

CHAPTER 6.

EMBRACING THE POTENTIALS AND NAVIGATING THE PITFALLS OF INTERDISCIPLINARY METHOD/OLOGIES

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This chapter reflects on the generative complexity of hybrid approaches to research, discussing their potentials and pitfalls. In writing about trans woman Natalie Wynn’s YouTube channel, ContraPoints, I combined feminist rhetorical method/ologies with those used in analytic feminist projects. My messy, nonlinear experience of researching, writing, revising, and publishing about Wynn’s channel was shaped by the intersection of these approaches. At times, this dual approach came into conflict and led to impasses. I demonstrate, however, that it was the presence and influence of both these and other methodological dispositions within my toolkit that allowed me to challenge existing paradigms about queer rhetoric. The chapter suggests that when we take time to examine and shine a spotlight on our method/ological assumptions even as we conduct research, we can register which of our existing perspectives enable or preclude meaningful discoveries and can take advantage of all the tools at our disposal for achieving research goals.

It was the fall of 2017, and I chose a seat at the single, long table that dominated the lecture room to begin my first class as a Ph.D. student at Georgia State University (GSU) in English rhetoric and composition. Despite my novice status, everything about my surroundings was completely familiar to me. While I was

now on the 24th floor of 25 Park Place, the most towering of the buildings on GSU's campus, I sat in nearly identical classrooms just eight floors below in the philosophy department for the two years prior. Even the course I was preparing to take felt eerily the same as much of my philosophy master's degree curriculum. I was there for a graduate seminar on feminist rhetoric when, just a year before, I'd taken a course in feminist philosophy in the very same building.

Yet once the syllabus was in our hands and we began discussing what the semester promised, I was most excited by the differences rather than the similarities between these parallel experiences. The purposes of conducting philosophical and rhetorical feminist research often overlap; in many contexts, both disciplines aim to facilitate the flourishing of all people by, among other aims, expanding normative understandings of gender in order to attend to the needs of *all* people. While the aims of these two disciplines can converge, their research method/ologies sharply diverge in most cases. On that August day in 2017, I was eager to flee the constraints of analytic philosophical methodologies and capitalize on what I saw as the affordances of a more flexible approach in rhetoric and composition.

Three years later, I had defended my dissertation prospectus and was hard at work gathering, coding, and analyzing data from Natalie Wynn's popular YouTube Channel, *Contrapoints*. The theoretical lens with which I proposed to study Wynn's channel came out of important research in the field of rhetorical studies and computers and writing. Furthermore, it aligned with the kind of work I'd studied in that first seminar in feminist rhetoric. Despite my excitement for the project, however, frustration infused the early research process. As I worked through the data, I felt that the rhetorical framework I was using was unable to facilitate discovery of any clear or respectful conclusions.

I now recognize that, regardless of how carefully I had set up my study, defined my lenses, and placed my boundaries, analytic philosophical approaches were unconsciously operating within what Laurie Gries calls my "research dispositions" (85). My close work with certain methods in the feminist philosophical tradition, specifically a project called ameliorative inquiry, informed the *way* I looked and *what* I looked *for* within Wynn's work. Only when I unpacked and laid bare my specific methodological commitments did I uncover assumptions that were precluding me from making sense of Wynn's channel within a rhetorical framing.

In this chapter, I reflect on the generative complexity of hybrid approaches to research, discussing their potentials and pitfalls. My messy, nonlinear experience of researching, writing, revising, and publishing about Wynn's channel was shaped by the intersection of philosophical and rhetorical method/ologies. At times, these conflicted unproductively, impeding progress. Ultimately, however, it was the presence and influence of both these and other methodological

dispositions within my toolkit that set the stage for me to challenge existing paradigms in my published work.

HABITUS OF METHOD AND UNCONSCIOUS METHOD/OLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Using the concept of “habitus of method” to frame a conversation about methodology is helpful because it foregrounds the reality that research does not proceed along a singular theoretical or technical line but develops out of a set of intersecting traditions and means. For Gries, “habitus of method can be understood as a set of dispositions embodied in a shared tradition of inquiry that influences a community of scholars to conduct research in certain ways” (85). In other words, some project’s methodology is complex, informed by multiple voices and sources. It is not a discrete variable one can plug into a research project that prescribes how to gather data, analyze that data, and draw conclusions. Instead of employing *a* methodology, researchers within a particular field develop methodological dispositions influenced by previous work in that and adjacent fields. These dispositions animate inquiries, providing scholars a point of entry for a research project but also placing limits on how scholars conduct their research. Thinking of methodology as part of a larger “habitus of a method” forces scholars to reflect on and lay bare the different “tradition[s] of inquiry” they bring to their projects.

As a new researcher in rhetorical studies, however, I did not engage in this kind of reflection. Without consideration of previous influences, I attempted to tightly construct and control my study by naming its exact variables and boundaries which I intentionally built from existing scholarship in computers and writing. Specifically, the study grew out of concerns on embodiment and digital technology that guest editors Phil Bratta and Scott Sundvall articulated in their special issue of *Computers and Composition*. In their introduction, they highlight the exigency for additional scholarly work that “continues discussions and practices on the entanglement of digital technology, bodies and embodiments with attention to power, oppression, and resistance” (6). Answering their “plea” for additional research on “how different embodiments address systems of domination differently with a vast array of digital technologies,” I proposed a study that would look for if and how Wynn’s digital compositions served to recompose bodies oppressed by harmful gender norms (4). In her videos, Wynn manages to parse thorny social and political issues, emphasizing concerns related to gender. Her work has been widely recognized by journalists for de-converting alt-right young men, leading them to hold less harmful positions about women and progressive politics (Cross; Faye; Marantz; Fleishman; Roose “The Making”; Roose

“A Thorn”). As a trans woman composing on YouTube, Wynn’s work represents the exact kind of work that Bratta and Sundvall urge scholars to study.

I assumed that I would need to run as far away as possible from older method/ologies and section off my study from any influences or processes that were not specifically sanctioned by my new discipline. I did not just use but *clung* to John R. Gallagher’s “A Framework for Internet Case Study Methodology in Writing Studies” which offers “researchers...a practical framework about how they might go about crafting a case study” of online spaces (2). Intended to guide people to articulate the contours of some online space so as to study them more effectively, I naively took Gallagher’s article as a blueprint for creating a concrete edifice around my research, believing that I could develop a controlled case study with perfectly transparent values, commitments, methods, and steps. Gallagher writes that “it is the job of any case study researcher—and especially an internet case study researcher—to be explicit about the methodology that one uses to create a case so that the case can be better understood on both its own terms as well as the reasons researchers present the case in the way they do” (2). I went into my research thinking that I had explicitly articulated the methodologies that guided my case study when in fact I had been explicit about how I *wanted* the research to proceed without reflecting on how my prior, disciplinary training unconsciously mixed in these thematic waters.

“FEMINISM/S” AND METHOD/OLOGIES

Perhaps what I did not immediately recognize was that, without naming their inquiry “feminist,” Bratta and Sundvall’s introduction turned around issues that various feminism/s purport to address; therefore, the method/ologies from my prior work in feminism/s were unconsciously activated in my thinking. I use *feminism/s* as opposed to feminism due to the slippery nature of the term. Ask anyone to define feminism, and the answers will vary wildly. This is not just a symptom of what many want to call misinformation but reflects the actual difficulty of capturing its meaning. For example, in her capacity as a UN Women Goodwill Ambassador, actress Emma Watson boldly proclaimed in a 2014 speech that “for the record, feminism by definition is: ‘The belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes.’” Yet she gives neither a citation for that theory nor unpacks manifold, conflicting understandings of “rights” or “opportunities.” Furthermore, nonbinary and gender nonconforming people remain unrepresented in her definition, creating distinct problems for this version of feminism. One can know this relatively standard and oft-mentioned definition by heart but still have relevant questions about what it means and whether

it is a worthy project around which to rally.

The term feminism can be confusing academically, as well as colloquially, which can pose problems when engaging in research that claims to be feminist. In the academy, feminism encompasses a broad set of concerns and styles of inquiry that find their way into numerous disciplines. This makes feminism/s a worthy site from which to explore the concept of hybridity in method/ology. After having studied feminism/s from both an analytic philosophical perspective as well as a rhetorical one, my only deeply held conviction about the term is that it is not simple, despite what anyone—progressive, conservative, centrist, apolitical, or otherwise—might claim. In her *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on “Feminist Philosophy,” Noëlle McAfee writes that some scholars in this tradition locate the definition of feminism within the historical movements in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries while others hope to identify a “set of ideas or beliefs” that characterize feminism/s within philosophy writ large. However, controversies abound when attempting to define those beliefs to the extent that McAfee asks, “Is there any point, then to asking what feminism is?” While she goes on to offer her own definition, her expression of frustration signals that this term is quite complicated.

Feminist work in rhetorical studies is similarly contested. In their *College Composition and Communication* article about feminist rhetoric, a precursor to their seminal 2012 work *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*, Gesa E. Kirsch and Jacqueline Jones Royster reflect on the difficulty of pinning down the meaning of feminism for their research. They find it impossible to think of “‘feminism’ as a singular concept.” Rather, “[t]here are many views from which to choose, anchored by many perspectives and combinations of perspectives—theoretical, ideological, geopolitical, historical, social, biological, and more across multiple sectors of interest and engagement. All matter” (643).

Yet people from both scholarly traditions—analytic feminism and feminist rhetorical studies—have managed to broadly articulate the values and methodologies of each tradition. While the methodologies differ greatly, the values and goals have many points of overlap as both engage in scholarship hoping to counter unjust domination often attributed to patriarchy. According to social and political philosopher Ann Cudd, the aim of analytic feminism is to “counter sexism and androcentrism” (qtd. in Garry). In part, this happens through an examination, unpacking, and critique of traditional, male-dominated understandings of philosophical concepts. The lack of women’s voices in philosophy has led to a distortion of “philosophers’ pursuit of truth and objectivity,” and analytic feminism hopes to expand traditional views to better reflect the capital-T Truth (Cudd 3). Similarly, feminist rhetorical studies begin from the notion that traditional rhetorical scholarship has been and is a patriarchal pursuit (Royster

and Kirsch 30). The definition of rhetors and rhetoric often excludes those who are not men and therefore limits the meaning of these concepts (39). Royster and Kirsch suggest that the purpose of engaging in feminist rhetorical studies is, in part, “to deepen, broaden, and build rhetorical knowledge and to offer multiple mechanisms for enhancing our interpretive capacity with regard to the symphonic and polylogical ways in which rhetoric functions as a human asset” (132). Just as studying philosophy from a feminist perspective changes notions of what philosophy is, feminist rhetorical studies are meant to transform the discipline for the purposes of building a more inclusive understanding of what rhetoric is and how it functions.

As for *how* these disciplines go about achieving their aims, there is little overlap between the two. Before moving on to discuss feminist rhetorical methodologies, I will spend some time discussing the specifics of analytic philosophical approaches to provide context for the research decisions I made later in my rhetorical work.

Analytic feminist philosophers work towards the goal of ending patriarchal domination “through forming a clear conception of and pursuing truth, logical consistency, objectivity, rationality, justice, and the good” (Cudd qtd. in Garry). Given analytic philosophy’s commitment to truth and logic, any project within this discipline that hopes to make claims about and politically intervene in women’s oppression must carefully define terms and craft clear propositions that precisely reflect the reality of patriarchy. As Ann Garry writes, analytic feminists “believe that feminist politics require that claims about oppression or denial of rights be true or false and able to be justified.” Among the tools available to these scholars are “methodological approaches often used while training in analytic philosophy.” These approaches are like an “ever-expanding toolkit that may include such instruments as conceptual and logical analysis, use of argumentation, thought experiments, counterexamples, and so forth” (Garavaso qtd. in Garry). In other words, these feminists work to articulate propositions about women’s oppression, clearly define the terms within those propositions, then interrogate the extent to which these propositions are true. Scholars test the strength of the definitions and propositions through “thought experiments” and generating “counterexamples,” looking for ways to enhance these statements by making them better reflect reality. If they find contradictions within their definitions or propositions, or if they find them to be over- or under-inclusive of some concept, scholars go back to the drawing board to find ways to amend their terms.

One specific tool that would eventually influence my research on Wynn in rhetorical studies is ameliorative inquiry, a type of “conceptual analysis” developed by Sally Haslanger. The purpose of an ameliorative inquiry is to generate definitions of terms we can use to craft logically verifiable statements capable of

describing and intervening in oppression. These definitions are not the kind you might find in a dictionary as they do not describe “ordinary understandings of the concept.” Rather, an ameliorative inquiry is a method by which one builds definitions “that a particular group should aim to get people to use, given a particular set of goals that the group holds” (Jenkins 395). Haslanger uses this analysis to build a definition of “woman” that does not rely on widespread beliefs about what a woman is but that includes all people who identify as such. I would later see in Wynn’s work a similar attempt to define “trans woman.” These definitions may lay the theoretical groundwork for the creation of social and political interventions capable of granting rights, protections, privileges, and material benefits to marginalized groups.

What makes ameliorative inquiry difficult—and what came to hinder my research in rhetorical studies—is the complexity involved in avoiding “the inclusion problem.” Many definitions of some term end up leaving out relevant aspects of the concept under consideration such that the definition excludes things that we politically *need* to fall under the conceptual category. For example, Emma Watson’s definition of feminism suffers from the inclusion problem when it claims that “men and women should have equal rights and opportunities.” Because the definition only mentions “men and women,” it excludes those who do not identify as men or women, eliminating consideration of equal rights for non-binary or gender non-conforming people. Given that these definitions are often meant to be used in political projects—that is, used in crafting policy and social movements—they must reflect the group of people these projects intend to support. Analytic feminist scholars continue to disagree about the best way to define “woman” because most competing definitions suffer from the inclusion problem. The project of crafting definitions of “woman” capable of recognizing “everyone who needs to be included for the purposes of feminism” is, indeed, fraught (Jenkins 421).

Method/ologies in feminist rhetorical studies are much more fluid than those in analytic feminism. Nevertheless, in their book, Royster and Kirsch offer some unifying “terms of engagement” that form the “terrain” of feminist rhetorical approaches to research (18-19). In their survey of and reflection on over three decades of feminist rhetorical scholarship, they detail robust and creative scholarly engagement and argue “that a feminist-informed operational framework has emerged organically from well-regarded work in the field.” They outline four general practices that they see as belonging to that framework: critical imagination, strategic contemplation, social circulation, and globalization. These practices involve broad but consistent approaches to research that Royster and Kirsch see as common to feminist rhetorical scholarship and that facilitate “gathering multiple viewpoints,” “[balancing] multiple interpretations,” “considering

the intersections of internal and external effects,” and “deliberatively unsettling observations and conclusions to resist coming to conclusions too quickly” (134).

Central to my own messy process of researching about Natalie Wynn, though I did not immediately notice it at the time, was what Royster and Kirsch call strategic contemplation, or the process of “taking the time, space, and resources to think about, through, and around our work” (21). While all research requires scholars to spend time thinking, Royster and Kirsch describe strategic contemplation as a more expansive, intentional process that includes a “meditative dimension” (21). Specifically, strategic contemplation:

involves engaging in dialogue, in an exchange, with the women who are our rhetorical subjects, even if only imaginatively, to understand their words, their visions, their priorities whether and perhaps especially when they differ from our own....It entails creating a space where we can see and hold contradictions without rushing to immediate closure, to neat resolutions, or to cozy hierarchies and binaries. (21-22)

After a brief survey of the method/ologies of these two disciplinary approaches to feminism/s, it is clear that the approaches differ. The difference in the way the two treat the presence of “contradictions” is particularly stark. As I will discuss, this divergent attitude toward contradiction unconsciously impacted the way I analyzed data in my study of Wynn. In the analytic philosophical tradition, discovery of a contradiction is a red flag moment; it signals that there is an untenable glitch in some system that needs to be ironed out. When using strategic contemplation, however, the researcher intentionally lingers in the presence of contradiction and listens again and again to the voices of those speaking.

DISCOVERING LIMITATIONS OF PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT STYLES

As a student of both philosophical and rhetorical feminist traditions, Gries might say that I have appropriated a mix of feminist thought styles. Gries cites Ludwick Fleck who defines thought styles as “a historical-cultural conditioning that manifests when individuals are exposed to the exchange of scholarly ideas from a particular thought collective or closely related thought collectives” (87). Just as habitus of method best describes the reality that our method/ologies are always complexly plural, thought styles best describe the plurality of *any discipline’s* approach to some area of inquiry. It is not the case that my work in philosophy or rhetorical studies resulted in a fixed set of ideas about feminism/s but instead “exposed” me to certain dispositions about how to do research and

“conditioned” me to call upon those approaches when I undertake new studies.

Given the centrality of the concepts “oppression” and “domination” in feminist studies, Bratta and Sundvall’s call for research (consciously and unconsciously) activated feminist thought styles that inevitably affected the way I went about gathering and analyzing data. In order to combat the tendency of scholarship to “decompose” marginalized bodies, Bratta and Sundvall ask scholars to question how online composing tools and environments might allow for “recomposing” the bodies and embodiments of oppressed persons. They write that “thinking in terms of having a body/embodiment . . . marks an inevitable decomposing of bodies,” whereas “thinking in terms of being/becoming a body/embodiment . . . marks a necessary recomposing of bodies and embodiments” (5). Language and work that *decompose*, by this framing, focus on the static reality of “*having* a body/embodiment” and appear complicit with harmful gender norms whereas compositions that *recompose* attend to the experience of “*being/becoming* a body/embodiment” and offer possibilities for flourishing despite those norms. Having identified the significance of the decomposition/recomposition metaphor in their introduction, my aim was to understand how Wynn uses and treats language that *decomposes* and *recomposes*.

In the early stages of my research, I watched and took notes on all the 25 public-facing videos on Wynn’s channel at the time, focusing on sonic, linguistic, and visual language around gender. Grounded theory broadly describes the method I used to analyze and draw conclusions about Wynn’s work; I coded all my notes on Wynn’s treatment of gender, allowing relevant categories to emerge as I worked through the data. However, I also used predetermined codes, categorizing some language as participating in either the decomposition or recomposition of trans women.

What I noticed after my first pass through all the videos was a thematic preoccupation with the question: What makes a person a trans? Just as analytic feminist philosophers engage in ameliorative inquiries to define woman, the characters on Wynn’s channel debate how to define trans women in a public-facing way that will help them gain rights and freedoms in society. Wynn herself rarely offers answers to this question as a narrator or talking head; rather, she uses her characters as embodied manifestations of current competing definitions of what it means to be trans and of beliefs about how trans people ought to present themselves to win greater rights and freedoms. Through dialogue, the characters articulate the worldviews of various cultural groups engaging with this issue: trans women of a variety of presentations, nonbinary trans people, straight cis women, cis trans exclusive radical feminist (TERF) women, and more, all with conflicting beliefs about what it means to be “authentically” trans (“Autogynephilia”; “The Aesthetic”; “Gender Critical”; “The Left”; “Tiffany Tumbles”;

“Transtrenders”). These portrayals are often highly sarcastic, drawing the audience’s attention to the harmfulness and hypocrisy of some character’s view. In other cases, these same transphobic, bigoted, or narrowminded characters make insightful objections to the arguments of their more reasonable interlocutors. One or another character may appear to win a debate; however, this is neither an indication of the superiority of their argument nor of Wynn’s endorsement of the position.

Because Wynn presents ever shifting and often contradictory views of what it means to be trans, I struggled to apply Bratta and Sundvall’s decompose/recompose distinction to her work. I suggest that my difficulty was the result of the unexamined operation of analytic feminist thought styles within my habitus of method. Specifically, I believe I was unconsciously applying the method of ameliorative inquiry to my reading of Wynn, looking for “clear conceptions” of what it means to be trans. From an analytic feminist perspective, the path to recomposing the bodies/embodiments of marginalized women requires establishing consistent, logical conceptions of what a trans woman is. Yet Wynn subverts the search for such clear conceptions at every turn. Given my unconscious search for inclusive, logical definitions, I assumed that any composition that works towards recomposing trans bodies ought to spell out and then build on such a definition. Wynn does not allow any of her characters to have a satisfying final word that neatly does the work of facilitating the flourishing of trans life. Furthermore, the analytic tradition primed me to see definitions that contained contradictions or that failed to satisfy a set of criteria as *prima facie* harmful; I assumed that laying bare and refusing to resolve the contradictions in the competing definitions was a move that necessarily, in the words of Bratta and Sundvall, decomposes the bodies/embodiments of trans people. The rhetorical framework I was using, as well as the unacknowledged method/logical dispositions in my habitus of method, led to the conclusion that Wynn’s compositions are complicit with oppressive dominant discourse in their failure to avoid the inclusion problem.

CHANGING COURSE WITH STRATEGIC CONTEMPLATION

Yet feminist rhetorical thought styles also operated within my habitus of method, perhaps unconsciously inviting me to go back to the data and spend more time listening. Strategic contemplation occurs when researchers return to contradictions and impasses as sites of potential meaning and when they “pay attention” to both the “outward” and “inward journey” of research. For Royster and Kirsch, the “outward journey” of research involves the actual legwork of gathering data, whereas research’s “inward journey” involves “researchers noticing how they

process, imagine, and work with materials” (85). In response to my initial frustrations, I took that inward journey, stopping to recognize that Wynn’s rhetorical moves were not conforming to my assumptions about them and reckoning with the reality that I needed to broaden my perspective to “process, imagine, and work” with Wynn’s channel in a more inclusive way. Outwardly, I decided to take a step back from focusing on particular videos, dialogues, and issues, instead zooming out to reexamine the whole channel and listen more carefully to what Wynn was saying and doing. Within my habitus of method was Royster and Kirsch’s work which “[highlights] the necessity of pausing in our work to question definitions...that we may have taken for granted but that have defined—perhaps limited—the boundaries of rhetorical inquiry” (139–40). This step is especially important as a cis-researcher looking at work by a trans composer.

Strategic contemplation first led me to code the data again and again in multiple rounds, tracking the presence of several visceral, embodied features through the oeuvre to see if they illuminated some way in which Wynn’s work fit into a decomposition/recomposition lens. To do this, I first revisited my notes seeking out specific characteristics such as body language, costuming, and set decor, looking for ways in which these components fit with the various themes each video explored. In one round of coding, for example, I noted and categorized all instances in which Wynn or her characters ate or drank in the videos; beverage consumption is consistent feature of many of the videos, from milk to tea to vodka. While at times I felt hot on the trail of some interesting connection, the thread was inconsistent and ultimately unhelpful. Yet part of strategic contemplation is having that dialogue with the text: asking a question and listening for the answer. When I interrogated the text and its response was “This is not a relevant question,” I listened.

My approach here is similar to Carol Gilligan’s feminist Listening Guide (LG), a method by which to analyze interview data (Boehr). This approach requires “a minimum of four successive readings, called listenings,” of some interview transcript in which the researcher pays attention to different aspects of the data: first, the “major themes” that arise in the conversation; next, the way the speakers present themselves in relation to others; third, “the rhythm, moves, and use of pronouns in women’s voices”; and lastly, “potential tensions and contradictions between” the speakers. Christine Boehr, writing about her experience using Gilligan’s LG, explains that this approach prompted “a change in [her] sensitivity to the words of others,” leading her to “re-think [her] positionality, question preconceived notions, and double-check associations.”

While I did not use the LG for my analysis, my approach was similar and led to the same changes in how I interpreted Wynn’s work, much as they did in Boehr’s case. When I engaged in multiple listenings to Wynn and her different

characters, I finally allowed their priorities and perspectives to supersede my own. This was not the result of any one specific question I asked or lens I used as I went back through my notes or rewatched videos; rather, the very act of returning again and again to the data allowed me to feel like I had stepped inside the world of the videos and that I knew and understood each of the characters' motivations on their own terms. I could finally see connections between character dialogues in one video and their changing views in another. I found that Wynn's *characters* may be preoccupied with finding a rational way of explaining what it means to be trans. However, if one pays attention to the progression of theorizing from video to video, one notices that Wynn *herself* ultimately rejects the project of defining "trans," instead advocating for trans people to have the right to simply accept themselves without explanation. It took several passes through the data, rewatching the videos, and listening again and again to each of Wynn's characters for me to disrupt my search for an inclusive definition of trans. I saw, then, that Wynn's channel as a whole—if not one particular video—argues that trans people ought to define themselves as they see fit regardless of how dominant ideologies may respond *and* regardless of the way those definitions might not be compatible with others' definitions. This embodied argument, unfolding over the entirety of Wynn's channel, is a force that affords trans people the agency to define their own existences: to recompose themselves.

I do not suggest that the analytic philosophical project of ameliorative inquiry is inherently disrespectful or harmful. I recognize the need, in certain contexts, to do definitional work that avoids contradiction as much as possible. These definitions have a place in social and political theorizing meant to secure rights and safeties for oppressed persons. Yet when it comes to looking at digital compositions by people from diverse bodies/embodiments, contradiction is a source of meaningful insights. When I notice the way Wynn both recognizes and accepts the problems with each of her characters' beliefs, I am then able to see that Wynn *herself* acknowledges problems with oppressive, dominant language around gender while also strategically affirming it in some contexts. Bratta and Sundvall might say that some language decomposes the bodies of trans people. Wynn, on the other hand, happily uses that language at one turn, critiques it at another, and condemns it in other contexts.

MAKING USE OF THE AFFORDANCES OF PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT STYLES

While feminist rhetorical method/ologies gave me the perspectives and tools to foreground Wynn's radical embrace of contradiction, analytic philosophical method/ologies nevertheless played a vital role in my research. Having

interrupted my search for clear definitions and accepted Wynn on her own terms, the question remained: how does her work fit into Bratta and Sundvall's decomposition/recomposition framework I started with? The article that finally grew out of this research asserts that Bratta and Sundvall's framing is not sufficient for capturing the unique rhetorical moves of trans rhetors. I suggest that the presence of philosophical thought styles within my habitus of method eventually led me to diverge from and add to the existing queer rhetorical project that underpins Bratta and Sundvall's approach.

In working to locate Wynn within the decomposition/recomposition framework, I kept coming back to the word "underinclusive," a word that got tossed around in a philosophy seminar like a badminton shuttlecock. Recall that part of the analytic philosophical method is engaging in thought experiments and posing counterexamples to expose weaknesses of a theory, concept, or definition. These methods are absolutely not unique to philosophy as they have a place in most all disciplines; nevertheless, they are central to philosophical research. Using such methods requires conceiving of scenarios and imagining whether the framework under consideration will fit the needs of the scenarios or will lead to unproductive or unintended consequences. Often, the outcome of a thought experiment or considering a counterexample is to pronounce that the theory, concept, or definition is either underinclusive or overinclusive: that the framework does not capture features central to its purpose or includes features that create unnecessary problems. The method of ameliorative inquiry uses thought experiments to determine whether some definition is underinclusive. Jenkins, for example, emphasizes that "an analysis of the concept of woman that respects gender identifications of trans women will need to provide space for a variety of articulations and interpretations of trans experiences." She, therefore, outlines "four possible scenarios" in which Haslanger's definition of woman fails to include trans women" in order to demonstrate its shortcomings and advocate for a different definition (399).

In my analysis, I used Wynn's channel as a "scenario" by which to test Bratta and Sundvall's framework, looking for whether it was inclusive of embodied digital composing practices of trans rhetors. I began to model Wynn's rhetorical strategies as if on a spectrum represented by a horizontal line on which language used to decompose existed on the far left and language of recomposition existed on the right. Equipped with a tiny, portable white board, I went through several iterations of this model, plugging in different data points on the spectrum including video titles, specific pieces of dialogue, examples of costuming, and set design. What I saw was that, in the process of asserting each person's right to define trans for themselves, Wynn uses and affirms language and arguments that Bratta and Sundvall might say is complicit with hegemonic structures: language

that decomposes. Yet as my earlier analysis established, her work, on the whole, is liberating and freeing: a force that allows for recomposition of trans bodies/embodiments.

Inspired by analytic philosophical methods, the visualization tactic allowed me to test Bratta and Sundvall's framing and conclude that it was underinclusive of at least one kind of trans rhetorical practice. Their introduction implies that queer rhetorical theory is the default lens for studying works by rhetors with diverse embodiments. My reading of Wynn, however, demonstrates that the queer framing, while helpful in some ways, cannot capture all the rhetorical moves of trans rhetors. This suggests that scholars of computers and writing and of rhetorical studies more broadly cannot rely on queer framings alone when studying the work of trans rhetors. In my *Computers and Composition* article, I demonstrate this finding and propose a new analytic, the embodiment contradiction, that helps scholars foreground the embodied reality of the trans composing practice that is distinct from queer composing practices.

EMBRACING HYBRID METHOD/OLOGIES

My experience of researching and publishing a piece about Wynn's channel demonstrated the need to unpack our method/ological commitments and make sense of how and when to use the various tools we have as researchers. Without the feminist rhetorical practices in my habitus of method, I would not have taken the time nor done the work of deeply listening to Wynn in order to hear her on her own terms. In this phase of the research and writing process, my analytic philosophical tools were not just inappropriate but were a hindrance. Yet I needed to call upon those methods to enable me to test and then challenge existing approaches in rhetorical studies. It is necessary to ground a project in a shared set of disciplinary method/ological approaches and values, but it can be valuable to borrow perspectives from other disciplines. Royster and Kirsch echo this, noting that feminist rhetorical studies has "benefited from dynamic intersections . . . from more-traditional areas" including "philosophy" (40-41).

As individual researchers, we necessarily bring our prior knowledge, assumptions, and experiences to the studies we undertake. Just as we all bring *baggage* to our various personal relationships, we each carry around certain *disciplinary baggage* to our research subjects. Failure to deal with baggage in relationships can lead to frustration and damage while opening up to others about our past can help each person uncover potential pitfalls *and* identify common ground to enhance the connection. Similarly, when we take time to examine and shine a spotlight on our method/ological assumptions even as we conduct research, we can register which of our existing perspectives enable or preclude meaningful

discoveries and can take advantage of all the tools at our disposal for achieving research goals.

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