a response to the issues identified in the Lee & Low Diversity in Publishing study, the VIDA Count, and social media hashtags like #representationmatters and #ownvoices. This project documents my experience curating a collection that will be subsequently published for the university textbook market. The project reflects on my editorial practice, as I sought to apply the intersectional, equity-based approach that the textbook advocates. What follows is a reflective introduction that covers my thinking and learning over the course of my research and editorial processes; an overview of some essential concepts and theoretical orientations from critical race,

gender, and sexuality studies that are necessary for understanding the contents of the full-length volume; the student/general reader and instructors' introductions to the text which further illuminate the relevance of the issues contained; and an alphabetized bibliography of the selected essays that will be contained in the textbook.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
REFLECTIVE INTRODUCTION .....	1
GUIDE TO TERMS .....	13
Defining Race .....	14
Defining Racism .....	14
Race and Culture: Systems of Oppression.....	15
Unpacking White Privilege.....	17
Colonization: Representation and the Experience of Body .....	18
Intersectionality: Compounded Oppressions .....	20
Women of Color Feminisms.....	21
Intersections of Race and Class .....	22
Gender and Sexuality: Disrupting Binaries .....	23
(Dis)ability: Diversifying Representation.....	26
Racialized Representation in American Literature .....	27
The Contingencies of Literary Value.....	29
Diverse Writers on Race, Power, and Creative Writing .....	31
FOR STUDENTS AND GENERAL READERS.....	33
FOR INSTRUCTORS .....	41
Race in the Creative Writing Classroom .....	45

Supporting Student of Color Writers in the Classroom .....	48
Further Reading and Classroom Models of Inclusivity .....	52
Learning Outcomes.....	55
Incorporating this Text.....	57
CHAPTER SUMMARIES .....	59
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	63
REFERENCES .....	70

## REFLECTIVE INTRODUCTION

My interest in literary representation, particularly that of novels, started in my time as an undergraduate in the English department at Humboldt State University. I had been told throughout my time in high school and into junior college that to study English is to study western canonical literature. I found that in my classes many of my peers were familiar with these texts, but I couldn't seem to find an interest in them—did I pick the wrong major? Then, in my first semester at HSU, I read Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. I was blown away by its heartbreaking beauty and the difficult classroom conversations about power and privilege that accompanied it. This novel and the conversations that surrounded it felt so much more relevant than the novels of the traditional western canon. Why hadn't I read anything like this before? Why were the overwhelming majority of novels I was assigned in school written by white authors?

Racism was not something I understood myself to be implicated in. Reading *The Bluest Eye* made racism visceral for me as a white reader in a way that I had never felt before. I had never read a book like Morrison's—pages filled with experiences that did not reflect my own or affirm my limited and privileged understanding of the world as a young, college-bound white woman. I had never felt suddenly rejected by the sweet familiarities of my world as Pecola Breedlove did—the dandelions, the crack in the sidewalk—because whenever I went to buy candy as a child, the shopkeepers did not hesitate to touch my hand as I handed them my money. They smiled. Why hadn't I read



anything like this before? Why were the overwhelming majority of novels I was assigned in school written by white authors?

Before I came to HSU, I lived my whole life in Sonoma County. My family was always struggling to make ends meet, but we always had a roof over our heads and food on the table. We lived in predominantly white neighborhoods and the schools I attended growing up were predominantly white as well. I grew up reading picture books with all white children and later on fiction and fantasy novels all with white protagonists. Once I got to high school, it was no different. English class was all about the western canon. In my English classes at Santa Rosa Junior College, there was more variety—more contemporary novels. But again (save *The Devil's Highway* by Luis Alberto Urrea) all the authors were white. I did not have to experience an absence or erasure of myself, my family, or my community in the literature I read. Throughout my childhood and into my early adulthood, I remained oblivious to this disparity in diverse literary representation. It took me until I was twenty-one and in my first semester at HSU to notice this disparity—to be able to name it. It should not have taken this long.

After my first semester at HSU, I began seeking out courses that addressed issues of race, identity, and representation (e.g. Practical Criticism; Advanced Topics in Critical Theory; Literature, Identity, and Representation; Ethnic American Literature; and Multicultural Issues in Language and Literature), I began to learn not only about racism experienced on a personal and visceral level, but also about the systemic nature of racism. In these classes, I started to think about institutions and industries such as academia and publishing that promote and uphold the supposed “universality of whiteness” (sometimes

referred to as “expected whiteness”) and the ways that they are, by design, meant to privilege certain folks, while keeping others out.

At first, I felt a kind of resistance to accepting that I was implicated in the system of racism—that I, even if I had not been aware of it, was actually benefiting from these systems of oppression, that I was afforded unearned privileges simply for the color of my skin. I felt uncomfortable in conversations about race, but I tried my best to lean into that discomfort and to learn from it by listening to my peers and the conversations about power and privilege that were being had. I eventually began to make a connection between these conversations about racism and the invisibility of whiteness and white privilege to the disparities in literary representation that I had seen over the years before I had come to HSU. Why is there so little representation of marginalized authors and characters in institutionally valued literature? Why does the literature that we publish and teach in our classrooms represent such limited perspectives, identities, communities, and worldviews? These questions were the exigence of what would eventually become my master’s project.

It took a lot of time to get to these questions, though. Let’s rewind.

It’s the fall semester of 2016 at Humboldt State University. Donald Trump was just elected president of the United States. It’s my first semester at a 4-year institution. I’m taking Dr. Mary Ann Creadon’s advanced critical theory class and am realizing I KNOW NOTHING. That semester we read Aristotle, Dante Alighieri, Sir Philip Sidney, Samuel Johnson, Germaine De Staël, William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Raymond Williams and more. We took a week to examine the possible moral obligations

of literature and read Ann Jurecic's "Empathy and the Critic," and sections of Peter Boxall's *The Value of the Novel*, Lesley Larkin's *Race and the Literary Encounter: Black Literature from James Weldon Johnson to Percival Everett*, and Paula M.L. Moya's *The Social Imperative: Race, Close Reading, and Contemporary Literary Criticism*. I wrote my final paper that semester on the power of literature to teach cross-cultural empathy. In the opening sentence of that paper I posed a question: "Empathy: can it be taught through literature?" This question, although very broad (and certainly a bit naïve), seemed a relevant and pressing question considering the dramatic shift in the political climate at the time.

Over the course of the next few semesters, I began to realize that I was asking the wrong questions. It wasn't a matter of *can* reading diverse literature teach cross-cultural empathy, but rather, where is the diverse literature to begin with? In my second to last semester as an undergraduate, I took Dr. Janelle Adsit's literary editing course. Students enrolled in this course serve on the staff of HSU's *Toyon Multilingual Journal of Literature and Art* and learn publishing basics such as best practices in book design, submission evaluation, and copyediting. In that course, we took a cursory look at issues related to diversity, representation, and (in)equitable practices in the publishing industry. We read articles and blogs written by and for marginalized authors and editors that examined, addressed, and redressed the politics of representation in publishing. Why aren't authors of color being published and celebrated nearly as much as white authors? Where are all of the books written by queer authors? Disabled authors? Queer, disabled authors of color?

When I decided to apply for graduate school, I knew that I needed to continue asking these questions. I had finally started to realize living in my bubble of privilege was living in a bubble of ignorance to the pain, suffering, and resilience that comes with the real world. I wanted to figure out how I got in that bubble to begin with and how I managed to remain there so long, unaware. Over the course of my education, I became increasingly aware of the ways in which systems of power operate to make privilege invisible to its beneficiaries.

By the end of my second semester in graduate school, Dr. Adsit had agreed to serve as my thesis advisor and we were beginning to put together an idea for my project. There was no scholarly conversation about the publishing industry and the politics of representation for me to ground my own research (an issue that was identified in Dr. Adsit's literary editing course), so she and I decided to take a non-traditional approach to my master's project: I was going to curate an edited collection. We were going to create the book that didn't yet exist.

The summer before I started actually researching and writing, I had a long reading list to tackle. My project is interdisciplinary. It uses an intersectional feminist lens to address the politics of representation and the contingencies of literary value. It is informed by critical race theory, queer theory, and disability theory, and contributes to the discipline of creative writing studies through explorations of craft and aesthetic theory. Before I could start gathering resources to begin organizing the collection, I first needed to develop my knowledge of these disciplines and make links between them.

Once I had versed myself in the disciplines that inform my project, I needed to find the material that would make up the collection itself. Many interesting and diverse voices have been excluded from more traditional scholarly locations. I found that conversations about the absence of certain voices in literature were, not surprisingly, missing in peer-reviewed journals and books listed in the catalogs of large publishing houses. Because of this, I began by spending hour upon hour scouring the internet for all of the articles and blogs that I could find by marginalized authors who were discussing the dismal state of diversity and representation in the publishing industry. I found articles explaining the systematic nature of oppression in publishing, I found blogs where authors discussed marginalizing industry practices, forums that addressed tokenism, misrepresentation, and appropriation. I found testimony. I found anger, resistance, and resilience. These became the authors and editors who would eventually fill my collection's table of contents.

In reviewing and selecting the materials that I found, I wanted to be sure that I was not replicating the inequitable practices that the collection works to challenge and disrupt. Through this process, I was learning how to be the kind of editor that the collection advocates for. This process also meant paying special attention to the language of whitewashing, especially when using terms like "diversity" or "inclusivity." To avoid replicating cheap attempts at meeting diversity quotas or the tokenization of marginalized authors, throughout my selection process I consciously attempted to forefront issues of access, positionality, and authors' potential "blank spots" or gaps in awareness. I did my best to include a wide variety of authors and topics, paying close attention to any possible

imbalances of representation in the table of contents. In this process, I took into consideration which issues/topics of discussion I was covering in my selection. In other words, did the selection of essays I was considering represent the larger conversation being had? Was I covering the most important topics based on their apparent prevalence in the broader online discussions making sure that I was not making decisions about relevance based on my own biases or interests?

A few times I found myself needing to make hard decisions as the publisher's word count limit for the book forced me to choose between articles on similar topics, as well. This happened a number of times, but one decision stands out from the rest. I needed to make a decision between two similar articles that both focused on the role of sensitivity readers in the developmental editing stage of book production. I was torn because I felt that the first article's discussion of the role of sensitivity readers was a bit stronger and more developed than the second's, but the second article, in addition to the discussion about the role of sensitivity readers, also unpacked the difference between sensitivity editing and censorship—a conversation that is integral to a developed understanding of the important role of sensitivity readers. I chose to include the second article.

Discussion boards were also tricky. A few times, I found myself getting excited about a conversation on a discussion board, when all of a sudden, a contributor would shift the direction of that conversation, prompting dialogue on topics I felt perpetuated the same kind of thinking that the collection works to dismantle. Again, and again I kept

reviewing my process, materials, and selection rationale to be as sure as I could that I was modeling the kind of equity-minded editorial work that the collection advocates.

In my research, I also reviewed a number of current “insider’s guides” to publishing (i.e., books meant to help students and professionals enter the publishing industry as editors) to get an understanding of what was already available and being discussed in publishing and in literary editorial courses. None of these volumes cover the prevalence of marginalizing practices in the industry, and none integrate a thorough examination of issues relating to diversity, representation, and (in)equitable practices. The collection I have curated brings together the voices of many diverse authors to present a coherent picture of the contemporary debates and complexities of the politics of representation in the publishing industry. It was my intention to bring these voices together in order to create collective impact in a kind of anti- “insider’s guide” for classroom use in literary publishing courses and creative writing programs. This collection was curated to break down the hierarchies that are implied by the insider/outsider dichotomy to create a better sense of equity and accessibility for students wishing to pursue careers as professional writers or industry professionals.

The book manuscript that came together as a result of this master’s project may be used in creative writing programs, many of which include opportunities in literary publishing as writing students work on the university literary magazine. With this audience in mind, this collection was created with the understanding that to transform publishing practices, we must also transform the workshop. Workshop discussions about craft are often falsely presented as politically “neutral,” as they do not address the power

and influence of identity on the writer's imagination. This assumed "neutrality," or separation of writing and identity in workshop discussions, is then reproduced by the publishing industry which is peopled by editors who may have been taught, in creative writing programs or in literature courses, that the writer's craft is somehow separate from identity and lived experience.

After I had exhausted my internet searches, I began pinpointing themes and organizing the materials I collected into the beginnings of what would eventually become the five chapters of my two-part collection. The first part of the collection reviews the editorial schedule: from the acquisitions stage to developmental editing, marketing, and considerations in readerships. The second part covers hiring processes, professionalization, and tips for how to build a career in publishing. Every chapter examines, addresses, and redresses the multifaceted levels of marginalization that take place within the publishing industry. Taking an intersectional, equity-based approach means actively working to disrupt institutions of privilege and power. Thus, this project explicitly names moments of marginalization within publishing processes and offers new approaches to avoid reproducing longstanding power imbalances.

The collection aims to accomplish three main goals: (1) illuminate the multifaceted, systemic levels of gatekeeping within the industry, (2) highlight the ways that marginalization is not accidental and is rooted in systems of oppression, and (3) provide tools for students and current and prospective industry professionals to engage in equity-based practices in their publishing careers.



The chapters of the collection cover topics such as marginalization and white-centric practices in the acquisitions process, misconceptions of marketability in relation to concerns of audience and readerships for underrepresented authors and subjects, the “sensitivity readers” and censorship debate in relation to developmental editing practices, (in)equitable practices in hiring and retention, and advice for prospective industry hires. It is intended to be a core/required text for undergraduate or graduate-level literary publishing courses where discussions about the politics of representation are often secondary or absent altogether. The voices collected in the volume are an invaluable resource for current industry professionals or anyone inside or outside of academia that is considering a career in publishing. The purpose of bringing these voices together into a collection is to amplify them and to ensure that students and industry professionals alike are listening and understanding these voices in context and in relation to one another.

This text was created as a multi-voiced collection (not a solely authored text) for a reason. bell hooks reminds us that writing about cultures or experiences different than our own “becomes most political when the issue is who will be regarded as the ‘authoritative’ voice” (84). Because there were already so many voices contributing to this conversation, I wanted to use this project to amplify these voices, rather than write over them. Thus, the decision to make this a multi-voiced collection came down to a consideration of ethics in scholarship. In conversations about the packaging and marketing of this volume, my committee and I discussed the implications of having my name on the cover, when the intention was to highlight the contributors. Removing my name entirely, though, as one of my committee members pointed out, might abdicate responsibility or accountability as

the editor of the collection. The powerful force of the “author function” in the publishing industry makes considerations in packaging and marketing deeply political issues.

Although I am intimately familiar with the conversations about diversity and representation being had in many literary communities, as a white woman, I do not claim any kind of authority over these issues.

Going into this project, I had no idea how much work it was to actually put together a book proposal for an edited collection. It was an immense amount of labor, but it was rewarding labor. One of the most interesting things about writing the proposal for this book was that I was getting first-hand experience with the industry that I was researching and writing about. I exchanged emails with an editor and began to make revisions based on her feedback. As I wrote and revised the proposal, I kept uncovering areas that I had not fully thought through. Repeatedly I found that I had to pause and ask myself why I was making the decisions that I was making and go back to clearly articulate my rationale. This has truly been a fully immersive project.

Since its beginnings back in my first semester as an undergraduate to writing and sending the proposal for the collection, my breadth of knowledge has expanded as I continually learn, question, and re-question my assumptions and beliefs. This project required that I examine my own privilege and the social and political systems governing this world that I, as a white woman, benefit from. As a beneficiary of unearned privilege, this was labor that I was never explicitly asked to do before.

What follows are a few core elements of the full-length textbook I curated, which is currently under external review for publication. Included is a section titled “Guide to

Terms” which is an overview of some essential concepts and theoretical orientations from critical race, gender, and sexuality studies that are necessary for understanding the contents of the full-length textbook; two introductions, one for students and general readers and another for instructors which further illuminate the relevance of the issues contained; and an alphabetized bibliography of the selected essays that will make up the volume.

## GUIDE TO TERMS

It's important to have conversations about ethical approaches to publishing and to be able to articulate their value in editorial and creative writing classrooms. Writers and editors are, in different ways, producers of culture. As producers of culture, it is necessary to unpack the ways that constructions of identity have shaped history and people's everyday lives. Whether they are aware of them or not, these things impact writers' creative imaginations and editors' judgments of value. To bring the relationship of identity and cultural production to the forefront of classroom conversations, it is necessary to develop a way of naming the cultural, political, and historical implications of identity and how it functions in the real world. These conversations should be integrated into every class, even when (or especially when) everyone in the room is white.

There are many theoretical frameworks, authors, and critics that informed the creation of this collection. The first part of this review covers the following topics: race as a political and social construct; the systemic nature of racism; white privilege; colonization; intersectionality; women of color feminisms; class; gender; sexuality; and disability. The second part of this review connects these concepts to creative writing. It traces the history of racialization in American literature and discusses the contingencies of literary value, and the interconnectedness of writing and identity.

## Defining Race

This collection focuses heavily on the material effects of marginalization, which requires an understanding the cultural/political nature of race. Rather than a matter of biology, **race** is a social and political construct. Cultural understandings of race develop and shift over time, making race an impossible concept to pin down. Michael Omi and Howard Winant in their article “Racial Formations” argue that race is “an unstable and ‘decentered’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle” (20). The authors describe the sociohistorical development of racial categories and how different cultural and historical contexts demand renegotiations of what race is. Aurora Levins Morales argues the same point in her article “What Race Isn’t: Teaching About Racism” and further describes the ways in which race and the categories of “white” and “non-white” fluctuate. This fluctuation, Morales argues, “serves the shifting interests of class” (12). In other words, race is not inherent or biological, but rather an historically situated cultural understanding of the categorization of human bodies and the systems of power that govern them.

## Defining Racism

Racism is not a problem that only some individuals have. Prejudice pertains to individuals, while racism describes systems of oppression that have been institutionalized and are deeply ingrained in social, political, and cultural structures. This is a point that Beverly Daniel Tatum makes in her essay “Defining Racism: ‘Can we Talk?’” She

argues that prejudice is not always directly taught, but is learned passively through cultural consumption or stereotypes that go silently unchallenged. The cultural messages that we receive when watching television, reading a magazine, or glancing at an advertisement inform how we view and interpret race and racial dynamics in our everyday lives. Tatum calls this “cultural racism,” which she defines as “the cultural images and messages that affirm the assumed superiority of Whites and inferiority of people of color” (113). It is our job, Tatum argues, to interrupt this cycle. White people are the beneficiaries of the political system of power that is racism, and, as Tatum concludes “to whom much is given, much is required” (116). She insists that, for those of us who are white, we ask ourselves some important critical questions: “Am I perpetuating and reinforcing the negative messages so pervasive in our culture, or am I seeking to challenge them? If I have not been exposed to positive images of marginalized groups, am I seeking them out...?” (113).

### Race and Culture: Systems of Oppression

An alarming example of the systemic nature of racism is the American prison system. Angela Davis, in her article “Masked Racism: Reflections on the Prison Industrial Complex,” describes the ways in which our prison system has actually been transformed into a massively powerful, privatized, for-profit industry. Many Americans, Davis argues, are tricked into believing that the “magic of imprisonment” will solve social problems. The focus of state policy “is rapidly shifting from social welfare to social control” (656). This issue is not separate from race. More than 70% of the nearly

two million imprisoned people, Davis reports, are people of color. These numbers make it clear the extent to which “criminality and deviance are racialized” (657).

Michelle Alexander is also concerned with the racial disparities in American prisons. In her essay “The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness” she asks, “Where have all the black men gone?” Alexander describes the ways in which the War on Drugs disproportionately targeted communities of color and how it was strategically built for the “management and control of the dispossessed” (291). This system, Alexander argues, has been normalized and is responsible for what she calls a “permanent racial undercaste” (291).

Interlocking systems of racialized oppression reinforce and reinscribe one another to ensure the perpetuation of the racial undercaste that Alexander names. The perpetuation of white supremacist ideology can be seen in academia as well. Many campuses remain predominantly white while claiming “diversity” as a positive descriptor. In Sara Ahmed’s book *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, she examines the ways that the discourse of “diversity” is enacted in institutional settings. Ahmed writes in length about the difference between “diversity” as a favorable institutional *descriptor* and “diversity” as an institutional *practice*. It’s one thing, Ahmed argues, to have “diversity” included in a university or department’s mission statement, but another to actually measure the ways in which institutions enact diversity as a practice: “Our popular interest in and institutional use of the term *diversity* may be a sign of a loss of a critical edge, rather than actual equity work” (1). Here, Ahmed is making the point that diversity can be claimed as a positive descriptor by a university as a

strategy to make institutional whiteness invisible, regardless of their practices.

Institutionalized racism in academia ensures that campuses can remain unaccountable for the ways that they privilege white students while keeping students of color out. Education systems too often fail to support communities of color, leaving them at a great disadvantage and thereby perpetuating the racialized caste system.

### Unpacking White Privilege

It is not enough, though, to simply talk about racism in relation to people of color. One of the most dangerous and powerful ways that whiteness works is in its invisibility or its perceived neutrality. The development of race in the U.S. can be historically traced. Pem Davidson Buck, in her essay “Derailing Rebellion: Inventing White Privilege” maps the construction of race, noting that it took until “the end of the 1700s for ideas about race to develop until they resembled those we live with today” (24). Differences between people were popularly perceived as cultural, rather than biological. After Bacon’s Rebellion (when black and white laborers joined forces against the ruling class), however, the elite had to devise a way to teach all whites, regardless of class, the value of their whiteness “in order to divide and rule their labor force” (24). To achieve this goal, it was necessary to convince whites of the privileges that the color of their skin afforded them. Pinpointing whiteness as the source of privilege meant that even landless whites could identify with the big slaveholding plantation owners on a basis of race (even against their own economic interests), so dividing the workforce and disarming the threat of another large rebellion. Buck highlights the ways that the construction of race and



invention of white privilege were instrumental in the development of how we perceive race in contemporary contexts.

In Peggy McIntosh's article "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," she addresses her own previously unexamined privilege that was afforded to her simply for being white. She critiques the myth of meritocracy, arguing that we are not born into neutral circumstances from which each individual has equal opportunity to make something of themselves. Whiteness affords many advantages that are denied to people of color and often go unexamined by whites. Of the myth of meritocracy, McIntosh writes, "many doors open for certain people through no virtues of their own" (186). Too often people are willing to acknowledge that others may be *disadvantaged*, but are unwilling to think of themselves as *over-advantaged*: "Power from unearned privilege can look like strength," McIntosh argues, "when it is in fact permission to escape or to dominate" (187). White privilege does not simply mean that "others" are disadvantaged (making whiteness a neutral or ideal state of being), but rather that whiteness is an unearned advantage that confers dominance. If white people are willing to examine their unearned privilege, it becomes not a matter of simply acknowledging what was always there, but rather a matter of what they will *do* with that knowledge.

#### Colonization: Representation and the Experience of Body

As many of these authors have demonstrated through evidence, testimony, and critique, identity/ies are fluid, contextual, historical, and are influenced by shifting dominant ideologies. Evelyn Alsultany, in her article titled "Los Intersticios: Recasting

Moving Selves” makes this point even more explicit by examining how we are governed by “binary axes of sameness and difference” (147). She is interested in the ways that we try to interpret and categorize the people we encounter in our everyday lives. Alsultany describes the ways in which her body is “marked with meaning” in public spaces and emphasizes the contextuality of identity: “... my body is marked as gringa in Costa Rica, as Latina in some U.S. contexts, Arab in others, in some times and spaces not adequately Arab, or Latina, or ‘American,’ and in other contexts simply as *other*” (148). Her words highlight the ways in which identity is fluid, constantly shifting and becoming destabilized through highly contextualized cultural interpretation.

The ways in which culture and dominant ideologies reinscribe one another can be seen everywhere. Take, for example, the classic American trope of cowboys and Indians. In Michael Yellow Bird’s article “Cowboys and Indians: Toys of Genocide, Icons of American Colonialism” he describes a trip to the convenience store where he comes across a bag of small plastic figures in the toy section: red toy Indians and blue toy cowboys. Of this “nauseating display of Americana,” Yellow Bird recalls saying to his class of undergraduate college students: ““Imagine if children could also buy bags of little toy African-American slaves and their white slave masters, or Jewish holocaust prisoners and their SS Nazi border patrol guards, or undocumented Mexicans and their INS border patrol guards” (631). Yellow Bird argues that the trope of cowboys and Indians demonstrates America’s “past and present infatuation with colonization and genocide” (630). These “genocide toys” or “icons of colonialism” as he calls them, are normalized (so much so that we give them to children to play with). In actuality, icons of colonialism

are an example of the “racist American myths and political policies of white colonial supremacy” (638).

### Intersectionality: Compounded Oppressions

Intersectionality asks that we consider the ways in which our varying identities (race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, etc.) *compound* in any given context. In her essay “Why Intersectionality Can’t Wait,” Kimberlé Crenshaw, the legal professor and theorist who coined the term, defines intersectionality as “an analytic sensibility, a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power” (109). The court case that was the catalyst for the birth of intersectional theory occurred in 1976 when Emma DeGraffenreid and several other black women sued General Motors for discrimination. Only men could hold factory floor positions and while women could be hired as secretaries, only white women were eligible. Crenshaw explains: “You see, the black jobs were men’s jobs and the women’s jobs were only for whites” (108). This meant that the consequences for black women were compounded. They were not candidates for either position.

Intersectionality is an invaluable theoretical frame that can be used to discuss and understand compounding axes of oppression, but it is also a tool that has given many people a way to “frame their circumstances and fight for their visibility” (109). This, Crenshaw argues, is why intersectionality can’t wait.

## Women of Color Feminisms

Intersectionality, which existed as a concept and lived reality before Crenshaw coined the term, is a central principal in women of color feminisms. For many generations, women of color have been discussing the ways in which they experience complex forms of marginalization on a daily basis as writers, teachers, organizers, and mothers. From powerful voices in the 19<sup>th</sup> century such as Sojourner Truth and Harriet Jacobs, to the more recent occurrence of influential coalitions in the 1960s and 1970s such as the Combahee River Collective, women of color have been speaking and writing about their particular and varied lived experiences for centuries. A number of highly influential books and collaborative collections of essays and testimonies of women of color sprang up in the 1980s: *This Bridge Called my Back*, an edited volume by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, is one foundational collection of women of color writers that captured feminist theory in practice by celebrating personal testimony and memoir as valuable sources of knowledge and wisdom; *Black Feminist Thought* by Patricia Hill Collins and *Sister Outsider* by Audre Lorde address the specificity of black women and queer black women's oppression; *Frontiers: Selected Essays and Writings on Racism and Culture* by M. NourbeSe Philip explores Canadian multiculturalism and the ways that racism shapes communities and cultural production; and *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* by Gloria Anzaldúa constructs a theoretical and emotional conception of what a "borderlands" is and the negotiation of identities that are shaped by colonial

forces. These are all examples of some of the groundbreaking contemporary work of women of color feminists.

### Intersections of Race and Class

Cultural constructions of race and class are interlocking and reinforce one another. Robin DiAngelo, in her essay “My Class Didn't Trump My Race: Using Oppression to Face Privilege” discusses how growing up in poverty informed her understanding of race. DiAngelo explains she had an understanding as a child that there was something “wrong” with her: “From an early age I had the sense of being an outsider; I was acutely aware that I was poor, that I was dirty, that I was not normal, and that there was something “wrong” with me. But I also knew that I was *not* Black. We were at the lower rungs of society, but there was always someone on the periphery, just below us” (189-190). DiAngelo explains how poverty reinforces racist ideology through the construction of a racialized other, through whom she “became clean”—the signs of poverty seemingly washed from her skin (190). DiAngelo writes, “my grandmother and I *needed* people of color to cleanse and realign us with the dominant White culture that our poverty had separated us from” (190). As they were beginning in the late 1700s, cultural perceptions of race became and have remained the great divider of the working class. The white working class, DiAngelo argues, has an internalized dominance that gives them a false racialized sense of belonging with the dominant white culture—a degrading power struggle that creates a racialized *us* versus *them*.

Even with extreme wealth disparities and rising unemployment and houselessness, issues of class are hardly addressed in the media. In his essay “Media Magic: Making Class Invisible,” Gregory Mantsios makes explicit the classist/class-blind nature of mass media. In mass media, the poor are portrayed in a very dehumanizing manner. The poor do not exist; they are a faceless, undeserving, eyesore who only have themselves to blame. The media would have us believe, he argues, that poverty is not a systemic issue, but rather that the poor are simply just “down on their luck.” Mass media constructs poverty as an issue belonging to *individuals* who are to blame for their misfortune. Again, the myth of meritocracy is brought to light, as there are complex social and political systems in place that keep the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer—tax breaks for the wealthy, limited government funding for programs such as welfare and food stamps, etc. The media constructs a sense of what Mantsios refers to as “we-ness.” The imagined audience for mass media are the middle and upper classes, constructing a popular sense that “the wealthy are us” and keeping the general population of consumers uncritical of the wide wealth disparities so prevalent in the U.S. today.

#### Gender and Sexuality: Disrupting Binaries

Gender and sexuality can also serve as a basis for socially constructed hierarchies. The ways that we perceive and police the gender binary (man/woman) and sexual preferences that depart from heterosexuality have consequences for people in their everyday lives. There is no such thing as “true masculinity.” Our perceptions of masculinity are shaped by history and culture. In his article, “Masculinity as

Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity,” Michael S. Kimmel tracks the development of our modern conception of masculinity. He argues that masculinity is not something in and of itself, but rather gets its meaning in contrast with perceptions of femininity. Masculinity is a kind of “antifemininity,” always defining itself by what it is not. For this reason, Kimmel argues, men constantly feel pressure to prove their masculinity, often in homophobic or sexist ways. To be perceived as gay is to be perceived of as more feminine, and it is in this way that homophobia and sexism are interlocked, reinforcing and reinscribing one another as men continually try to prove and reprove their masculinity. To further explicate the link between homophobia and sexism, Suzanne Pharr, in her essay “Homophobia as a Weapon of Sexism,” argues that women experience a similar kind of sexualized gender policing. She writes that “to be a lesbian is to be *perceived* as someone who has stepped out of line,” no matter the individual’s sexual orientation (161). “Lesbian” is equated with “bad,” something that is not quite ‘woman,’ and certainly something that hates men.

Too often sex and gender are equated and it is still common for people to think of gender in binary terms. Judith Butler’s book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* breaks down the male/female dichotomy and undermines the notion that gender be equated with sex, arguing that gender is not a matter of biology, but rather, is culturally constructed. Gender is constructed through the negotiation and performance of a multitude of social cues.

Joey Mogul, Andrea Ritchie, and Kay Whitlock in their article “The Ghosts of Stonewall: Policing Gender, Policing Sex,” reveal the history of the policing of sexuality

and the gender binary (most notably by law enforcement officers) since the birth of the LGBTQ rights movement in the 1960s. If you do not conform to popular conceptions of a “real woman” or a “real man,” the authors argue, then you are labeled as deviant. Police officers often succumb to “classification anxiety” when they cannot immediately identify a person’s gender or sexuality, and so that individual’s “mere presence in public spaces is experienced as a disruption of the social order,” resulting in harassment, mistreatment, and police brutality. This puts queer, transgender, and gender-nonconforming people at high risk of police abuse in their daily lives. To a similar end, Susan Stryker, in her essay “Transgender Feminism: Queering the Woman in Question,” argues that gender can be weaponized by observers who wish to police or normalize “unruly bodies,” regardless of whether or not those bodies are actually transgender. Stryker writes, “Stripping away gender, and misattributing gender, are practices of social domination, regulation, and control that threaten social abjection; they operate by attaching transgender stigma to various unruly bodies and subject positions, not just to ‘transgendered’ ones” (77). Individuals who deviate from our dominant perceptions about what acceptable gender and sexualities are face harsh discrimination.

Until fairly recently, transgender and gender-queer poetry and experience, in particular, have been treated as something “other” by literary communities. The groundbreaking collection *Troubling the Line: Trans and Gender-Queer Poetry and Poetics*, edited by TC Tolbert and Trace Peterson, was first published in 2013, and was one of the first examples of an extensive anthology of transgender and gender-queer poets and poetry. This collection is “*by and with not for and about*” transgender and



genderqueer people and unpacks how authors take-up, inhabit, and imbue space in order to “directly explicate body and poem” (9). Before conceiving of this collection, the editors asked themselves, “Why aren’t we seeing the work of trans and genderqueer poets in other collections, at academic conferences, on a variety of presses, at slams, and in literary journals? Where are the trans and genderqueer poets with tenure track positions, poet laureate positions, and on editorial boards?” (12).

#### (Dis)ability: Diversifying Representation

Disabled persons have also had to write a seat for themselves into existence at the literary table. Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha’s book entitled *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* explores what disability justice means to her as a “disabled fem of color writer in a collective movement of many” (25). Noting the ways that disability movements have often centered on white disability experiences, Piepzna-Samarasinha breaks away from these movements in an effort to centralize intersectional experiences of disability through “crip creative practice.” Foregrounding access and inclusivity, she makes the case that “culture makes culture. When there’s no space to talk about disability in art... disabled artists of color won’t make art” (17). Piepzna-Samarasinha challenges our perceptions of what activism is by discussing the ways that the stationary and sometimes solitary act of writing and storytelling have been some of the most powerful tools of disability activism: “to exist is to resist.”

A groundbreaking anthology *Beauty is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability* edited by Jennifer Bartlett, Michael Northen, and Sheila Black, is a collection of poets

who write about their experiences of disability poetry being described as located outside of mainstream poetry (i.e. considered to be specialty poetry or not “real” poetry). How do we define disability poetry? What makes a poem *about* disability? Some of the contributors would argue that just because a poem does not specifically address disability doesn’t mean it’s not a lens that the poet is constantly reading and processing the world through. A more relevant question might be “How does the author embody disability in ways that are not recognizable to standard discourses?” Contributors of this collection also complicate the reductive binaries un/impaired, normal/disabled, neuro-a/typical, sick/well that signify relations of power and privilege. Their collection combats limited and stereotyped understandings of disabled people and experiences. The editors argue that the lack of diverse categories and understandings of the complex issues associated with disability cause creative writing about poetry and disability to be narrow and misrepresentative of the diversity of disabled persons.

### Racialized Representation in American Literature

It is easy to see the ways in which history, culture, and identity shape our literature. For example, the American literary canon was heavily influenced by slavery and the creation of the “other.” In Toni Morrison’s *The Origin of Others*, she maps the history and creation of a cultural and literary other. Morrison notes how most Americans believe that racism followed race, when in reality racism is what created racial categories. She argues that the formation of a racialized other was necessary to confirm a white self as normal. In other words, whiteness requires blackness—they are co-constituted. This

idea is present in American literature, Morrison argues, highlighting the often-stereotypical depictions of blackness in canonical literature. This literary “colorism,” as Morrison calls it, remains an issue in representations of race to this day. The publishing industry furthers this issue by policing depictions of race and rewarding certain representations, while censoring others. Of her own writing and effort to avoid colorism, Morrison writes:

My effort may not be admired or interesting to other black authors. After decades of struggling to write powerful narratives portraying decidedly black characters, they may wonder if I am engaged in literary white-washing. I am not. And I am not asking to be joined in this endeavor. But I am determined to de-fang cheap racism, annihilate and discredit the routine, easy, available color fetish, which is reminiscent of slavery itself (53).

Rather than white-washing her stories, Morrison is interested in departing from the cheap representations of blackness that are often rewarded by the publishing industry to write more nuanced depictions of blackness.

In her highly influential book *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, Morrison examines literary constructions of whiteness and blackness, highlighting the ways that whiteness has traditionally been represented as a neutral, or non-racialized identity. Posing critical questions to her readers about how this tradition might affect the literary imagination, Morrison asks,

When does racial “unconsciousness” or awareness of race enrich interpretative language, and when does it impoverish it? What does posing one’s writerly self,

in the wholly racialized society that is the United States, as unraced and all others as raced entail? What happens to the writerly imagination of a black author who is at some level *always* conscious of representing one's own race to, or in spite of, a race of readers that understands itself to be "universal" or race-free? In other words, how is "literary whiteness" and "literary blackness" made and what is the consequence of that construction? (xii)

The white literary imagination, Morrison argues, manages, controls, and silences that which it is not, but most notably it does this to African American voices. *Playing in the Dark* provides invaluable insight into the construction of race in literature and creates a critical lens from which we can read canonical and contemporary representations of race.

#### The Contingencies of Literary Value

In publishing houses and in discussions about craft in workshops, the term "relatability" often comes up. How relatable is a text and therefore valuable or marketable? How do we determine relatability or value? Perceived "relatability" of subjects or characters is inescapably tethered to and influenced by the identity of the individual assessing the work. There is no universally relatable subject or position, so what does this say about our literary value judgements?

In her essay "Contingencies of Value," Barbara Herrnstein Smith complicates our understanding of the value ascribed to the works of the western literary canon, arguing that there is no such thing as "intrinsic value." The value of the traditional academic canon, Smith argues, has not been largely questioned. According to Smith, our value

judgments are radically contingent. Certain literature's perceived value can be accounted for by considering its sociohistorical context and the specificity of individuals who evaluate it. An inquiry into the value of certain texts, Smith contends, should be pursued with

... the recognition that, like any other intellectual enterprise, it would consist, at any given time, of a set of heterogeneous projects; that the conceptual structures and methodological practices adopted in those projects would themselves be historically and otherwise contingent (reflecting, among other things, prevailing or currently interesting conceptual structures and methods in related areas of inquiry); that whatever other value the descriptions and accounts produced by any of those projects might and undoubtedly would have (as indices of twentieth-century thought, for example, to future historians), their specific value as descriptions and accounts would be a function of how well they made intelligible the phenomena within their domain to whoever, at whatever time and from whatever perspective, had an interest in them; and that its pursuit would be shaped by-that is, energized and transformed in response to-those interests, and its descriptions and accounts continuously and variously interpreted and employed in accord with them (11).

In other words, certain texts have made it into the western canon because their form and content aligned with the specific political and cultural contexts at the time of its emergence and the ideals of the individuals making value judgments. It is crucial that as readers, writers, and instructors, we examine the ways that the perceived relatability of a

text and our own value judgments are entirely contingent upon when, where, and who is making those calls.

### Diverse Writers on Race, Power, and Creative Writing

*The Racial Imaginary: Writers on Race in the Life of the Mind*, edited by Claudia Rankine, Beth Loffreda, and Max King Cap, helped frame some of the core concepts that are central to this collection. *The Racial Imaginary* is a collection of authors who discuss their experiences writing in different literary communities and social contexts. The contributors write about issues such as racialized power dynamics in creative writing workshops or classrooms, the positionality of the white imagination, the invisibility of literary whiteness, and tokenism. Several of the essays discuss the particular burdens or racialized representations authors of color carry—a burden that white writers do not carry.

There are five core concepts that form the basis for this volume. These core concepts are informed heavily by the contributors of *The Racial Imaginary*: (1) Histories of subjugation belong as much to the oppressors as to the oppressed; (2) the imagination is not post-racial, post-historical, or postpolitical—only white writers experience a false sense of “imaginative freedom;” (3) to represent whiteness is also to represent race, even if it goes unacknowledged; (4) marginalized authors are often pressured by the publishing industry and readerships to write strictly about their marginalized identity or speak on behalf of others who identify as they do; and (5) marginalized authors make very strategic decisions about how they want to address (or not address) their identity/ies in

their writing—a decision that will affect how they are perceived, critiqued, and/or published. These core concepts take center stage throughout this text and are addressed and unpacked in detail by its contributors. Each chapter gives insight into a stage of the editorial schedule or hiring, professionalization, and tips on how to build a career while being informed, at every step, by these five core concepts.

In this project, next you will find two introductions: one for students and general readers and another for instructors. The chapter you have just read introduced some of the core concepts of the full-length volume which will be prefaced by the two introductions that follow. Note that in the introduction for students and general readers, there are **bolded** terms. These terms are bolded to indicate that they will be included in the glossary of the full-length textbook.

## FOR STUDENTS AND GENERAL READERS

The books that we see lining the shelves of bookstores took a lot of work to get there. From the acquisitions stage to developmental editing, and considerations in audience and marketing, seeing a book through to print is a complex process. These books are also a reflection of the majority white-, cis-gendered, hetero-, able-bodied makeup of the publishing industry. By taking a look at who holds the power of decision making within the industry and what the ramifications of this are, we can see that there is much more to consider beyond the technical processes and labor of book selection and production.

Nothing exists inside of a cultural or political vacuum. Everything that we produce is influenced by the world we live in and the structures of power that govern it. The publishing industry is no exception. The production and circulation of things such as books, media, or music reflect cultural and political values. This is why it is incredibly important that we examine these factors when discussing the various stages of book selection, production, and circulation—an issue that this collection you are holding takes up in great detail.

Next time you find yourself perusing the aisles of a bookstore, pay attention to who is on the shelves. What authors do you see? Who are their main characters? Do you notice any trends? What processes and decisions do you think went into getting those books and their authors spaces on those shelves? Decisions made by real people determine whether or not a book will get published. This process begins at the acquisition



stage. Authors can submit their work to editors of publishing houses to be considered for publication. It is the editor's job to sort through the submissions and make a decision about which books they will publish. How do they make those decisions? Some editors claim to select manuscripts based solely on the "quality" of a piece of writing or the "relatability" or "relevance" of its content. This practice, however, does not hold anyone accountable for how their choices are influenced by their identities or values as decision-makers and cultural producers.

After a manuscript is selected, correspondences between the publishing team and the author take place and the process of developmental editing begins. **Developmental editing** involves the author responding to feedback given by the publishing team about their manuscript. True, this is a dialogue between the author and the publisher, but the power clearly lies with the publisher who has the power and resources to put books into print. This feedback may ask the author to make a few minor changes to their manuscript or it may ask them to make major changes in order to be accepted and pushed through to publication. This is also the stage where authors can decide if they want to hire a sensitivity reader. **Sensitivity readers** are professional reviewers who hold varying identities that can often be misrepresented in books. This can relate to race, class, gender, sexuality, religious beliefs, and more. Authors writing characters who they do not personally identify with can hire a sensitivity reader to review their manuscript for any stereotypes or clichés, but this kind of review may also be required by publishers before agreeing to push the manuscript through to publication. The power dynamic between

author and publisher that we see in the developmental editing process shows us how much influence these decision-makers have on the books we read.

Finally, the book needs to be marketed to relevant readerships—the audience that the marketing team determines would want to buy the book. The perceived marketability of a book is determined based on a number of factors. Some questions that they might consider are: Is there an audience for the book? Who is that audience? Is the content of the book relatable to a wide enough audience for it to be financially successful? Considerations in marketing and the marketability of a book are influenced by the industry's perceptions of readerships—who reads books and what those readers want to read. Book selection and production is not an inherently “neutral” or “objective” process, as many of the decision-makers in the industry would have us believe. It is a process that is highly influenced by people's values, beliefs, and assumptions—a concerning truth considering the overwhelmingly white, cis-gendered, hetero, able-bodied industry professionals. How can we claim to make neutral or objective decisions about what is “good” or “relatable” when the people making those decisions do not reflect the diversity of the real world?

The books that are produced by the publishing industry do not represent the diversity of the world that we see around us. When we browse the shelves of many major bookstores, it is clear that there are wide disparities in who and what gets published. This collection examines, addresses, and redresses some of the central issues facing the publishing industry in regard to who and what is represented in books and the inequitable practices in book selection and production that lead to the disparities we see. As current

or prospective members of the publishing industry, this collection is meant to guide you through the major steps in the editorial schedule while giving you insight into hiring processes, professionalization, and how to build a career in publishing. Each essay included in this collection works to demystify these processes with an emphasis on **equity** and **intersectionality**.

Because people's varying identities are dynamic (and often plural), this book takes an intersectional approach to these issues. In other words, the aim of this collection is not to focus on one axis of oppression (e.g. race, sexual orientation, *or* ability), but instead considers how these axes of oppression overlap or compound (e.g. race, sexual orientation, *and* ability) to create different, more complex understandings of how oppression operates. The contributors of this collection have been chosen to represent a wide variety of intersectional perspectives on issues of representation in the contemporary publishing industry.

Often "insider's guides" to publishing focus solely on the editorial process, explaining to readers what each step looks like from acquisitions to print and marketing. What these guides lack, though, is an examination of the politics of representation in these processes. In other words, the things that influence whose voices, worldviews, perspectives, and ideas are valued and reproduced in the books we read. This collection works to unpack some of these concerns and is intended to be a kind of anti- "insider's guide." It is meant to break down the hierarchies that are implied by the insider/outsider dichotomy to create a better sense of equity and accessibility. So, while you learn about the stages of the editorial process, you will also learn about the barriers facing

marginalized authors at each stage and grapple with the ethical concerns related to these issues. What are these barriers? How might they be overcome? What steps as current or prospective industry professionals can *you* take to combat these issues? What steps are current members already taking?

The conversation that this collection showcases is one that has been going on for many years. Marginalized authors have been talking about these issues for decades, but have received very little serious consideration. In 2015 the publisher Lee and Low Books conducted an industry-wide diversity baseline survey that shook the industry and sparked a resurgence of voices addressing issues of inequity and representation. Their results showed many authors and editors a fact that they already knew: the publishing industry is predominantly run by white, cis-gendered, hetero, able-bodied people. A follow-up survey in 2019 by Lee and Low Books demonstrated only minor shifts in the demographics since their 2015 survey, underscoring the necessity of systemic change to transform the industry. Editors, agents, and writers from all walks of life took to the web, publishing powerful article after article about their experiences facing these issues. These articles are scattered in online spaces, hindering their ability to make collective impact. All of the essays included have been gathered from online newsletters, internet media and news sites, and blogs where these editors and authors speak their truths. While this collection only contains a small fraction of the conversations about the state of diversity and representation in the industry, the essays included capture the scope of those conversations.

As you work your way through each chapter, you might come across terms that are unfamiliar to you. This volume is equipped with the tools you need to unpack complex concepts and ideas. Every concept or term that is in **bold** is included in the glossary, and there are also resources available to you on the accompanying textbook website including further reading if you come across an avenue of interest that you wish to explore further. There are also a few ways to approach this text. You might decide to jump around and select essays that sound most interesting or relevant to you, or you might decide to read from cover-to-cover. However you decide to approach this collection, you will no doubt learn something valuable from each and every contributor.

In the opening section, you will get to take a look at the breakdown of Lee and Low's diversity baseline survey results to give context to the ramifications of the rest of the issues presented by this collection. You will also read a roundtable discussion between five industry professionals about race and gender in publishing, and hear short passages from fifty more industry professionals about their daily experiences with marginalization in their field.

This collection is organized into two parts. The chapters included in Part I describe the editorial schedule and outline considerations of representation in the acquisitions process, the importance of developmental editing and the role of sensitivity readers, and ethical concerns in considerations of audience, readerships, and marketing. The essays included in Part I will give you insight into the history of oppression in the publishing industry and shed some light on the emergence of statistical diversity reports. The contributors of these chapters will ask you to challenge your notions of what is

“good,” “worthy,” or “important” when it comes to reviewing writing. They will outline the social and political responsibilities of editors as they make decisions about whom and what they will represent, and push you to (re)consider the power dynamics at play in regard to who is permitted to speak and on what topics. Part I also contains interviews and personal accounts that will give you insight into what the job of sensitivity reader entails, what the process looks like from an author’s standpoint, and the issue of **whitewashing**. Finally, in the concluding essays of Part I, you will learn about the politics behind marketing and the many and varying ways that **gatekeepers** (i.e. those who control access to social capital, resources, and opportunities) in the publishing industry use the market as an excuse for the limited representation of diverse authors and stories produced by their publishing houses or appearing in their tables of contents (e.g. “There’s just no demand for a book like this”).

Part II covers hiring processes, professionalization, and tips for how to build a career in publishing. These chapters highlight respondents to the Lee & Low’s 2015 diversity baseline survey as they share their experiences and “aha!” moments and call for greater transparency when owning up to the disparities illuminated by these kinds of statistical studies. The contributors also review the limitations of statistical reports and the necessity of not only equitable hiring practices in all levels of the industry but also practices that heighten retention rates and foster opportunities for advancement for marginalized groups. You will also get answers to some questions about what pursuing a career in this field might look like. From entry-level intern positions and the complicated nature of networking as a new and marginalized writer to exciting and powerful stories of

different paths to success, Part II gives you insight into just what might help you get your foot in the door of this complex industry.

The goal of this collection is twofold: First, to give you insight into the editorial processes, hiring processes, professionalization, and how to start a career, and second, to help you gain an understanding of issues of equity and the politics of representation within the publishing industry. These are some of the most valuable insights and tools that you can have as current or prospective industry professionals to help you succeed in your career.

As the curator of this collection, I invite you to reflect on your own experiences as readers, writers, or editors. What has influenced your decision about what book to read next, what story to write, or what manuscript to select for publication? Do your bookshelves represent a diverse array of authors and characters or do you see disparities? How might you work to be a more conscientious consumer or producer? This collection will give you some tools to help you unpack the nature and gravity of these questions (and many more) to help you succeed in your career in publishing or as a writer while also being an advocate for equity and representation within the industry.

## FOR INSTRUCTORS

Getting a book through to publication is hard work and can feel overwhelming for those who are unfamiliar with the process. Students in literary publishing courses and creative writing programs need guidance on how to navigate this complex process in order to make informed decisions in their future careers and succeed in their professional endeavors. From the acquisitions stage to developmental editing, to marketing and publicity, each step is complex. Demystifying these processes will give your students a leg up when they enter the professional sphere.

In 2015 the publisher Lee and Low Books conducted an industry-wide diversity baseline survey that shook the industry and sparked a resurgence of voices addressing issues of diversity, representation, and inequitable practices. Their results revealed a fact that many of us already knew: the publishing industry is run predominantly by white, cis-gendered, hetero, able-bodied people. Lee and Low's follow-up survey in 2019 showed only minor shifts in the demographics of the industry. These issues have taken center stage again recently with the controversy of Jeanine Cummins' novel *American Dirt*. Cummins came under fire after the release of the book regarding her whiteness, her claims of racial/ethnic identity, and the book's problematic depictions of Mexicans and immigrants. Cummins' publisher, Flatiron Books, and Oprah's Book Club are also implicated in this controversy, as they chose to fund and promote this text over the many other books that offer immigrants' stories. This controversy sparked the development of the movement #DignidadLiteraria, which campaigns for literature *by and for* diverse



Latinx communities and heightened inclusion in the U.S. publishing industry overall. *American Dirt* is a salient example of the ramifications of issues of inequity and (mis)representation in this largely white industry today and exemplifies the ways that politics, identity, and creative writing are inextricably intertwined. One of the main purposes of this collection is to teach students to be able to recognize the problematic nature of novels such as *American Dirt*, to understand what is at stake when/if they take on projects such as these, and to have the self-reflexivity to ask the questions that weren't asked enough in the production of a problematic book such as Cummins'.

It is all too common to pick up the core theoretical or craft text assigned in creative writing programs to find advice that is masked as “neutral” craft talk. It is tempting to want to believe that cultural production is not political—that it is somehow separate from our everyday lives and the power structures that govern them. This volume and its contributors, along with the many critics that are integral to its theoretical orientation like those in the “Guide to Terms,” argue that the notion that creativity is separate from identity, politics, and power is false. Its contributors push students to ask critical questions. How do we decide what is “good,” “worthy,” or “important”? How and in what ways do editors' different identities and positionalities affect their decisions about selecting the “best” idea or piece of writing from their slush pile? Is anyone able to be truly “objective” in decisions about aesthetic value and culture? This collection asks that, as producers of culture, we critically examine who and what is given space on the shelves lining our bookstores. The authors included in this anthology push us to consider the reasons for the disparities we see on those shelves.

Why are these important conversations to have in literary publishing courses and creative writing programs? All creative writing teachers are engaging with publishing in one way or another, even if they do not teach publishing courses. Publishing is in the background of any workshop conversation, and creative writing students are better equipped to approach their work if they have an understanding of the complex dynamics of circulation and publication. Furthermore, many creative writing programs explicitly teach publishing with the anticipation that many creative writers are also editors, who often start and sustain independent presses or take on small press projects. Issues of representation cross both publishing and workshop spaces, making this collection an invaluable classroom tool for addressing inequities in both spheres.

From the minute students take their seats in the writing workshop or begin reviewing submissions for their university's literary journals, considerations of identity and power and how they operate in the world and shape cultural production become central. What authors will you assign in your creative writing classrooms? Invite to visit your campuses? Students and teachers with privileged identities need to take accountability for the ways in which their privilege affects the people around them and the conversations that are being had in the classroom and beyond. If we are going to talk about cultural production, we need to talk about the power structures and hierarchies that govern the bodies and minds that fill classrooms. Constructions of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and beyond all influence the way that we perceive the world and the people in it, and so are inextricably entwined with literature produced, read, and published.

An understanding of the conversations about diversity, representation, and (in)equitable practices in the publishing industry covered by the contributors of this anthology are fundamental for students in creative writing programs. Publishing courses are often part of creative writing programs and the creative writing and publishing classrooms on university campuses reproduce and reinscribe one another—their core values and beliefs. In order to transform inequitable publishing practices that are happening in creative writing programs, educators must also transform workshop spaces to allow for critical conversations about cultural production that center issues of identity, equity, and representation.

Other books written as “insider’s guides” to publishing are merely descriptive in their exploration of the processes of publishing and lack an examination of the politics of representation that drive this industry. Influential books such as those by David Cross, David Comfort, Steve Dunham, and Peter Ginna all give insight into the technical processes of book selection and production, but lack a thorough examination of the industry that is informed, at every step, by concerns of diversity, representation, and equitable practices. This collection is meant to build on these existing conversations in publishing to give an equity-informed account of publishing processes.

This collection takes an intersectional feminist theoretical approach. It is grounded in anti-racist pedagogical practices and curriculum, which are intended to lead to antiracist industry practices. This volume is meant to be a tool to help you have critical conversations with your students not only about the technical processes of book selection

and production, but also about the politics and inequities that inform the daily make-or-break decisions that go into determining whether or not a book will be published.

This text contains a collection of diverse authors speaking back to the many incidents of marginalization they've experienced and is a call to rally for a more diverse, representative, and equitable future within the industry. Because these issues have received far too little in-print attention, there are very few published resources available for classroom use. Because of this, the essays contained in this text have been gathered from online resources such as internet media and news sites, literary newsletters, and creative writing blogs. This text groups these powerful essays into chapters related, but not limited to: (1) marginalization and white-centric practices in the acquisitions process, (2) misconceptions of marketability in relation to concerns of audience and readerships for diverse authors and subjects (3) the "sensitivity readers" and censorship debate in relation to developmental editing practices, (4) (in)equitable practices in hiring and retention, and (5) advice for aspiring authors or prospective industry professionals.

### Race in the Creative Writing Classroom

Whether overt discussions about identity and power happen in the creative writing classroom or not, these things are present. Perhaps identity and power are not topics that you have traditionally included in your syllabi, but no doubt these things have arisen or will come up eventually. In *A Stranger's Journey: Race, Identity, and Narrative Craft in Writing*, David Mura discusses the way in which identity is a powerful shaping force of the writing we produce. Writers of color, Mura argues, have "altered our literary identity

and the ways that writers practice their craft,” relating specifically to “an increased focus on issues of identity” (1). Along with his discussion of the narrative construction in and aesthetic principles of fiction and memoir, Mura explicates the ways in which being a racial minority informs authors’ identities, experiences, and imaginations, having major implications for the creative process. Writing “is an exploration of who one is and one’s place in the world; how such exploration entails challenges to familial, cultural, social, or political norms and to one’s own psychic defenses and blind spots” (4). Investigations of the role identity plays in creative writing are fundamental to inclusive workshop and classroom spaces. Conversations about the racial status quo in the classroom, Mura contends, all too often go “unexamined and unchallenged” (5).

The workshop undoubtedly brings up issues of identity, but it's how we decide to address these issues that matters. Shirley Geok-lin Lim in her essay “*Lore, Practice, and Social Identity in Creative Writing Pedagogy: Speaking with a Yellow Voice?*” argues that in creative writing pedagogy, we have accepted the notion of the subject as being gendered and classed, but we need to also consider race and ethnicity as “distinctive elephants in the workshop” (91). Of course, sometimes these discussions can bring up uncomfortable feelings or anger amongst those in a workshop discussion. In her article “*Baring/Bearing Anger: Race in the Creative Writing Classroom,*” Toi Derricotte insists that anger be treated as a necessary tool in the creative writing classroom. There should be an open dialogue about race in these spaces, Derricotte argues, and we should not be afraid of anger. Discussing an incident in one of her classes where a white student complained that she was focusing too much on race in classroom discussions, Derricotte

explains how she reacted in anger—a necessary anger. Her experiences in creative writing classrooms in her graduate program where they read book after book written by white authors had a negative impact on her as a writer and as a student of color, giving her the sense that she did not belong. When pressed about why they hadn't read any black authors in class, Derricotte recalls her professor replying, "We don't go down that low." Of this conversation, she writes, "It wasn't just that I thought my professors regarded the writings of blacks as inferior; the damage was even more corrosive—I thought that many of them felt black people themselves were incapable, either because of their minds, experiences, or language, of writing 'real' literature." The damage that is caused by not including diverse authors in reading lists goes beyond matters of representation. Discussions about race and identity can affect students on a personal and visceral level, and can inevitably cause anger in the classroom: "I want to talk about anger," Derricotte writes, "about how important it is as a part of the process of coming to one's voice, about how it is inevitable in a diverse classroom... If we don't recognize anger, if we don't allow for it, if we're not ready for it, if we don't, in fact, welcome it as a creative force, then I think we're going to end up blaming and dividing people even more."

How we help young writers develop their authorial voice and how we make and discuss value judgments in creative writing classrooms is also of great concern. In Richard Teleky's essay "'Entering the Silence': Voice, Ethnicity, and the Pedagogy of Creative Writing," he examines the ways that diverse reading can help young writers develop their authorial voice. Teleky writes,

... all young writers, whether consciously not, need books that will engage them in the process of transformation that can produce a distinctive voice. In this sense, writers are all ethnic writers, without language and stories. Young writers from ethnic backgrounds have a special dilemma. They are doubly silenced by the majority culture and its manufactured popular culture, and yet they have an often pressing matter in their backgrounds that, once recognized as potential subject, can give them an immediate advantage in an alternative of narratives (Teleky).

In other words, for young writers to develop their voices, they must be exposed to or seek out writing that represents lives and experiences similar to their own to help them recognize the value in their identity/ies. Teleky highlights the intimate link between writing and identity and argues that because of this link, we must see the ways in which our value judgments can never be purely objective. The relationship between writing and identity demands a reevaluation of the ways in which we categorize writing as “good” or “bad.”

### Supporting Student of Color Writers in the Classroom

What are some of the ways we can begin to transform our creative writing programs and campuses to be more inclusive? In her essay “In Our Way: Racism in Creative Writing,” Claudia Rankine asks instructors to take an actively critical stance: Maybe your university and program are recruiting students of color, but do you only bring white visiting writers to your campus? What do your reading lists look like? Universities all too often have an investment in whiteness. To create more inclusive

creative writing classrooms, we must first recognize that race and identity play a key role in shaping the writer's craft. Rankine writes,

The inability of white faculty and students to know and understand themselves as white Americans and white writers conditioned by a racist history with resulting dominance and privilege, diminishes and marginalizes students of color in the workshop. This is whiteness working at privileging the white imagination, keeping their notions of normality, universality, and transcendence in tact [sic] (Rankine).

It takes work to address privilege and to dismantle the racial power dynamics that are so ingrained in our universities and classrooms. It is essential for the transformation and growth of our programs that white instructors take responsibility for the ways in which they perpetuate these power dynamics. This, Rankine argues, is necessary for students and writers of color to feel free to "love to love where we are" (Rankine).

Finding ways to best support all students in the classroom can be tricky. It is especially tricky in diverse classrooms where students' needs vary widely. In David Mura's article "Ferguson, Whiteness as a Default, & the Teaching of Creative Writing," he discusses the importance of white writing teachers to educate themselves about race in order to effectively support students of color in workshop spaces. Mura recalls students of color sharing their experiences of marginalizing practices in the classroom, where, for example, workshop facilitators have instructed students to resist code-meshing because their writing would not be publishable as it was, or how instructors have silenced students speaking up about harmful stereotypes, arguing that the (white) student-author's creative



experience would be limited if they were not allowed to write about racial identities that were not their own. These are just two examples of many in which students of color are marginalized and silenced in the creative writing classroom.

To make shifts necessary to support students of color, white writing teachers must do the hard work of addressing their privilege. Mura argues that for white writing teachers to educate themselves in order to provide this support for their students, “they must first acknowledge their ignorance, how little they actually know of our world. But that would require a spiritual humility and a dismantling of ego”—an undertaking that would require immense amounts of emotional labor (Mura). It is imperative that white instructors implement equity-minded teaching practices, even if white instructors perceive their classrooms as being predominantly (or solely) white. This work, though, cannot wait until a university receives a Hispanic-Serving Institution designation, or until African American students’ enrollment in creative writing or MFA programs increases. These shifts need to take place before, during, and after the student body becomes diverse, otherwise programs will remain predominantly white.

Noor Naga and Robert McGill, in their article “Negotiating Cultural Difference in Creative Writing Workshops,” suggest that transforming our programs can start with conversations in the workshop. The authors “identify a need for teachers to lead discussions about stereotyping, cultural appropriation, and the contingencies of literary value” and argue that it is necessary to rework some of the workshop’s fundamental practices in order to account for varying identities (70-72). Teaching students how to articulate their artistic choices is fundamental to an inclusive creative writing classroom.

Because writing by authors of color can often be misunderstood or misinterpreted by white students and instructors, Naga and McGill argue that workshop rules such as the gag rule (i.e., that the writer must be silent while their work is being discussed) can actually be harmful to students of color. Students should have the chance to explain who their intended audience is or why they are choosing to use exclusionary tactics in their writing. The authors contend:

Teachers must be alive to the various cultural repertoires that students bring to their writing, to their reading, and to workshop discussion. Instructors must also lead students in fostering self-consciousness about the limits of their own cultural repertoire and the ramifications of those limits in terms of their ability to interpret and assess others' texts (83).

These conversations are integral, Naga and McGill write, "even in classrooms where craft remains the principal focus" (71).

Kazim Ali, in his article "Addressing Structural Racism in Creative Writing Programs," highlights the often-unaddressed racial disparities seen in enrollment. He proposes eight solutions to heighten inclusivity that are meant to be "starting points for honest discussion," ideally leading to more comprehensive approaches to dismantling the structural racism in creative writing programs that leads to these enrollment disparities. The proposed solutions are as follows: (1) implement open admission to account for the skewed numbers relating to poor K-12 education and marginalized students' ability to perform "merit," "potential," or "talent;" (2) heighten faculty diversity and professional development support; (3) create a "curricular bridge" by cross-listing Africana studies

classes so that students are not subjected to “race-blind” workshop pedagogy; (4) create joint positions shared between creative writing and other departments; (5) increase curricular diversity by examining curriculum with inclusivity in mind; (6) rethink modalities and approaches to poetry and fiction writing; (7) include translation studies as a required area of study for all students; and (8) diversify admissions. “Without a comprehensive approach,” Ali argues, “inclusivity is merely cosmetic” (Ali).

Transforming creative writing programs can start on the classroom-level, as Naga and McGill suggest, but in order to create lasting inclusivity and equity in these programs, Ali reminds us that much larger and more integrative programmatic and structural shifts must occur.

#### Further Reading and Classroom Models of Inclusivity

The following resources examine critical topics in creative writing studies and can be used alongside this text. These texts cover a range of topics in great depth, from the powerful force of identity in workshop and classroom spaces, to the complexities and problematic pitfalls of writing identities or cultures that are not one’s own. A few of these texts also provide insight into how to transform creative writing courses and workshop conversations to center issues of identity, positionality, power, and representation.

- *Critical Creative Writing: Essential Readings on the Writer’s Craft* by Janelle Adsit is a collection of craft-criticism that addresses issues such as the myth of “pure craft,” the external and internal impact of a writer’s identity in writing, the effects of systems of inequity on a writer’s worldviews or beliefs about writing,

how to avoid stereotypes and other marginalizing practices in written representations, what is at stake in decisions about language use, issues of appropriation, and the contingency of literary value.

- *Power and Identity in the Creative Writing Classroom* by Anna Leahy remaps theories and practices for teaching creative writing at the college and university level. The collection critiques well-established approaches for teaching creative writing in all genres and builds a comprehensive and adaptable pedagogy based on issues of authority, power, and identity. A long-needed reflection, this book shapes creative writing pedagogy for the 21st century.
- *Borrowed Power: Essays on Cultural Appropriation* by Bruce Ziff and Pratima V. Rao is a collection that works to unpack the complicated concept of cultural appropriation. The editors of this collection, referencing the Writers' Union of Canada define appropriation as "the taking—from a culture that is not one's own—of intellectual property, cultural expressions or artifacts, history and ways of knowledge" (1). The contributors of this collection ask questions such as "What do we mean by 'taking'? What values and concerns are implicated in the process of appropriation? And how, if at all, should we respond?" (1).
- *Writing Intersectional Identities: Keywords for Creative Writers* by Janelle Adsit and Renée Byrd covers a list of key terms for creative writers to consider to become more conscious of matters of identity in writing as it pertains to representation of people and characters of differing social identities. Key terms in this helpful reference guide include "appropriation," "authenticity," "body,"

“class,” “counternarrative,” “disability,” “essentialism,” “gender,” “indigenous,” “power,” “privilege,” and “representation.”

- *How Dare We! Write: A Multicultural Creative Writing Discourse* by Sherry Quan Lee is a collection of essays about the labor of writing as a marginalized author. A self-proclaimed creative writing textbook, this collection breaks away from standard creative writing textbooks to acknowledge the highly political nature of creative writing workshops and classroom spaces to “up-end the aesthetics, cultural politics... and economics on which most educational institutions are founded” (Lee). The contributors give testimony to the fear, risk, and complex responsibilities of writing as a marginalized person in an academic and literary climate that reflects and values the narrow-minded vision of the wider culture.
- *Toward an Inclusive Creative Writing: Threshold Concepts to Guide the Literary Writing Curriculum* by Janelle Adsit asks that we re-examine pedagogical practices as the demographics of our universities become increasingly diverse to consider the ways in which workshop conversations can marginalize some student writers by not considering the full range of aesthetic orientations associated with diverse cultural histories. To truly center students’ voices, literary writing pedagogy needs to adopt more equitable models of inclusivity. This text critiques traditional understandings about literary value that result in exclusionary workshop practices and provides twelve threshold concepts to begin the work of transformation and growth in creative writing classrooms. It recommends that

students ask critical questions about their writing: “How can fiction writers support linguistic diversity? And what risks does a writer need to consider when writing in a voice that is not one’s own?” or “How can writers avoid contributing to stereotypes? How can writers avoid mobilizing limiting constructions of lives and identities?” and “How do you account for the ‘contingencies of literary value’ when you sit down to write?”

- *June Jordan’s Poetry for the People: A Revolutionary Blueprint* by Lauren Muller is another good classroom model of inclusivity. The book is a how-to guide for setting up a poetry classroom modeled after June Jordan’s Poetry for the People program at U.C. Berkeley. It has a wide array of tools and resources that can be easily implemented into any creative writing classroom including advice on how to create an inclusive workshop community, disrupt classroom power dynamics, and discuss the power and politics of poetry. It is a rich multimodal text that unpacks the complex work that is inclusive pedagogy.

### Learning Outcomes

The texts that formed the theoretical orientation of this volume played a key role in developing some of the learning outcomes for this collection, particularly Janelle Adsit’s *Toward an Inclusive Creative Writing: Threshold Concepts to Guide the Literary Writing Curriculum*. These learning outcomes have been repurposed for editorial courses.

1. Recognize that writing and value judgments of writing are heavily influenced by individuals' identity/ies;

2. Recognize and analyze the contingencies of literary value in relation to a text's specific cultural, political, and historical context;
3. Demonstrate critical perspectives in relation to authorship and diverse readerships;
4. Consider the effects of varying craft choices and articulate the implications for marginalized writers and diverse readerships;
5. Evaluate representations in texts generated and read in relation to instances of appropriation and cliché or stereotype;
6. Learn how a diversity of literary communities creates a diversity of knowledge, experiences, values, world views, and traditions and the ways that the publishing industry can support diverse representation;
7. Explain how cultural differences and identities within literary communities are produced and perpetuated through a variety of social, cultural, and disciplinary discourses in the publishing industry and wider literary community;
8. Explain and critically analyze how differential privilege and power influences publishing practices and how it creates problems such as inequities, lack of representation, or misrepresentation;
9. Demonstrate an understanding of literary communities in regard to professionalization and building a career as a writer and/or publishing industry professional;
10. Recognize and critique the range of (sometimes unexamined) core values and beliefs influencing publishers' understandings of literary markets and readerships;

11. Gain fluency in publishing discourse and familiarity with the traditions, values, and debates that shape diverse literary communities.

In addition to these learning outcomes, students will learn about the editorial schedule and the established conventions associated with editing, book design, and production. They will grapple with what it means to say that “representations matters,” and come to know the ways in which we need to reconsider all of our publishing practices with equity in mind if we are to achieve diverse representation. They will also come to see how literature and ethical publishing practices can forward social change and transformation through creative acts of resistance and equity-based approaches.

#### Incorporating this Text

There are a few ways to approach incorporating this text into your editorial or creative writing classroom. As the instructor, you might decide to jump around and select essays that sound most relevant to your particular class or program, or you might decide to assign this text from cover-to-cover, paced with your own editorial and production schedule. However you decide to approach facilitating the conversations that this text presents, your students will no doubt learn something valuable from each and every contributor. To help you incorporate this text more smoothly, there are also classroom tools provided on this text’s accompanying website including further reading and resources, and an instructor’s guide that includes sample lesson plans and syllabi. As your students work their way through each chapter, they might come across terms that are unfamiliar to them. This anthology is equipped with tools meant to help students unpack



complex concepts and ideas. Every concept or term that is in **bold** is included in the glossary, and there are also resources for students available on the accompanying textbook website including further reading to help unpack conversations or concepts that may prove to be particularly difficult for some students to grasp. Each essay includes a brief contextualizing introduction and some guiding questions afterwards to help students grapple with the concepts covered.

The overall goal of this collection is twofold: (1) to familiarize students with the processes of publishing and guide them through the various stages of the editorial schedule, and (2) to unpack the ways in which identity and inequities in the power of decision-making and representation have an effect on the literature that we produce and value. It is imperative that students in creative writing programs and literary editing courses know the editorial schedule, but it is equally important for them to be able to ask critical questions about the politics of the industry and how these political forces shape the literature that is valued and subsequently produced and reproduced by the industry. Facilitating discussions in your creative writing or editorial classrooms is fundamental for students' future success and for positively shaping the soon-to-be professionals of the field.

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES

This collection is organized into two parts. Part I reviews the stages of the editorial schedule from the acquisitions stage to developmental editing, and considerations in audience and marketing. The publishing industry is (and has always been) predominantly white—white executives, white editors, white authors. In the opening chapter titled “Considerations in the Acquisitions Process – Representation Matters,” the history of marginalization and oppression of writers of varying identities within the American publishing industry is traced, giving students insight into the systemic nature of some of the issues relating to representation and (in)equitable practices presented by this collection. Subsequent essays delve into issues related to the recent emergence of statistical reports on the state of diversity to create institutional change and the question of “what’s really in a number?” Others ask students to challenge the current standards for what is “good,” “worthy,” or “important” when it comes to reviewing submissions. Do blind submissions really allow for an unbiased reading? Can editors really be seen as “passive machine[s]” capable of performing identity-blind readings? Does literature exist in a vacuum? What are the social and political responsibilities of editors as they make decisions about whom and what they will represent? This chapter pushes students to consider the ways in which marginalized authors are overlooked or pushed aside because of inequitable practices in acquisition processes, while also exploring the ways that marginalized authors are often tokenized or pigeonholed—or as one contributor puts it, they are often “tethered to [their] identit[ies].” The question of

who is permitted to speak in regard to power dynamics and marginalization is addressed in detail.

In the second chapter of this collection titled “Considerations in Developmental Editing – The Importance of Authenticity Readers,” contributors answer basic questions about what “authenticity readers” or “sensitivity readers” are, what they do, how they do it, the kind of power that they hold, and the important role they play in bringing attention to two-dimensional representations, stereotypes, or clichés. Interviews and personal accounts/confessions from authenticity readers with experience working in the field give students insight into what the job entails and what the process of sensitivity reading looks like from the author’s standpoint. Issues concerning developmental editing and whitewashing are addressed and the “sensitivity reading” and censorship debate is illuminated and thoroughly examined from experienced insiders’ perspectives.

The third chapter of this collection titled “Considerations in Audience, Readership, and Marketing – No More Excuses” elucidates the many and varying ways that gatekeepers in the publishing industry use the market as an excuse for the poor representation of diverse authors and stories produced by their publishing houses or appearing in their tables of contents. This phenomenon ranges from issues relating to the supposed lack of audience for a particular subject matter or identity/ies, the censorship of diverse narratives due to the fear of excluding white, cis, hetero, able-bodied, neurotypical readers, or the fact that perhaps another marginalized author has already published a similar story that year. The authors who contribute to this chapter demonstrate the ways in which lack of diversity is a symptom of, as one contributor puts

it, “the underlying illness of institutional racism.” These authors untangle the complex and sometimes troublesome use of the word ‘diversity’ as a tactic for covering up and continuing exclusionary practices and demand that the inclusion of a single author or story not be mistaken for multiculturalism.

Part II of this collection covers issues relating to hiring processes, professionalization, and tips for students who want to learn how to successfully build a career in publishing. In the first chapter of Part II, titled “Considerations in Hiring – Problematizing the ‘Bottom-Up’ Approach,” respondents of Lee & Low’s diversity baseline survey share their experiences and “aha!” moments as they call for greater transparency when owning up to statistics about the state of diversity in their publishing houses. The contributors also review the limitations of statistical reports and the necessity of not only equitable hiring practices in all levels of the industry but also practices that heighten retention rates and foster opportunities for advancement for marginalized groups. This chapter also gives students a brief history of the rise of multiculturalism and the market’s appropriation of it and highlights the potential power of unions for creating more equitable working conditions and concrete standards of accountability for those in gatekeeping positions.

And finally, the last chapter of this collection, “Considerations for Those Starting a Career in Publishing,” presents students with answers to some questions about what pursuing a career in this field might look like. From entry-level intern positions and the complicated nature of networking as a new and marginalized writer to stories of different paths to success, this chapter gives students insight into just what might help them get

their foot in the door of this gatekeeping industry. Woven throughout the chapter is advice from authors and editors in the field about how to make shifts within the industry relating to diversity, representation, and (in)equitable practices on an individual level.

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