CHAPTER 2

“INTERSECTING REALITIES”: QUEER ASSEMBLAGE AS RHETORICAL METHODOLOGY

Jason Palmeri and Jonathan Rylander

Within rhetorical studies, scholarship on sexuality has evolved from an initial focus on the inclusion of seemingly stable gay and lesbian identities in pedagogy to a broader “queer turn” (Alexander and Wallace) that calls us to resist binary models of sexuality and to recognize how sexuality is interrelated with other axes of embodied difference (Alexander and Rhodes; Fox; Gibson, Marina, and Meem; McRuer; Pritchard). Similarly resisting stable or simplistic notions of identity, proponents of ecological and networked approaches to rhetoric have been rearticulating rhetorical subjectivities as complex, shifting assemblages of bodies, technologies, material spaces, and discourses that emerge and transform over time (Dingo; Hawk; Reid; Rice; Rivers and Weber; Sheridan, Ridolfo, and Michel). Although this turn to viewing rhetorical subjectivity in terms of networks has been productive, feminist rhetorical scholars have critiqued, importantly, how many of these emerging theories of rhetorical assemblage have too often elided material power dynamics of gender, race, sexuality, and nation (Dingo; Micciche; Jung).

Seeking to outline a networked sexual rhetoric approach attuned to complex power relations, this chapter draws on Jasbir Puar’s articulation of queer assemblage to develop a rhetorical methodology for understanding “sexuality not as identity, but as assemblages of sensations, affects, and forces” (Puar, “Homonationalism” 24). Employing Puar’s work to engage the sexualized rhetorics of U.S. immigration discourses, we demonstrate how a queer assemblages approach can help us critique and ultimately develop tactics of resistance to the complex networks of “homonationalism” (Puar) that have worked to ally LGBTQ rights
rhetorics with imperialist and nationalist agendas. To demonstrate how queer assemblages can work as a methodology for analyzing queer activist rhetorics, we perform a close rhetorical analysis of the “undocuqueer” activist movement--focusing especially on the collaborative political work of visual artist, Julio Salgado.

**Sexuality as Process: Moving Toward A Queer Assemblages Methodology**

Resisting both the definition of “queer” as a stable identity category and the uncritical celebration of queerness as inherently transgressive, we turn to Puar’s formulation of queerness as an assemblage uncontained within a single body as well as one that can be co-opted by state and otherwise oppressive regimes. Placing Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of agencement in dialogue with queer of color critique, Puar reconceptualizes sexuality as assemblage of complex “affective processes, ones that foreground normativizing and resistant bodily practices beyond sex, gender, and sexual object choice” (Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages* 221). Pushing beyond a singular focus on sexual identities and desires, a queer assemblages methodology seeks to elucidate unfolding networks or fields of “psychic and material identification” with forces that one may not immediately associate with sex, sexuality or queerness--forces such as patriotism and American imperialism (221). As a form of sexual rhetoric operating through seemingly disconnected forces, queer assemblages constantly unfold and expand, resisting epistemological closure--their full dynamics cannot be known in advance because they are made up of a complex, ever-shifting array of forces that escape the control of any single individual. Following this understanding of queer assemblage, we are concerned with ways in which queer politics, even seemingly radical queer interventions and queer theorizing, can be co-opted through neoliberal
and otherwise normative discourses, especially those discourses that mark and exclude racialized others.

In highlighting this methodological approach, we are building upon and extending (not seeking to replace) intersectionality as a viable theoretical framework for complicating rhetorics of identity and identity politics (Anzaldúa; Crenshaw; Lorde; Pough; Royster; Wallace). Resisting the common theoretical move of replacing one theory for another, we follow Puar’s more recent articulation of intersectionality and queer assemblage as related analytical frameworks that might work together in “frictional ways” to better understand relations of power (Puar, “I would rather be a cyborg”). Within a queer assemblages framework, identities (even intersectional ones) are not stable and are not analogous, especially when axes of embodied difference—race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, disability, age, religion—are conceived not as “separable analytics” but as “interwoven forces that dissipate time, space, and body against linearity, coherency, and permanency” (Puar, Terrorist Assemblages 212). Further, categories such as race, gender, and sexuality operate “not as simple entities and attributes of subjects” but as events transformed through the interplay of human and non-human actors influencing subjects and systems of oppression at varying levels of scale and power (Puar, “I would Rather be a Cyborg”). For Puar and for us, then, the recognition of nonhuman agency is not a disavowal of feminist, queer of color critique but rather a way to better understand the wide array of forces (including the nonhuman) that influence shifting constructions of race, gender, and sexuality.

In seeking to understand queerness as a messy assemblage of both dominant and transgressive forces, we have been influenced in particular by Puar’s articulation of “homonationalism” as an assemblage that reveals how the claiming of “queerness” can be coopted to support or elide neoliberal and imperialist regimes. Building on Lisa Duggan’s
understanding of homonormativity as a privatized and “depoliticized gay culture anchored in
domesticity and consumption” (50), Puar defines *homonationalist assemblage* thusly:

the concomitant rise in the legal, consumer and representative recognition of LGBTQ
subjects and the curtailing of welfare provisions, immigrant rights and the expansion of
state power to engage in surveillance, detention, and deportation. (Puar,

“Homonationalism as Assemblage,” 25)

In articulating the concept of homonationalism, Puar powerfully calls scholars and activists to
pay more attention to unfolding relations among what may initially appear as disparate and
disconnected forces.

In the context of our work analyzing the undocuqueer art, we employ Puar’s theory of
homonationalist assemblage as a methodology for analyzing the complex intersections among
mainstream LBGTQ rights activism and repressive immigration regimes in the contemporary
United States (Chavez; Nair). Specifically, Puar’s theory of homonationalism can help explicate
the contradictions of our current moment when many mainstream LBGTQ groups are celebrating
Obama’s support for gay marriage and gays in the military while remaining largely silent about
how the Obama administration has been deporting more people annually than previous
administrations (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera). Although homonationalist LGBTQ activists
often ignore questions of migrant justice, a queer assemblages methodology encourages us to
remember that oppressive discourses of sexuality and migration have long been intertwined in
the United States: indeed, gays and lesbians were explicitly banned from immigrating to the U.S.
until 1990 and still today immigration law privileges heteronormative conceptions of family in
reviewing applications for citizenship (Cantú; Reddy).
As we seek to untangle the complex array of forces that shape and contain dominant conversations about LGBTQ and migrant “rights,” we also turn to Jennifer Wingard’s understanding of “branding” as a neoliberal assemblage through which normative bodies are included and granted protection through national citizenship and family values appeals while minoritized bodies are marked as threats to be contained or eliminated. In particular, Wingard details how affective neoliberal rhetorics “have made immigrant and GLBT citizen bodies into ‘brands’ that serve as cautionary tales of what to avoid, whom to fear, and who is outside norms of citizenship”(2). When migrant and queer bodies both function as brands against which normative American family values are defined, not just identities but histories of racism, colonialism, misogyny, homophobia, and sexism are “flattened” in order to “forward a ‘simpler’ vision of the American family” that elides “the deep material differences between those who are seen as part of this family and those who are not” (Wingard 29).

As a result of the dominance of the family brand in our neoliberal political times, it is not surprising that some of the most visible advocacy on behalf of LGBTQ migrants has centered on the plight of binational LGBTQ couples who could benefit from the ability to apply for citizenship on the basis of same-sex marriage (Chavez; Nair). Although this kind of advocacy has important material consequence for some undocumented migrants, it also problematically enables LGBTQ groups to keep the focus on marriage rather than on more capacious activism against the diverse forms of structural violence that queer migrants face (Chavez; Nair). By more thoroughly tracking the assemblages that render the complex experiences of queer migrants as illegible within neoliberal LBGT rights discourses, we can begin to elucidate tactics of rhetorical resistance to dominant branding regimes that flatten queer migration experiences.
Tactical Queer Assemblage: Tracing Bodies, Discourses, and Technologies in the “I am Undocuqueer” Art Project

In addition to viewing queer assemblage as a powerful way to map affective, material networks of normativity, we also articulate queer assemblage as an activist methodology not only for reading but contesting dominant brand representations. To this end, we analyze Julio Salgado’s collaborative “I am Undocuqueer” art project as a potentially subversive queer assemblage. In particular, we map the potentially resistant ways the project works (1) to reconceive identity formation as a collaborative and tactical assemblage of bodies; (2) to reassemble and complicate queer activist discourses; and (3) to reimagine rhetorical action as a shifting assemblage of bodies, discourses, and material technologies that evolves over time.

Working in conjunction with the Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project and the Queer Undocumented Youth Collective, Julio Salgado organized the collaborative “I am Undocuqueer” Art Project” in January 2012 in an attempt to “give us undocumented queers more of a presence in the discussion of migrant rights” (Salgado, “I am Undocuqueer”). Offering a platform for undocumented queers to take control of their own representations, Salgado put out a call on tumblr and other social media to invite participants to join the project by emailing him “a photograph of yourself from the waist up and a quote telling us what does it mean to be UndocuQueer for you ” (Salgado, “Undocuqueer” Archive). Salgado then turned these photographs and quotes into digital images circulated both online and as printed posters. Each image in Salgado’s collection includes the words “I am Undocu-Queer” in the top right corner as well as a drawing of an individual person next to a quote in which they describe what being Undocu-Queer means to them. In a stylized form reminiscent of both comics and advertising images, the drawings of the participants are placed on a solid color background. By developing a
visually striking and easily recognizable design template for the I am UndocuQueer images, Salagado reveals a savvy understanding of and subversion of the visual technology of branding--creating an iconic image campaign that is highly memorable, extensible, and circulatable.

In mapping Salgado’s “I am Undocuqueer” project as a queer assemblage, we have been influenced by Karma Chavez’s and Hinda Seif’s astute rhetorical readings of undocuqueer rhetorics. In particular, Karma Chavez offers an important reading of how the “I am Undocuqueer” project enacts a transformational “queer coalitional ethic” while also at times problematically reifying an individualist model of social change (101). Further deepening our understanding of the rhetorical and material implications of the project, Hinda Seif’s person-based research with queer migrant activists (including Salgado) usefully elucidates the conscious rhetorical choices Salgado and other participants have made in crafting the project---focusing especially on theorizing the complex, material implications of employing “coming out” as a political strategy for migrant justice. In this chapter, we seek to extend the analytic work of Seif and Chavez by demonstrating how the “I am Undocuqueer” project enacts queer assemblage as a methodology of rhetorical action.

Reassembling Bodies: Identity as Collaborative and Tactical Assemblage

One of the key tactics of Salgado’s project is the collective claiming and repetition of the term “Undocu-Queer” itself--often but not always hyphenated. By claiming a single word “Undocu-Queer” to name the experience of being both queer and undocumented, Salgado’s work powerfully insists that sexuality and citizenship status must be considered together. As one participant puts it, “I am Undocu-Queer...because I can’t be one without the other” (Claudia) or as another asserts “Undocuqueer: Taking Control of my own identity. I exist” (Seleny). By
claiming undocuqueer as a singular term, participants in Salgado’s project strategically ensure that queerness and undocumentedness cannot be divided into separate words that can then be elided. In this way, the usage of the term undocuqueer can be seen as a kind of ontological activism making visible material experiences that are often erased. Further demonstrating the ontological implications of the undocuqueer project, another participant, Tony, powerfully describes the term “undocu-queer” as marking “intersecting identities and realities” (italics ours). In other words, undocuqueer is not a simple, easily reducible identity brand---rather it is a process of mapping the intersecting realities that work to both constrain and enable particular kinds of action for bodies marked as queer and undocumented.

In addition to highlighting the complex experiences of queer and undocumented people, the term undocuqueer also implicitly highlights other positionalities in relation to immigration status and sexuality--the “undocu-straight “and the “docu-queer”-- that call viewers to more critically interrogate intersecting privileges and oppressions. For example, for us as two white male “docu-queers” with US passports, the very word undocu-queer demands that we account not just for the ways in which our queerness denies us particular kinds of recognition by the state but also to recognize the many material privileges we claim as documented U.S citizens whose racial identification causes our citizenship not to be questioned by authorities.

While the consistent and repeated use of the term “Undocu-Queer” in the project makes visible the experiences of people who identify as both queer and undocumented, it like all brand representations risks flattening the complex embodiments of those it seeks to represent. Yet, when we look closely at the diverse quotes that accompany the “I am Undocu-Queer” images, we can see that many participants explicitly position “undocu-queer” as but one of many identity markers that they might use to describe themselves. For example, numerous participants choose
to compose quotes that blend English and Spanish while also claiming additional identifications such as “Latina,” “Jota,” or “Mujer”—framing their images in ways that “insist on the interlocking identities that constitute undocuqueers” (Chavez 102). Indeed, some participants explicitly call out the limitations of the “undocuqueer” brand in the quotes accompanying their images. For example, Yahaira argues that “We grow into our multi-faceted selves each and every time we embrace who we are….Undocumented? Yes. Queer? Yes. All of me? No.” In this way, Yahaira deliberately refuses claiming undocuqueer as a totalizing brand—positioning it instead as a provisional marker that ontologically describes just a part of her existence.

In addition to pointing to the limits of UndocuQueer or any branded identity to describe the complexity of their “intersecting realities,” participants in the project also resist the tendency to position branded identities (including “UndocuQueer”) as “new” and ahistorical. For example, one participant, Prerna, credits the foundational influence of Audre Lorde in her own conception of UndocuQueer identity: “To borrow shamelessly from Audre Lorde, as a queer, undocumented person I know that their is no such thing as single issue struggles because we don’t lead single issue lives” (Prerna). Further, Salgado himself has noted how his conception of the project has been influenced by the traditions of women of color feminism:

in the feminist movement you had [...] white women leading movements. And you had women of color trying to say your experience is different from my experience. Knowing that history, I knew that my experience as an undocumented man in California was different than Yesenia who grew up in St. Louis. I wanted to hear from them, what that experience was like. (Salgado, qtd in Seif 112 - 113).
In this way, Salgado reveals his own conscious desire to resist the sedimentation of “UndocuQueer” as a one-dimensional brand—to instead reconceive the project of identity representation as necessitating a collaborative assemblage of voices that reveals the complex differences of positionality among those who identity as UndocuQueer.

Reassembling Discourses: Normativity as “Common Enemy”

Resisting a “single issue” model of social change, the undocuqueer project powerfully draws connections between the affective rhetorics of queer and migrant activist struggles. In their statements accompanying their images, participants often draw on LGBTQ rhetorics of “resisting normativity” to explain their experiences as both queer and undocumented. Although some of the individual images could be read as arguing for a simple equivalence of LGBTQ and undocumented struggles, the broader assemblage of the project reveals a much more nuanced approach to highlighting the affinities and differences in the discourses of LGBTQ and migrant activism. In a savvy move, Vincent’s image articulates the undocuqueer movement as “about crossing borders of normativity which allows us to celebrate all our identities and live in a space of liberation.” Instead of arguing for inclusion within current regimes of border regulation or state-sanctioned marriages, Vincent calls undocumented and queer activists to “cross borders of normativity.” By connecting the refusal of border control regimes with queer activist traditions of resisting heteronormativity, Vincent suggests queer liberation must necessarily include resistance to all normative borders—both national and sexual.

Further emphasizing how queer refusal of normativity must encompass a resistance to normative immigration regimes, another participant, Jonathan, is pictured holding a microphone and leading the chant: “We’re here, we’re queer, we’re undocumented. Get used to it!” While
mainstream LGBTQ and immigration reform groups often argue for inclusion by telling stories of “model” families who adhere to normative values, Jonathan remixes a classic queer liberation chant that demands justice and recognition for queers (and, in his version, undocumented people) on their own terms. In this way, Jonathan’s protest chant powerfully enacts Salgado’s professed activist goal of “finding a common ground and becoming a huge fist to punch the one bully we have in common” (Salgado Tumblr, “Being”).

While “resisting normativity” can be a useful frame for connecting queer and migrant struggles, the invoking of “normativity” as a common “enemy” can also risk effacing differences in the experiences of “undocumentedness” and “queerness.” Although there are affinities between resisting heteronormativity and refusing border regimes, the material consequences of that resistance differ greatly depending on positionality and context. Emphasizing this point, one participant writes, “just like being queer has allowed me to say forget the norms, I want to be able to say forget the laws (immigration laws specifically) and start living” (Ireri). For Ireri, queer and undocumented activism both involve resisting normativity, but she finds it easier to “forget” heteronormativity than it is to “forget” normative immigration regimes when the very act of claiming undocumentedness could result in her deportation. Although U.S. citizen queers face substantial violence and discrimination, they cannot legally be removed from the nation for refusing to fit into heteronormative structures (and white queers are unlikely to ever have their citizenship questioned). In this way, Ireri’s poster powerfully highlights the important material differences in the experiences of queerness and undocumentedness--refusing to let “resisting normativity” function as a flattening brand slogan. Rather than challenging normativity through a unitary model of oppression, Ireri and other participants in the project savvily rearticulate
normativity as a complex array of shifting forces that can be strategically hacked by flexible coalitional networks of differentially positioned activists.

*Reassembling Technologies: Materiality, Circulation, and the Politics of Access*

While our analysis thus far has focused on reading the project as a collaborative and tactical assemblage of discourses and bodies, we turn now to considering how material technologies and spaces have influenced the composition and circulation of the project. Notably, Salgado was first introduced to the term “undocuqueer” via his use of Facebook (Seif 111), and he first popularized the term through composing and distributing images across diverse digital media, including the blogging platform Tumblr. While Tumblr does allow for longer alphabetic text-based posts, its interface strongly encourages the sharing and *recirculation* of visual images by prominently positioning the uploading of photos as a distinct kind of posting (with captions denoted as optional). Thus, it’s not surprising that Salgado’s Tumblr project emphasized composing and circulating single images that feature only brief text—a constraint that may have limited participants’ ability to tease out the nuances of their positionings in relation to “undocuqueer” identities and politics.

While Tumblr is an excellent tool for enhancing digital circulation, we must remember that the Tumblr network (like all digital networks) is limited in its reach because of persistent inequalities of Internet access (Banks; Yergeau et al). Reflecting in part his own experience as a person who has struggled at times to compose digital art without internet access at home (Lopez), Salgado importantly conceived the “undocuqueer” project as flexibly circulating through multiple digital and analog technologies, including print posters to be used by activist
groups. In an interview with Rogelio Alejandro Lopez, Salgado explained the importance of print circulation to his activism by noting that

People like to have something to hold on to...much like the newspaper...I think holding a piece of artwork created by one of their peers who is also undocumented...empowers them in a sense. They’re like, ‘damn, one of us did this.’ It’s not somebody else who doesn’t really understand what we’re going through, but it’s like somebody who is actually also undocumented. This art [is] for them, and for us too.

By highlighting the importance of distributing tactile posters for use by undocumented activists at on-the-ground protests, Salgado points to a model of queer technological activism that recognizes the necessity of constructing activist texts that can be developed and circulated through a range of digital and analog technologies--refusing a colonialist technological progress narrative (Baca; Haas) that might privilege the circulatory power of digital technologies over printed and hand drawn media that may be more accessible to communities with limited access to online spaces.

In addition to looking at how the project was initially distributed across digital and print media, a queer assemblages approach also encourages us to look at tactical ways that the “I am undocuqueer” project has continued to evolve and shift over time in response to particular kairotic moments, media, and material spaces. For example, in June 2013 (more than a year after most of the images were originally created), Salgado composed a billboard of five of the undocuqueer images that was installed in the Mission neighborhood of San Francisco in collaboration with Galleria de La Raza--an art space committed to showcasing the work of Latin@ artists who have long resided in the Mission. In a YouTube video documenting the
unveiling of the billboard, Salgado explicitly positions his public artwork as a critical response to homonormative politics that focus attention on marriage and joining the military while eliding the broader struggles of queers of color in the city. Salgado argues that his billboard seeks to reveal that “...it’s not all about marriage and the army. Queers are more than that. You know, it’s just an FYI for Gay Inc” (“Julio’s First”). Couched within a comedic and playful tone in this video overall, this line in particular rhetorically articulates a direct message of activism and coalition building. Highlighting the ways in which politicians in San Francisco claim to support LGBTQ rights while also enacting gentrifying “development” policies that have been displacing many queer people of color from longstanding Latin@ neighborhoods such as the mission, Salgado explicitly positions his billboard as part of a movement to “gentefy” the mission—to recenter dominant discourses about housing in the city on the needs of the people (or gente) who have long resided and made art in the district.

Although the project’s initial manifestation on Tumblr might be read as lacking a deeper structural analysis of interlocking racialized power structures (Chavez), the assemblage of the billboard and associated online coverage of it works to draw connections between the state violence of repressive immigration regimes and the state sanctioned violence of so-called “development” plans that marginalize and displace queer people of color. While the initial deployment of the project did not explicitly focus on critiquing how homonormative LGBTQ groups are complicit in supporting racist gentrification policies, the images take on different meanings when transformed into a billboard in the Mission in San Francisco during LGBTQ pride month and framed as an act of “gente-fication.” If we had just read a single image of the project at a single moment in time, we would miss the complexly evolving ways in which the images take on new meanings and call forth new coalitional possibilities as they circulate
through diverse media, geographic locations, artivist networks, and kairotic moments. We have only begun to trace the many ways the images were re-circulated and re-framed over time; to gain a clearer picture, we would need to combine queer assemblage theories with emerging rhetorical methodologies such as “iconographic tracking” (Gries) to more systematically document the ever shifting meanings of the images in different contexts—a project that is unfortunately beyond the scope of this chapter.

**Conclusion: Reassembling Queer Rhetoric**

In outlining queer assemblages as a rhetorical methodology, we call on sexual rhetoric scholars to move beyond situating our research in relation to stable identity categories and instead work toward analyzing and enacting resistant queer assemblages that strategically build connections among seemingly disparate (and perhaps unthinkable) social movements, discourses, spaces, technologies, and erotic intimacies. Drawing on Salgado’s work which resists positioning “undocuqueer” as a stable identity by instead offering a shifting, collaborative assemblage of embodied voices, we call for scholars of queer rhetoric to both analyze and practice collaborative forms of composing that highlight and tactically reassemble the complex, shifting, affective forces—both dominant and transgressive—through which the very idea of “queer rhetoric” is constructed and deployed.

As a model of what collaborative and tactical assemblage work might look like in the field of rhetorical scholarship, we could look to the collaborative work of Michele Gibson, Martha Marinara, and Deborah Meem’s “Bi, Butch, and Bar Dyke: Pedagogical Performances of Class, Gender, and Sexuality.” For these scholars, the complex and shifting dynamics of identity make it difficult to meaningfully discuss through essentializing narratives composed by solo authors. By interweaving layered narratives of the always shifting interplay of various spaces
and actors—academic and non-academic—in the lives of queer teachers, Gibson, Marinara, and Meem offer an inspirational vision of a queer assemblage that resists epistemological closure in favor of engaging the messy connections among bodies and materialities across seemingly disparate locations. Similarly, in “Queer: An Impossible Subject for Composition,” Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes resist epistemological closure by composing a collaborative assemblage of collaged images, fractured narratives, and radical queer artistic texts that ultimately revels in the “impossibility” of fitting queer experiences into conventional professional structures of pedagogy or research.

While we are profoundly inspired by Alexander and Rhodes resistant assemblage of queer impossibility, we also seek to recognize that it in fact is all too possible for evocations of transgressive queerness to unwittingly serve dominant ends within the academy. Our work in this chapter, then, calls attention to the ways in which queer activism and rhetorical scholarship shapes—and is shaped by—a complex assemblage of both dominant and resistant forces. The term “queer” for us does not immediately signify radical or transgressive bodies and actions; queer relations are often facilitated through—and normativized by—our associations with forces that engender homonormative and homotionalist ideals, whether we are aware of them or not. If queer rhetoric is to truly be a resistant force in the academy, we must commit to not only highlighting the importance of sexuality to rhetorical study but also to emphasizing the ways in which sexuality is always already enmeshed in broader material networks of race, gender, class, disability, nation, and neoliberal economics (Alexander and Rhodes; Fox; McRuer; Pritchard).

As we move towards a more capacious understanding of queer rhetoric as an assemblage, we also can work to challenge static, human-centered models of rhetorical situation that can limit our ability to understand both the dominant and resistant possibilities of particular queer
rhetorical practices. As Rebecca Dingo has argued in her articulation of transnational feminist rhetorical methodology, a networked approach to rhetoric must necessarily “look not just at static rhetorical occasions but how rhetorics move across occasion, time, space, and geopolitical location” (146). As we work to trace how rhetorics travel and shift across time and space, we can also attend more carefully to how rhetorics are shaped by a diverse array of human and nonhuman actors (e.g. social media tools, architectural structures, military technologies).

In addition to recognizing how technologies can function as repressive tools that enable the “branding of bodies” in flattening and exclusionary ways (Wingard), we also suggest that queer rhetoricians explore how branding technologies might be subverted to generate and circulate resistant sexual rhetorics such as the “I am Undocuqueer” project. In particular, Salgado’s work calls us to ask: What might queer rhetorical scholarship look like if it didn’t take the form of a print manuscript or static online publication but rather emerged as a collaborative and tactical assemblage unfolding across diverse media over time? What kind of academy would we have to build for such an assemblage to be recognized, valued, and supported? What kinds of alliances can queer rhetoricians make with critical scholars in allied disciplines to challenge the neoliberal academic regimes that constrain our work and flatten our experiences?

We may not be able to ever fully step out of the neoliberal academic structures in which we are embedded, but we can fuck with them by engaging critically with queer rhetorical assemblages (such as Salgado’s project) that resist homonormative and homonationalist agendas. We can fuck with them by insisting on composing our work across multiple forms of media--resisting both the digital progress narratives and traditional print conventions that limit the accessibility of our arguments. We can also fuck with the neoliberal academy by reveling in a state of ontological unknowing--by acknowledging up front that our own attempts to map and
resist dominant formations are always partial, incomplete, unfolding, cut off in media res. In sum, a queer assemblages methodology invites us to be audacious in reconceiving sexual rhetoric as a shifting assemblage of bodies, discourses and technologies, but also to be humble in recognizing how any assertion of a queer rhetorical methodology (including our own) may be subtly shaped by dominant forces in ways we cannot yet envision or trace.
WORKS CITED


