

Archives 2.0: Digital Archives and the Formation of New
Research Methods

[Alexis E. Ramsey-Tobienne](#)

“Ain’t I a Woman”: Using Feminist Rhetorical Practices to Re-set
the Terms of Scholarly Engagement for an Iconic Text

[Jacqueline Jones Royster](#)

This Speaking Leaf: Vera Connolly’s Good Housekeeping
Crusade for the Indian Cause

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Review: Beyond the Pulpit: Women’s Rhetorical Roles in the
Antebellum Religious Press

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Review: Techniques of Pleasure: BDSM and the Circuits of
Sexuality

[Nicholaus Baca](#)

Review: Wit’s End: Women’s Humor as Rhetorical and
Performative Strategy

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Peitho seeks to encourage, advance, and publish original feminist research in the history of rhetoric and composition and thereby support scholars and students within our profession. For submission guidelines and requirements, please see <http://www.peitho.cwshrc.org>.

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Editor's Note

Dear Reader:

It is with great pleasure we present to you the first peer-reviewed issue of *Peitho*, the journal of the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition. *Peitho* first debuted in 1996 as a newsletter, edited by Susan Jarratt and Susan Romano; in 2009, Barbara L'Eplattenier took over the editorial duties and shifted the journal into a .pdf format, to ensure wider distribution and less costly printing, and as a way to ease the transition into a peer-reviewed journal. (Almost all past issues are online at *Peitho*/the Coalition's website—<http://www.cwshrc.org>). To celebrate the peer-reviewed publication of *Peitho*, we are making the first two issues available online with full access for everyone. Subsequently, the archives will be open to all, while the two most recent issues will be available to Coalition members only. To never miss an issue, visit our website, <http://www.cwshrc.org>, and become a member!

The Coalition has always been committed “to feminist research *throughout* the history of rhetoric and composition” (Coalition Mission, emphasis ours). The preposition *throughout* in this mission statement has always struck us as significant; we read it to say that the Coalition is interested in feminist research that occurred at any point in time, rather than limiting the Coalition's interest to historical feminist research. *Peitho*'s commitment to feminist research is no different. The journal seeks to publish all types of feminist research—including, but not limited to historical work.

Thus, our lead article asks us to think about where feminist work might occur in the future—in the digital archives. Alexis Ramsey-Tobienne explores how digital archives impact the work feminist and historians do and how we as researchers need to interrogate them. Our second article, “Ain't I a Woman” by Jacqueline Jones Royster combines both past and present as it explores how the theoretical lens of social circulation can help us re-examine a venerable, feminist text. We close our first volume with Paige Conley's “This Speaking Leaf: Vera Connolly's *Good Housekeeping* Crusade for the Indian Cause,” a close examination of reporter Vera Connolly's work to expose the conditions of Native Americans and provide this information to a broad American audience.

Finally, we give heartfelt thanks that Cheri Lemieux Spiegel agreed to be our production editor. The cover, the design, the layout—all are Cheri's work. This issue would not exist without Cheri's work. Colleagues such as Cheri remind us of the generosity, intelligence, and cleverness of academics and why we enjoy editing work so much.

We hope you enjoy this issue and we encourage you to submit your work to *Peitho*.

Barb and Lisa

Archives 2.0: Digital Archives and the Formation of New Research Methods

Alexis E. Ramsey-Tobienne

Archives—what they are, where they are, who they are for, how we use them—are gaining critical attention within our discipline. Witness, for instance, the recent publications of *Local Histories: Reading the Archives of Composition*, *Beyond the Archives: Research as Lived Process*, and *Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition*, not to mention a myriad of articles. Yet, as many rhetoric and composition historians have pointed out, the difficulty with archival research and with viewing archives as potentially generative, transforming, and transformational places stems from the lack of discipline-specific scholarship devoted to archival methods and methodologies. As Linda Ferreira-Buckley emphatically argues in “Rescuing the Archives from Foucault,” methods sections are important because “historians of rhetoric need to return to the archives [because we are] underprepared in the specialized research techniques necessary to [write] revisionist histories. Theoretical sophistication does not obviate the need for practical training. We lack the tools of the historians' trade” (577, 582). Echoing, to a certain degree, Ferreira-Buckley's call, Janine Solberg reminded scholars of rhetorical history that

we would do well to ask how digital environments promise to inform or transform our work as historians and what can we do to foster more explicit, discipline-specific conversations that consider the role and influence of digital technologies in our research. (54)

While Rhetoric and Composition scholars are responding to these calls (L'Eplattenier), certainly there remains much work to be done in regard to clearly articulated archival methods, particularly for digital archival

scholarship. As we continue to discuss and formulate archival research methods, we also continue to build our ethos as archival researchers. Such ethos-building is important for so-called archives 2.0 because questions of trust and community are central to concerns about this developing archival space. Yet, this shift, or perhaps more rightly this reconstitution of “archival space” may be a means for responding to both Ferreira-Buckley and Solberg’s call for more explicitly stated research methods, even as these new archives help us, as researchers, define what it means to be an archival researcher and what it means to be “in” an archive.

Thus, this article will do three things: first, it will consider what is archives 2.0 and how we can define and understand the term “archives 2.0”; second, it will examine archives that might be considered as 2.0 (or, at the very least, heading in that direction); and finally, this article explores what these new spaces mean for rhetoric and composition scholars, particularly in relation to research methods, access(-ibility), and community.

What is Archives 2.0?

In the last few years, scholars in library science, information technologies, records management, and archival science have debated what exactly constitutes “archives 2.0.” As I see it, the debate is actually a series of overlapping conversations regarding:

- How do archives 2.0 differ from, for lack of a better term, archives 1.0 or what we might consider more traditional, physical archives?
- How do archives 2.0 relate to web 2.0?
- What does an actual archives 2.0 look like? How does it function?
- What does this archival reframing mean for researchers/users of these spaces and how does it affect the research process?

The most basic conception of archives 2.0 is grounded on the idea of collaboration within a digital space. Yet, as many discussions of archives 2.0 point out, just because archives 2.0 rely on digital environments does not mean that web 2.0 + archives = archives 2.0. Rather, Joy Palmer, Senior Manager for Library and Archival Services at the University of Manchester, writes that archives 2.0 are “less about the integration of web 2.0 technologies into online finding aids, and more related to a fundamental shift in perspective, to a philosophy that privileges the user and promotes an ethos of sharing, collaboration, and openness” (Palmer).

Further, archives 2.0 are a culmination of many conversations and many movements in archives that now represent the majority view of how archives function (Theimer, “Meaning of Archives 2.0” 60). Thus, while archives 2.0 embrace and readily use web 2.0 technology, they are more about a perceptual shift in the way that archives function than just about using the web.

Likewise, archives 2.0 are not just digital representations of collections, although they can—and do—include digitized versions of collections. As Jim Ridolfo, William Hart-Davidson, and Michael McLeod note in their discussion of creating an archives 2.0 space for the Michigan State University Israelite Samaritan Scroll Collection:

One may conclude then that simply digitizing the entire collection would solve most access problems, but this is not the case. We learned from our interviews and field research that both stakeholder communities need particular language, feature, and interface considerations in order for them to effectively utilize the archival collections online.

Archives 2.0 emphasize how collections are read, interpreted, and searched by a myriad of different kinds of users and they use web 2.0 technologies to enable such varied uses. They are more than digital collections because they invite participation in the formation and expansion of the sites, expecting involvement from both archivists and users/researchers alike.

Specifically, archives 2.0 are defined by the following characteristics: openness, transparency, user-centered, standardization, technology-savvy, measuring outputs, outcomes impacts, archivist as facilitator, open to iterating products, archivists valued because of what they do, innovative and flexible, looking for ways to attract new users. (Theimer, “Archives 2.0 is Here”)

Unlike traditional archival spaces (and by traditional, I mean spaces that one physically enters, that are housed in buildings, where researchers get to touch, albeit with white gloves or very clean hands, the items), archives 2.0 are less about physical spaces and physical contact and more about establishing various levels of connectivity: between user and archivist, between users and users, between users and multiple collections. Archives 2.0 use web 2.0 technologies to facilitate these collaborative endeavors,

often through wikis, blogs, or Flickr, but the technology is always the means by which an end occurs, in this case, collaboration.

This emphasis on collaborative communities of users has led some to term these new archives “participatory archives.” According to Isto Huvila, a Swedish Professor at the Department of Archival Studies, Library and Information Science and Museums and Cultural Heritage at Studies at Uppsala University, the foundations for participatory archives are “decentralized curation, radical user orientation, [and] contextualization of both records *and* the entire archival process” (15, italics original). In other words, archives become about the inclusivity of many different types of people, of items, and of knowledge.

One of the seminal and early instances of archives 2.0 is the September 11 Digital Archive. The repository for “more than 150,000 digital items, a tally that includes more than 40,000 emails and other electronic communications, more than 40,000 first-hand stories, and more than 15,000 digital images” collected items until June 2004 (September 11 Digital Archive). Although the site did not necessarily incorporate dialogues among users/uploaders, a feature of later archives 2.0, the idea that the users themselves shaped and gave substance to an archive space was a radical departure from earlier digital archives.¹ Huvila views this momentous, participatory shift as a way to create renewed relevancy for archives, rather than as a means for undermining archival legitimacy. In other words, by encouraging user contributions, the items preserved within are made accessible to a wider audience, are given contextualization beyond that offered by finding aids, and may become the basis for interesting connections among collections and among users leading to new research opportunities. An additional benefit is that interest in a digital collection may lead to the digitizing of other collections that may or may not have been in the queue for such treatment.

While the role of the user is clearly restated, so too is the role of the archivist. No longer simply a caretaker of documents, archivists must now “be active in their communities rather than passive, engaged with the interpretation of their collections rather than neutral custodians, and serve as effective advocates for their future” (Theimer “Meaning of

Archives 2.0” 60). Certainly, this is how the majority of archivists behave today, but as Kate Theimer points out, confirming, stating, and sharing this belief system showcases that “the professions has reached a new stage of maturity in the United States” (“Meaning of Archives 2.0” 60). Further, the emphasis on collaboration suggests that the dichotomy between user and archivist lessens, replaced by a sense of peer collaboration. As Joy Palmer asserts “in this new paradigm, content consumers become content producers.” Or, as Huvila notes: “the radical user orientation is based on an understanding that together the participants are more knowledgeable about the archival materials than an archivist alone could be” (26). This emphasis on the sharing of knowledge is further elucidated by Kate Theimer in her presentation at the 2011 Society of American Archivists annual meeting when she defined participatory archives as “an organization, site or collection in which people other than archives professionals contribute knowledge or resources, resulting in increased understanding about archival materials, usually in an online environment” (“Exploring the Participatory Archives”).

Yet, one downside of archives 2.0 or participatory archives is readily evident—the need for participation, the need for consumer buy-in. An early prototype for archives 2.0 was the Polar Bear Expedition Digital Collections held at the University of Michigan’s Bentley Historical Library. The collection was popular with both academics and Polar Bear enthusiasts, thereby acting as a logical collection for an experiment with a “next generation finding aid” developed by the Finding Aids Next Generation Research Group (FANG) and led by University of Michigan Professor of Information Elizabeth Yakel. In 2005, the group developed a site that enabled users to encounter the digital collection a number of different ways: through bookmarks, comments, link paths, browsing, searching, and user profiles.² Of particular interest were the two main ways that FANG created interactive finding aids: comments and link paths. The comment function allowed visitors to essentially add to the overall description of an object. Visitors could “supply information about sources, ask questions, or participate in discussions” (Krause and Yakel 285). Further, “registered users [could] also add comments to a document or respond to comments by other researchers or the archivist”

¹ For a fuller treatment of the September 11 Digital Archive, see Ekaterina Haskins “Between Archive and Participation: Public Memory in a Digital Age.”

² FANG produced multiple publications discussing the use and maintenance of the site. The publications are listed here: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/polaread/about.html>.

(Krause and Yakel 285). In addition to this feature, the site also used The Everything2 engine that created soft links or link paths that were intended to alert visitors to related pages viewed by other users. Link paths [were] an unobtrusive collaborative filtering mechanism in the Polar Bear Expedition site that show relationships among documents by collecting usage information from all site visitors, pooling this information, and feeding back an aggregated form of these data to later visitors. (Krause and Yakel 286)

However, as the site developers moved on to other projects, the site became difficult to maintain and keep up to date. Because the site was a prototype and thus not integral to the mission of the Library, the site was reformatted to the original concept of the digital collection. The participatory nature of the site was deactivated. The return to a more simplified search and retrieve system, one that is perhaps what most researchers using digitized collections expect, illustrates the time and people commitment necessary to maintain archives 2.0. The sites demand both the time and expertise of the users, as well as the archivists themselves.

Yet, we must not read the deactivation of the next generation finding aids as a failure of archives 2.0; instead, we can celebrate the successes of the next generation finding aid. While the site was active, FANG reported seeing commenters updating information on the collection, and querying about adding to the collection. In addition, interaction between researchers was also seen, such as in one example where one researcher offered additional internet and historical sources to another researcher (Yakel, Reynolds, Shaw). The site embraces the idea that, collectively, users and archivists can create a fuller description and context than archivists alone can. None of the discussions of the site refer to issues with participation suggesting that, based on usage, the experiment was a success. In other words, the site did not close down for lack of use, but for other reasons.

Examples of Archives 2.0 Projects

There are multiple examples of archives 2.0 projects. The BBC Memoryshare Project (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/memoryshare/home>), touted as “a place to share and explore memories” is a visually appealing



Figure 1: Homepage of Memoryshare

site, that invites users to make connections with other users and with major events (See Figure 1).

For instance, if I search “mother” ten memories are shown using a colorful spiral display (See Figure 2). If I then click on one of the hubs, “1946” for instance, I can read an account of Mina “who loved musicals, even the ‘modern’ ones” (Toddy) (See Figure 3). The page also shows other events, news stories, and people that coincide with the date of this memory. In this instance, the events and persons include Winston Churchill and Northern Ireland. I am also given the chance to add my own memory or to share this memory via Facebook, Twitter and other

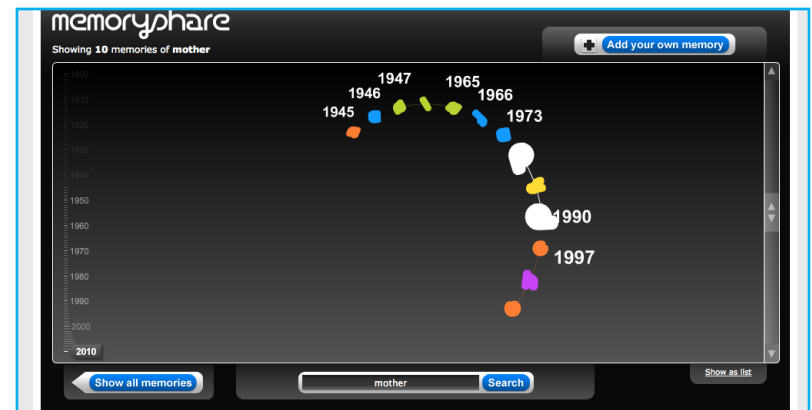


Figure 2: A spiral of memories based on the keyword “mother.”



Figure 3: One “memory.” Note the links to other memories posted on the same day, related memories, and other events from the same day as the memory.

social media sites. What is appealing about this site is the connection among individual, everyday people memories and headlines. It reminds me of the ephemera I find most fascinating in archives—those items that, for better or worse, were never really meant for posterity but are there anyway—the coloring book, the apron, the postcard.³ Likewise, the site encourages users to add to the site or to share information via social media “likes” and “shares.”

An interesting showcase of the rapid development of archives 2.0 spaces is the Your Archives wiki from the National Archives, Britain. (http://yourarchives.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php?title=Home_page). The site was launched in 2007 with the purpose of providing users an online platform for adding their knowledge of archival sources held by the Museum. Over 31,000 people registered for the site and contributed to it in various ways. However, as the homepage announces:

³ Historian Marc Bloch refers to the authors of these types of materials as “witnesses in spite of themselves,” offering the example of the lake-dweller who threw garbage in a nearby lake. This “garbage” is later recovered by archeologists and forms the basis for interpreting the lake-dweller’s life. The intention behind this act was not to save the material, but to dispose of waste. The lake-dweller did not exhibit, according to Bloch “the least desire to influence the opinions either of contemporaries or of the future historians” (61). These were the private actions of a private individual. Archives seem to be increasingly interested in these types of non-traditional materials, particularly as archival spaces themselves get redefined.

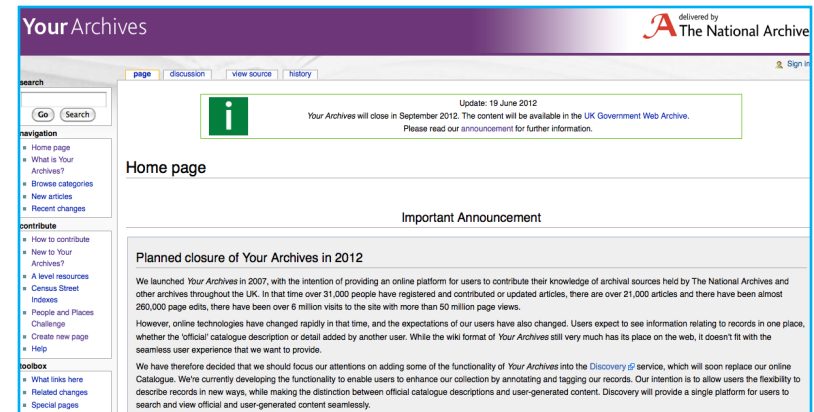


Figure 4: Homepage of the Your Archives site. Notice the announcement regarding the closure of the site.

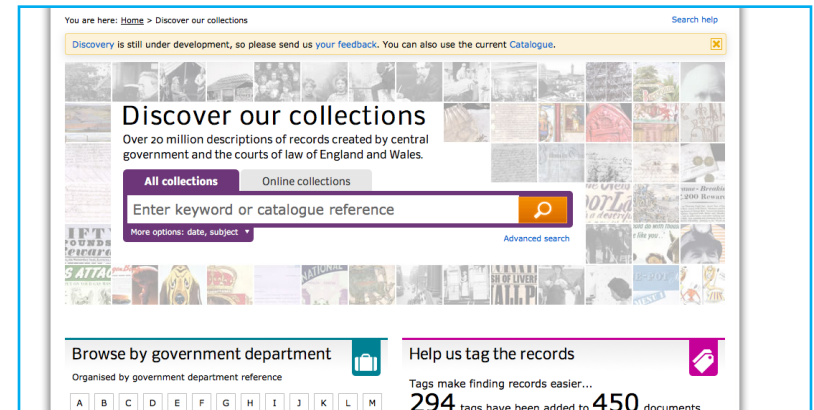


Figure 5: The new Discovery site from The National Archives.

online technologies have changed rapidly in that time, and the expectations of our users have also changed. Users expect to see information relating to records in one place, whether the ‘official’ catalogue description or detail added by another user. While the wiki format of *Your Archives* still very much has its place on the web, it doesn’t fit with the seamless user experience that we want to provide. (See Figure 4).

Your Archives closed to new users in January 2012, though it did allow modifications up to September 2012. Even as the site is closed to new users, already existing users continue to update records. On June 11,

Date:	15 Mar 1842
Held by:	The National Archives, Kew
Legal status:	Public Record
Language:	English

Found an error? [Suggest a correction](#) to help improve our descriptions.

Help us tag the records

[Add a tag](#) [Show all tags](#)

Figure 6: Detail of the requests for suggestions from users.

Figure 7: Homepage of the Our Archives wiki.

2012 a user added company names to the document “Royal Marines casualties of the War of 1812” while another user deleted an erroneous row to the “Coventry Registration District, 1891 Census Street Index” page. I see this continued involvement on the part of the users as a positive sign that users recognize the importance of their information and they recognize that their input is valued.

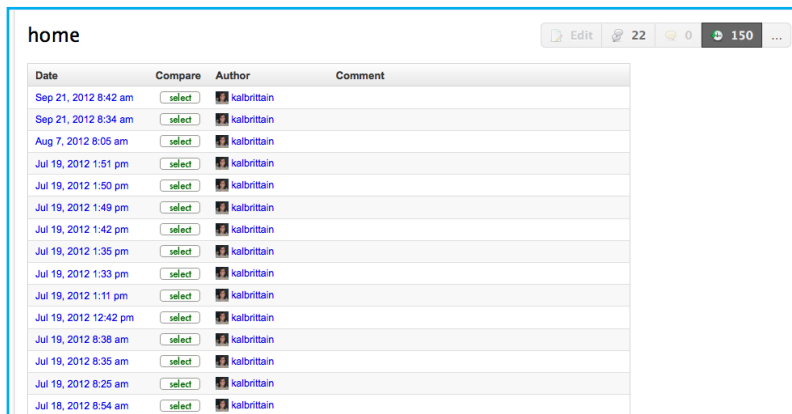
Currently, the Your Archives catalogue is being migrated to the new Discovery Service, an online catalogue that will bring more functionality and flexibility to searching the National Archives. According to the announcement on the Your Archives page “Discovery will provide a

single platform for users to search and view official and user-generated content seamlessly.” (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/new-catalogue.htm>) (See Figure 5). The Discovery catalogue is still the beta version, but each record does include the following statements: “Found an error? Suggest a correction to help improve our descriptions” and “Help us tag the records” underneath of which are the boxes for “add a tag” and “show all tags” (Day) (See Figure 6). This request for tagging help also appears on the site’s homepage (See Figure 5 above). These queries reinforce the Archives’ statement that “*Your Archives* has helped us learn so much from researchers who use our collection, and has helped us realise the importance and value of user collaboration. We really do value your past contributions and hope that you will continue to work with us on our exciting new ventures.”

This transition from a wiki to a more participatory site demonstrates the value institutions are placing on user feedback and participation, as well as the overall research experience. Kate Theimer makes the distinction between engagement and participation with the former suggesting a “having fun” attitude toward archival material and the latter suggesting the active contribution of new information to archival material (“Participatory Archives”). The Discovery site seems to want to capitalize on both ideas: encouraging both the Sunday browser as well as the more serious researcher.

A similar site to Your Archives exists for the United States National Archives, titled “Our Archives.” (<http://www.ourarchives.wikispaces.net/>). The tagline “Our Voices. Our History. Our National Archives” speaks to the inclusionary nature of this wikispace archive (See Figure 7). Much like the former Your Archives site, this wiki encourages users to create their own wiki pages, expand on already existing descriptions, and generally add to the information available about a given subject.

Figure 8: The grey box with the clock and the “150” is a link to the site’s revision history.



Date	Compare	Author	Comment
Sep 21, 2012 8:42 am	select	kaibrittain	
Sep 21, 2012 8:34 am	select	kaibrittain	
Aug 7, 2012 8:05 am	select	kaibrittain	
Jul 19, 2012 1:51 pm	select	kaibrittain	
Jul 19, 2012 1:50 pm	select	kaibrittain	
Jul 19, 2012 1:49 pm	select	kaibrittain	
Jul 19, 2012 1:42 pm	select	kaibrittain	
Jul 19, 2012 1:35 pm	select	kaibrittain	
Jul 19, 2012 1:33 pm	select	kaibrittain	
Jul 19, 2012 1:11 pm	select	kaibrittain	
Jul 19, 2012 12:42 pm	select	kaibrittain	
Jul 19, 2012 8:38 am	select	kaibrittain	
Jul 19, 2012 8:35 am	select	kaibrittain	
Jul 19, 2012 8:25 am	select	kaibrittain	
Jul 18, 2012 8:54 am	select	kaibrittain	

Figure 9: Page allowing viewers to compare different versions of a specific page.

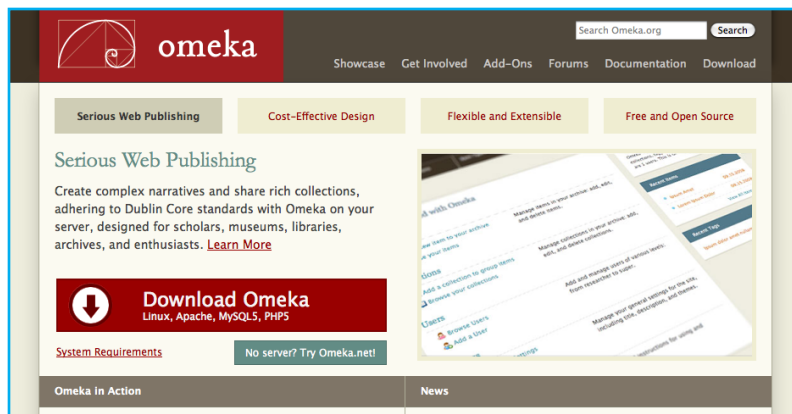


Figure 10: The homepage for the Omeka.org site.

The participatory nature of the website is evident in the toolbar found on the top right of the homepage and on all pages within the site. This toolbar lets visitors view discussion posts or view any revisions about or made to that specific page. Recent discussions on the homepage, for example, have included how to tag and post on the wiki. While the homepage layout has been revised recently, users can click on the “view revisions” icon in the toolbar (See Figure 8) to compare various versions of pages (See Figure 9). When comparing various versions of a page, inserted material is highlighted in green while deleted material is highlighted in red.

In addition to user-generated pages, users of the site can also expand on descriptions in the online catalogue and edit pre-existing pages created by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Many have done so, if the 199+ registered users is any indication. However, NARA does oversee the edits. Further, the site’s holdings are always expanding. For instance, on June 13, 2012, NARA uploaded .jpg files of the Treaty of Ghent (which ended the War of 1812). This site showcases the commitment that a traditional archive must have to archives 2.0: to keep the site vibrant by uploading new content and to maintain the site by monitoring edits, updating or verifying links, and answering queries, among other duties.

Finally, the Omeka website, (<http://omeka.org/>) launched by the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, allows users to essentially create their own archives using a highly adaptable content management system (See Figure 10). The software offers a different kind of participatory culture because it allows users to create archives, as well as upload a variety of different kinds of materials for digital preservation. For example, the Women’s Building “Doing it in Public: Feminism and Art at the Woman’s Building” archival site (<https://wbexhibit.otis.edu/>) includes both digital objects and oral histories, as well as calls for users to tell their story or submit a picture. Granted, users don’t have a chance to directly comment on each others’ stories, but the idea that archives can also collect, preserve, and celebrate recent history is another element of archives 2.0. We move away from what Steedman referred to as a place where the “dead walk and talk” (20) toward a place where history reminds not embedded in the past, but an active, changeable endeavor. Of note, Omeka now hosts the aforementioned September 11 Digital Archive, though the archive is no longer accepting donations.

Learning from Archives 2.0: New Research Methods

The move from simply digitizing collections to encouraging user contributions and celebrating user knowledge in these participatory archives suggests many possibilities for scholars in Rhetoric and Composition. Archives 2.0 can, by their very nature, become places for exploring or explaining our own research methods. We can leave behind traces of what we have done or we can follow the research paths of those

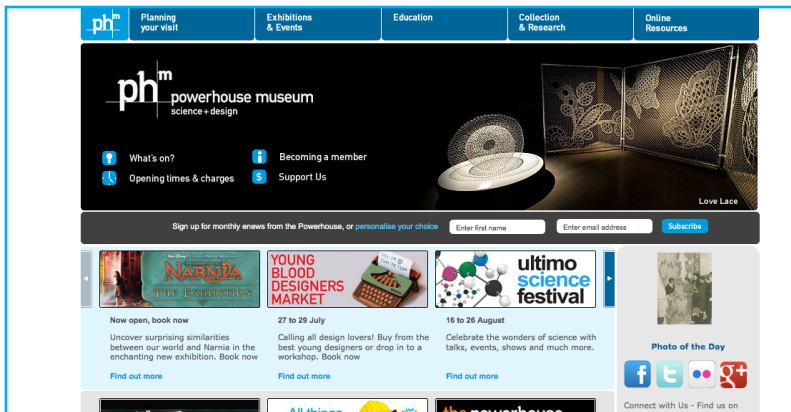


Figure 11: Homepage of the Powerhouse Museum.

who have come before us. The methods of other researchers, showcased visibly and visually through path links, tags, or recent search histories, can show new archival researchers one possible way to utilize the space, and give them a model for developing their own methods. There is also direct contact with other users through chat functions, discussion boards, and posted comments. Through these features, not only is the researcher intimately connected into or with a community of likeminded users, but the community can help with the research process by suggesting relevant or related materials and by adding knowledge about any of the items.

This idea of “working” with other researchers is exemplified in another prominent example of archives 2.0: the Powerhouse Museum (<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/>) (See Figure 11). The Powerhouse Museum’s Online Collection Database began in 2006 and has about 70% of the brick and mortar museum’s collection available online (<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/menu.php>). The site is regularly updated based on feedback and input from users. To facilitate searching, as well as to encourage chance discovery of items, the collection utilizes multiple, dynamic methods: “today’s popular searches” “recent tags,” “keyword searches,” “related items.” In addition to these user-generated methods are those created by the Museum itself; one can look at recent acquisitions, at the Museum’s “Photo of the Day,” which is accompanied by a context note, or by following the blog “Inside the Collection,” which provides the visitor with a kind of behind the scenes look at collections not available for public viewing, as well as

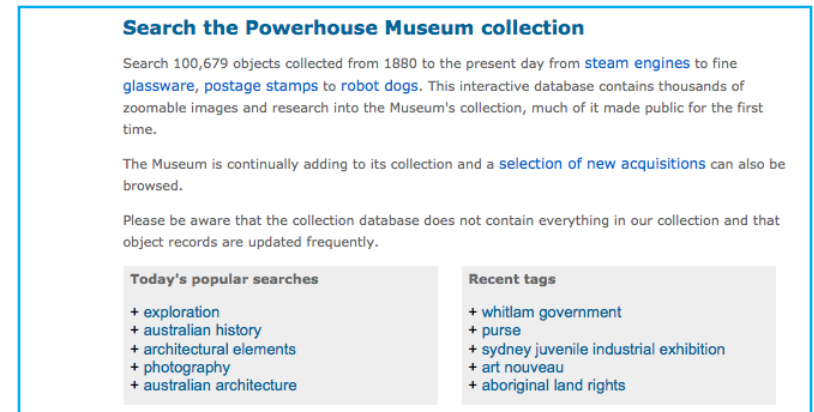


Figure 12: Screen shot of the search page showing “Today’s popular searches” and “Recent tags”

highlights objects that are favorites of the Museum’s curators, registrars, and conservators. There are a myriad of ways that one can enter into the collections held by the Museum, some more deliberate, some favoring the chance discovery, but all creating a sense of engagement with not only the objects, but with other people interested in and/or working for the Museum (See Figure 12).

This multi-modal system of searching, highlighting as it does the idea of “chance discovery” (to use the language of the Museum), very much mirrors how people often first encounter or experience archives. Many archival stories refer to either that serendipitous moment when a key document is found or revealed or they refer to the confusion, the stumbling, halting first attempts at doing archival research (See L’Eplattenier and Mastrangelo, for example). Indeed, in “(En)Gendering the Archives for Basic Writing Research” Kelly Ritter recounts her first forays into archival research:

I sat quietly among other scholars...but no one was talking; no one was noticing me, either, as I wandered, a little aimlessly, back to a seat in the far reaches of the reading room, near the oscillating fan. My nervousness—(*Am I the only one who sweats in the summer?* Apparently.)—led me to other questions that very much resemble the questions we often ask ourselves when we first begin to teach. Am I the only one here who is a visitor, who doesn’t have some ‘legitimate’ affiliation with this institution?

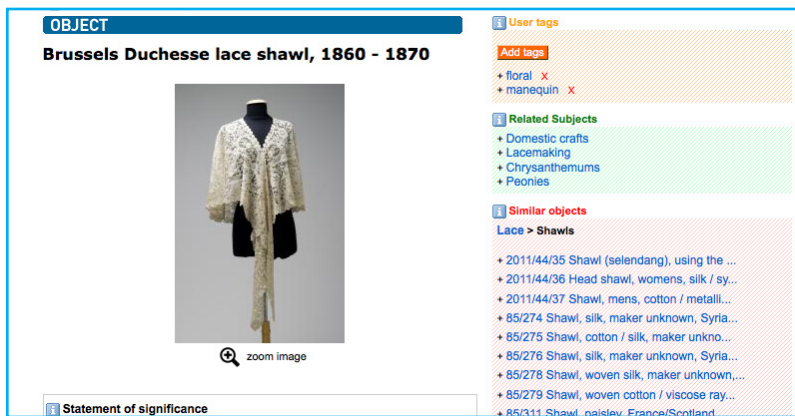


Figure 13: Page for “Brussels Duchesse Lace Shawl.” Note the number of links to other objects on the right side of the page.

Does anyone know that I don’t know what I am doing? Or, to put it more boldly, am I the only *imposter* in the room?” (182) She is not alone in feeling bewildered by the intricacies and unknowns of archival research, which may be part of the appeal of digital archives generally and of archives 2.0 specifically. One is encouraged to “stumble” around, to “talk” to other users, to ask questions, and one can do so in (hopefully, air-conditioned) private spaces.

The Powerhouse Museum’s search strategies allow a particular object’s page to have chance discovery options. Along the right side of the page are links to “tags,” “related subjects,” “similar objects,” and “auto-generated tags.” Under the object are links to “subject tags.” For example, a search for “lace” leads to a Duchesse Lace Shawl from Brussels, made sometime between 1860-1870 (See Figure 13). Once on the page for the shawl, links appear for other shawls held by the Museum and available for viewing digitally, as well as links for related subjects, such as “Chrysanthemums.” If I follow the link for “chrysanthemums,” I enter into a whole other search area that includes thumbnails of items with the same tag, as well as links for “related user keywords” and a “search filter.” The site takes quite seriously its mission to encourage browsing!

I think that these various tags are one of the most interesting navigational and participatory choices utilized by the site. The tags are described as “experimental ways of navigating the collection [and] user added keywords [or tags] are useful in bridging the semantic gap between

the language of the museum and that of the user” (“Browse Tags”). Note that the description doesn’t necessarily portray the museum as the “expert” or as the holder of knowledge; rather, the museum understands the limitations of its descriptive abilities, and relies on the knowledge of users to make the objects readily searchable and findable. In other words, the museum acknowledges the diversity of ways that an object might be seen and described.

Cara Finnegan explores a similar point when she asks “What is this a picture of?” while searching through photographs and negatives in the Farm Security Administration-Office of War Information (FSA-OWI)—a traditional archival space. Specifically, she is referring to her search for a particular, though elusive, photograph:

it features a ragged, middle-aged white man standing on the porch of a rough-hewn cabin in a rural area. His shirt and coveralls have stains and holes, yet the man stands confidently with his hands on his hips, gazing past the right edge of the frame. (116)⁴

Initially she viewed the photograph as depicting the man, but, in trying to find that picture among the thousands stored at FSA-OWI, she realized that the picture was taken to showcase the shack before which the man stands. From this perspectival shift she learned one must “read the file not on [our] terms, but on its own” (117). The reframing enabled her use the FSA’s coding system to her advantage by narrowing down her search. Rather than looking through all the photographs taken by photographer Arthur Rothstein, an endeavor that would have required hours scrolling through microfilm images, she was able to pinpoint the correct subject heading “Homes and Living Conditions.” Through her anecdote, she reminds readers of two things: 1. archives are not always set up to facilitate the research interests and research questions of Rhetoric and Composition scholars, noting that most scholars visiting the FSA seek information on a particular photographer or a specific subject, rather than Finnegan’s interest in tracing a photograph’s circulation over multiple media; and 2. Finnegan reminds us that the “archive is a product of a deliberative process of ‘classification,’” (119), a place we must

⁴ The photograph is available at the following URL: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1998017600/PP/> or by googling the following negative number: “LC-USF34-T01-00042-D.”

rhetorically navigate. Perhaps unwittingly, the Powerhouse Museum is likewise calling for such rhetorical navigation when asking viewers to tag, and thus to provide context and language, for an object.

Another way that archives 2.0 might shape our role as researchers is the openness and accessibility of the archives. They allow for a broader range of users, and not just those who are “qualified” or “experts.” The archives become a less restrictive place (Themier, “Participatory Archives” 61), which might also attract more novice archival scholars or more diverse types of researchers. Those using the archives for academic purposes, like ourselves, are readily able to mingle and work with and/or alongside those outside the academy, thus enabling new research directions, questions, and findings.

In addition, working with or alongside non-rhetoric and composition specialists gives us a greater awareness of the limitations of our own perspectives. Such awareness helps enable us to further our own disciplinary project of, as Donahue and Flesher Moon note in their introduction to *Local Histories*, moving from a single narrative of discipline’s history to one that “extend[s], challenge[s], complicate[s], and [thus] enrich[es] the narrative” (3). Archives 2.0 give us the possibility of new interpretive frames. In “Disciplinary Histories: A Meditation on Beginnings” in *Local Histories*, Patricia Donahue writes that “the writing of disciplinary history is a highly collaborative act; ‘new’ work contains traces of numerous precedents” (223). Presumably, archives 2.0 might enable us to follow these traces or to offer alternative “beginnings.” Further, we might learn from those who first viewed the archival documents, let’s say, not as pieces of history, but as pieces of everyday life—the student who used the syllabus in class, the woman who helped draft that petition, the man whose relatives are in that picture. Essentially, archives 2.0 might help foster a renewed awareness of audience.

Further, the awareness of audience that is essential to archive 2.0 scholarship can help remind us of a lesson Jessica Enoch and Cheryl Glenn highlight in “Invigorating Historiographic Practices in Rhetoric and Composition Studies”: that we need to “consciously acknowledge those who, beyond the researcher and archivist, might be affected by our scholarly conversation” (23). We need to be aware that we write our histories for each other, but also, to a certain degree, for those women who attended the normal schools, for those early abolitionists, for those

female agitators as well as for contemporary readers who exist outside the academy.

Also, because archives 2.0 tend to work best with select types of collections (e.g. as of now those that have a strong audience already in place or at least strong user potential), there is perhaps a clearer awareness of what is not digitized, what is not made available for community involvement/feedback. Researchers must keep in mind that not only is digitizing collections a time and money intensive task, it also must keep pace with the rapidly changing technology.⁵ Indeed, since 1994, the Library of Congress has been digitizing their collections for the American Memory project, but they note that digitization “raises preservation challenges on two fronts: preserving original Library items fully and accurately in digital form; and designing this vast treasury of digital objects so that their utility and accessibility survive and flourish beyond the inevitably limited lifespan of any single technological platform” (“Technical Information”). Therefore, one thing archives 2.0 do not do is obviate the need for visits to time spent in more traditional archive spaces. Archives 2.0 are thus not replacements for traditional archives, but rather are additions to them. For example, in recounting her use of the search engine Google in her own research, Renee Sentilles points out that

had I only relied on digital archives, I would have missed nonverbal clues in my search....Digital reproductions...were not enough; they told tales I had already heard. I needed to see what had been overlooked by curators and archivists posting the materials; I needed to see what had been deemed unimportant. (146)

Key here are the words “deemed unimportant” because they emphasize that someone else judged the importance of the documents. Archival visits allow researchers to make these judgments themselves. Although archives 2.0 do give researchers access to a plethora of new information, that information remains filtered by the decisions made of what and how to digitize and what to make available as an archives 2.0.

⁵ For a somewhat dated, but still enlightening discussion of the costs of digitizing, see the 2007 article from The New York Times: “History, Digitized and Abridged” available here: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/10/business/yourmoney/11archive.html?pagewanted=all>

Another element of archives 2.0 that the aforementioned examples showcase is the non-permanence of these archival spaces. Indeed, “recourse to the virtual archive does not mean that their posterity is any more secure.... The archives which cyberspace houses are no less fragile or vulnerable to disappearance, for a variety of technological, economic, and political reasons” (Burton 3). To help maintain digital collections, archivists create preservation metadata which is used by later archivists who may need to transition the collection to new platforms or make use of new technologies and software. In order for the collections to remain digitally accessible, archivists must have both the resources and the knowledge to continually update their digital collections.

Another key element of archives 2.0 is their ethical dimension. Since, as Huvila notes, archives 2.0 encourage “decentralized curation” they may, as Ridolfo, Hart-Davidson, and McLeod argue, more closely align or reflect the stakeholders’ cultural values and taxonomies. While preservation remains important, so too is the cultural connection between the object and its history. Influenced by Malea Powell’s work with tribal texts, Ridolfo, Hart-Davidson, and McLeod note that

In the traditional archive the text is often turned into an artifact....In the name of preserving culture, cultural contact is cut off, the cultural context fades away, and the text becomes a silent call number with a very limited viewership.

Though as Ridolfo, Hart-Davidson, and McLeod point out, such a silencing can still occur in an archives 2.0 space, there is also great potential for a more dynamic, more usable, and more accessible texts. As they rightly ask: “what do we posit or write about and around the digitized materials to make them findable and to keep them usable, useful?” How can we create archives 2.0 in ways that truly facilitate usability and accessibility without replicating past exclusionary tactics (e.g. taking artifacts away from the creators themselves in the name of preservation)? While I cannot answer these questions here, certainly archives 2.0 help us to think about how we frame a given object, how we decide, to return to Finnegan’s question: “What is this a picture of?”

Discussions about archives 2.0, as well as discussions within archives 2.0 spaces emphasize the rhetoricity of archives themselves, and the fact that, history writing is often a rhetorical act (as rhetoricians Dominink LaCapra, Hans Kellner, and F.R. Ankersmit remind us). As Barbara

Beisecker asserts, rhetorical scholars are uniquely situated to offer rhetorical histories of the archives, the “critical histories of the situated and strategic uses to which archives have been put” (130). By making clear a researcher’s path of inquiry or by acknowledging the evolution of knowledge about a particular artifact, archives 2.0 spaces encourage users to think about questions of authenticity, of authority, and of the history of the archives itself. We can begin to follow how the archive has developed and changed over time through and because of users/researchers and archivists.

I believe there are lessons we can take from archives 2.0 research ideals and put into practice in more traditional archival spaces. Perhaps the most prominent lesson is one that has been reiterated often: develop a relationship with the archivist, see them not as a gatekeeper or a hindrance to a collection, but as a resource throughout the research process. Another strong lesson is the recognition that we can contribute to archives. We can encourage our colleagues to leave their papers to archives, ask archivists about certain holdings thereby encouraging their processing, and continue to actively share our archival experiences with each other. Palmer observes,

Certainly, archives 2.0 remain a somewhat nebulous endeavor, but we must accept that any vision for ‘Archives 2.0’ will remain necessarily elusive, especially as data and archival content will be increasingly uncoupled from the traditional channels of the online finding aid or digital library, and instead will be made available via a plethora of alternative channels, supporting a range of different contexts and user models.

As such, archives 2.0 are less about technology innovation and more about a radical change in our thinking about what archives can or should do and our role as users/researchers of these spaces. I don’t think that archives 2.0 are going to eclipse more traditional archival spaces; rather, as we can see from the Our Archives project, these spaces might become not a secondary archive (since that suggests a hierarchy), but a partner space. We create an archival parellism where exchanges happen side by side between the digital and the traditional archive. This partner space can help us elucidate our own research endeavors within traditional archives, even as they provoke new relationships and new connections in the digital realm, and can only strengthen the practice of doing history.

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"Ain't I a Woman": Using Feminist Rhetorical Practices to Re-set the Terms of Scholarly Engagement for an Iconic Text

Jacqueline Jones Royster

In *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Directions for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy*, Gesa E. Kirsch and I conducted an inventory of scholarly work in rhetoric, composition, and literacy, focusing on women's participation and achievements in rhetorical action, variously rendered. With the data generated, we created a topology of specific types of methodologies that take into account not just gender but other points of reference as well, for example race, ethnicity, class, status, sexuality, geographical location, ideological values, rhetorical domains, genres, modes of expression, and so forth. Our intention was to articulate the range of analytical and interpretive tools being used by feminist researchers and teachers in rhetoric, composition, and literacy. Our analysis resulted in our proposing an enhanced analytical model that, in broad strokes, draws attention to four inquiry processes that add value to our work in both research and teaching.^{1,2} These processes are critical imagination, strategic contemplation,

¹ I would like to thank especially Professor Tammie Kennedy and the undergraduate students at the University of Nebraska at Omaha who were enrolled in her Researching and Writing Women's Lives course in 2010 and who read and provided such thoughtful feedback to me on an earlier draft of this article.

² For a more detailed discussion of these processes see: Jacqueline J. Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch, *Feminist Rhetorical Studies: New Directions for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP 2011).

social circulation, and globalization. We posit that each process constitutes a set of lenses by which we can interrogate rhetorical events and situations and gain a more fully textured insight into rhetorical action as a global human enterprise.

My intention in this essay is to take just one of these lenses, social circulation, as an opportunity to re-think the ways in which we might gain a more generative understanding of one of the most iconic texts of the nineteenth-century women’s movement, Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman.” I apply the term as a touchstone for the complex ways in which feminist practices involve connections among past, present, and future in the sense that women’s rhetorical actions are intertwined throughout the overlapping circles in which women travel, live, and work and that these practices are carried on or modified from one circle to the next, from one generation to the next. My goal in using this approach is to re-tell the story of Truth’s speech with historical facts that we now know about the context in which it was made and to suggest that this re-told tale has considerably more to highlight for feminist discourses and American rhetorical history than we have brought attention to in the past.

Understanding the Truth speech within such a context requires a preliminary understanding of critical relationships between local and national women’s activism in the nineteenth century. From a local perspective, in Akron, Ohio, on May 28-29, 1851, an elite group of white women gathered to discuss women’s rights. The meeting raises questions about the relationship between this Ohio meeting and the first national meeting on women’s rights three years earlier in Seneca Falls, New York, on July 19-20, 1848.

The Akron Convention: A Landscape View

In contemporary scholarship, we acknowledge that the Seneca Falls meeting and the *Declaration of Sentiments* that emerged as its manifesto was the launch pad for the nineteenth-century woman’s rights movement. In the context of abolitionist activism

in the decades preceding 1850, the Seneca Falls Convention was an extension of liberation struggles and constituted a moment of coalescence for the passionate desires of white women activists to work in their own interests, rather than just the interests of enslaved African Americans. Their effort was to gain equal rights for women, including not only political rights, and specifically the right to vote, but also economic, educational, and social rights as well. By all accounts, Seneca Falls was successful in engendering the desired momentum. Women from across the country walked away from this meeting inspired and encouraged by the conversations and interactions. Such was the case with the women from Ohio.

The Seneca Falls meeting greatly energized the Ohioans, so much so that they organized themselves at the state level with their own interests and priorities in order to agitate for change motion. They set in motion in a generative way, the circulation of ideas, interests, and frameworks for action that were gaining momentum in the national meeting. Drawing from the national discourses, the Ohioans applied general frameworks for women’s rights to their local conditions. In Ohio, as in other places, the goal of equality—whether political, economic, educational, social, or a combination—was a very ambitious one, with considerable opposition not simply from white male power elites but also from a highly entrenched local and national culture in which patriarchy and sexist oppression reigned alongside the oppressions of race and class hierarchies. In this way, the Akron meeting as a local story was very much a part of a national story as well with the Ohioans working collectively across their communities for change and linking these efforts to the national agenda. Consequently, the Akron meeting offers specific evidence of both the desires of Ohio women for local change and the growing momentum of the national movement.

Quite interestingly, however, the Akron meeting had an unanticipated outcome. Over the generations, it has actually become best known, not for the way in which Ohio women

participated in forwarding women’s activist agenda—locally and nationally—but for one speech act that occurred during the meeting: an extemporaneous statement made by Sojourner Truth. As documented by media accounts of its own day, the rhetorical event, widely recognized now as the “Ain’t I a Woman” speech, was deemed successful. Most powerfully, though, through the decades this speech has come to function instrumentally in race and gender discourses as a mythological display of equity, justice, and action.

Even so, in American feminist rhetorical history, the substantive potential of this much quoted and even more persistently appropriated speech still remains largely unrealized. Too often, it seems we swallow this event whole, as if it were indeed our own feminist version of a Camelot-like creation myth, a narrative within which Sojourner Truth is positioned and re-position in two ways: as inspiration—i.e., quite literally a breathing of life into our master narratives of feminist eloquence, activism, and action—or as essentially untouchable in the sense that the issues tied now to the veracity and credibility of the moment have made us turn away with academic fear and trepidation. Both positions, of course, are intriguing in that they seem to emanate from the same dis-ease, i.e, a lack of attention and priority to multi-dimensional analyses—to taking a reflective, reflexive, dialectical, poly-logical stance in interrogations, a process that might prime us to ask: So, what was really going on here? How do we stand back from the simplicity and forthrightness of the basic account of eloquence to see more than what we might perceive at first sight or hear at a first listening? How do we go beyond the pathos of the moment to the logos and ethos of it? How do we shift our viewpoints from one point of interrogation to another nimbly enough so that we can grab better hold of what’s what and what else—other than inspiration and fabrication—this moment might mean?

Social Circulation as an Analytical Lever

Social circulation, as used in addressing such questions, draws directly from cultural studies, and particularly from the concept of circuits of culture, as espoused, for example, by Stuart Hall (1997) and from similar uses in composition studies, as theorized by John Trimbur (2000) in his discussions of the circulation of writing. In *Feminist Rhetorical Studies*, we argue that by taking a closer look at the processes by which women engage rhetorically in various sites and domains—traditional or not, we’re able to see how a more multi-variant analysis of women’s practices sets in motion the idea that rhetoric is evolutionary, not just revolutionary. Paying attention to social circulation helps us to: 1) understand the analytical and interpretive values added by placing women in social space, rather than only in private, public, or institutional space and 2) understand how ideas and habits might seep beyond specific social circles and communities, travel through time and space, re-locate, and become re-used for many purposes.

Our use of the term, then, suggests that, social circulation is specifically useful as a tool in feminist rhetorical analysis. By encouraging multi-focality and multi-vocality across time and space, social circulation serves to illuminate women’s lives, practices, and achievements. It helps, on one hand, to bring visibility and audibility to the ways in which women’s words and action are mediated through personal, social, and political agenda and through the various and sundry relationships that surround them. On the other hand, the approach ultimately draws attention to the dynamic realities of the use and re-use of specific moments and actions for an ever-evolving range of self-determined or community-determined rhetorical purposes.

Using these types of inquiry strategies aligns well with Clifford Geertz’s (2000) sailing metaphor of tacking in and tacking out, with the idea of rendering views of our points of scholarly interests that are more thickly textured. Tacking out with the Truth speech, we

recognize the synchronic and diachronic success of the speech—in its original delivery and in the ways in which it lives on in rhetorical and feminist histories. Tacking in, we take the complementary on-the-ground step of examining more closely the specific moments: the moment of delivery, specific moments of use and re-use, the contexts and conditions of its migration. The goal of such analyses is to be diligent about the facts and features of the content, context, and conditions of the original rhetorical moment, as well as about the impacts and consequences of its uses over time. The task is to be deliberately reflective, reflexive, dialectical, and poly-logical in interrogating the act, scene, and situation, all with the desired outcome of enhancing our capacity to engage the speech as a rhetorical problem, issue, and challenge, not only in a robust way, but also a socially and ethically conscious one. As Geertz suggests, by such methods, we enhance our capacity to deepen and broaden insights, enabling a more generative understanding of the speech and its rhetorical functioning. The familiar and iconic territory of “Ain’t I a Woman,” as a passionate and provocative appeal, becomes, as Geertz would say, “strange,” and the “stranger” details of its ethical and logical implications become strikingly familiar, with the speech re-positioned as a provocative display of ideas in motion.

This approach aligns most immediately with the methodological expectation that looking and looking again and again at a familiar subject permits us to see that, with each examination, there may be more to be noticed, more to be heard, more to be understood. The value added is that social circulation as an inquiry tool helps us magnify and amplify the actual details of the moment; helps us establish specific points of reference for marking and monitoring the ebbs and flows of uses, for taking into account different contexts for different purposes; and helps us see with greater clarity how sense-making enterprises might morph and change across time, geographical space, and context.

Looking again at the “Ain’t I a Woman” speech, we examine what we know about how the event functioned in its own time

and space as we track how it morphs and changes in the hands of others at different times, in different spaces, in response to different agendas. One implication of this analytical approach is the need to acknowledge explicitly, given feminist practices in rhetorical studies, that a dialectical perspective in knowledge-making is valuable. We gain understanding, not just from synchronic and diachronic analyses, but from their calibrations and intersections. By these sorts of dialectical, reflective, reflexive inquiry strategies, we enhance our capacity to notice within the matrix of details generated connections that might otherwise go unnoticed and unconsidered. Moreover, we gain not only a clearer sense of potential patterns created from the ways in which remnants and resonances of the original events travel, but also what factors from among these choices we either leave behind or continue to take with us—iconically, mythologically, and often rather transparently.

To illustrate that the Truth speech is a provocative case in point, this discussion posits it as a thrice-told tale: 1. as a materially constituted event that happened during the Akron convention; 2. as an account of the event as circulated through the socio-political prism of Abolitionist interests; and 3. as an account of an event that reached epic proportions as a result of being continually circulated and re-circulated over several generations through the socio-political prism of women’s activism and feminist analysis.

The Akron Convention: A Thrice-Told Tale The Convention as an Event

As stated earlier, the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, with its production of the controversial *Declaration of Sentiments*, gave rise across the nation to a wave of white feminist desire for action and thus, the first woman’s rights movement. Women from Ohio were energized. In their second, 1851, statewide meeting, a gathering was planned for Akron. It was led by two women, both of whom had multiple socio-political interests and commitments—to

abolitionism, woman’s suffrage, and temperance.³ One of the leaders was Hannah Conant Tracy (Cutler) (1815-1896) from Rochester, Ohio. Tracy was a regionally recognized journalist and also very much a Renaissance woman who had studied “lyrically,” as suggested by Marcia Farr’s use of the term, in venues in which her husband was studying (e.g., law at Oberlin College). After her husband’s sudden death in 1844, in 1847, Tracey herself enrolled at the age of 32 in Oberlin. The next year she accepted a position as matron of the Deaf and Dumb Asylum (an institution now known as the Ohio School for the Deaf) in Columbus, and in 1849 she was appointed principal of the female department at a new publicly funded high school in Columbus. Later in life, at the age of 53, she also obtained a medical degree, evidencing her ongoing passion for knowledge-based activism, related particularly to the gendered realities of the time regarding property ownership, the nature of women’s bodies, and the implications of women’s health issues.

Tracy’s co-leader was Frances Dana Barker Gage (1808-1884) from McConnelsville, a well-known writer in the region, who used the name “Aunt Fanny,” to write children’s books and poetry. Gage was also a regular contributor of essays, letters, and poetry to several periodical publications as well, including the *Western Literary Magazine*, *The National Anti-Slavery Standard*, and the *Saturday Review*. By 1851, Gage was becoming increasingly linked with the convergences of abolition, women’s rights, and temperance—in that order. At the Akron meeting, she was tapped to preside, with Tracy to serve as secretary.

The meeting had national as well as local participation. Attending was a cross-section of prominent activist women and

³ This account of the Akron meeting and key participants is drawn from several internet sources, related to the following topics, including *Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600-2000*; “First Women’s Rights Movement” at *Ohio History Center*; Butler’s “Sojourner Truth Speeches and Commentary” at *Sojourner Truth Institute of Battle Creek, Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography*, and *The Proceedings of the Woman’s Rights Convention, Akron, Ohio, May 28 and 29, 1851*. See also Sylvia D. Hoffert, 2004; Sally McMillen, 2008; Nell Painter, 1994; Swisshelm, 2005.

men from Ohio, as well as well-known participants from beyond Ohio, e.g., women leaders such as Jane Grey Cannon Swisshelm, a nationally recognized abolitionist, women’s rights advocate, and journalist from Pittsburgh. In addition, several letters were read from other national figures, such as Amelia Bloomer, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and others.⁴ Then, there was Sojourner Truth, who at the time was one of the best known African American women advocates for abolition and women’s rights in the United States. The question is: Who was Sojourner Truth? What is certain is that she was not an elite white woman and quite clearly, as an African American woman, she was in a minority, if not absolutely alone, within this group in terms of race and status. So, how did she come to be there?

Sojourner Truth as Un-invited Rhetor

Sojourner Truth was born in 1797 as a slave to Elizabeth and James Bomefree (Baumfree) in a Dutch-speaking rural community in Ulster County, New York, west of the Hudson River, north of New York City.⁵ She was one of 13 children, all of whom, including Truth, were sold away from their parents to be slaves in households other than the one into which they were born. Truth was treated as “property.” She passed through several hands over the first three decades of her life, doing, at the will of others, many different kinds of labor. In 1817, her owner at the time, John Dumont of New Paltz, New York, had the power and privilege to marry her to a slave named Thomas. Truth had a total of 5 children: two older children with Robert, an enslaved man whom she loved but who was forbidden by his owner to marry her and three with Thomas,

⁴ See Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Ida Husted Harper. eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, Volume 1 for a listing of women and men leaders who attended the meeting and others who sent letters (114).

⁵ The account of Sojourner Truth’s life is drawn from several sources including: Painter (1996); Truth (1988); and various websites as cited in the Works Cited at the end of this essay.

one of whom, as suggested by available evidence (See Painter 1996), died in infancy.⁶

In 1827, around the age of 30, Truth was freed under the state of New York’s gradual emancipation law—after she had already walked away from Dumont a year earlier and “freed herself” and her youngest child. In 1829, she began the sojourn that would move her toward a career as an itinerant evangelical preacher, an abolitionist speaker, and an advocate for the rights of Africans in America and women. With the help of various white activist friends, including Marius Robinson, editor of the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* (Salem, Ohio), she traveled often, attending all sorts of meetings across the northeast where freedom and justice were at issue. At such meetings, Truth would speak; after 1850 and her autobiography’s publication, she would also sell her books. Venues at which she spoke included the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 in New York, the Worcester Convention in 1850 in Massachusetts, and in 1851, the Akron convention in Ohio.

As documented by Painter (1996), brief accounts of Truth’s speech were published in the *New York Tribune* (June 6, 1851) and *The Liberator* (June 11, 1851). A more complete version was published in the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* (June 21, 1851). Twelve years later on April 23, 1863, Frances Dana Gage published a different version of the speech in the *New York Independent*. This 1863 version was re-printed after yet another 12 years in 1875 in *History of Woman Suffrage*, Volume 1, edited by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage. This volume was, then, re-published in 1881 and 1889. The Gage version, popularly named the “Ain’t I a Woman” speech, because of an often repeated refrain, began during this period to function as the standard account of Truth’s speech. This oft-circulated version has come to be received, over the generations in discourses related to social activism, as an

⁶ Robert’s owner was incensed by the fact that Robert was bearing children with Truth for another owner’s profit. Robert’s owner beat him nearly to death and then married him off to an enslaved woman on his own plantation. Robert died of his injuries shortly thereafter.

eloquent and poignant intersectional manifesto for freedom, equity, and justice.

A Twice-Told Tale: The Robinson Version

The frequently anthologized Gage version is familiar. For this analysis, however, it is instructive to consider the far less known Robinson version⁷ in order to acknowledge the conceptual differences between this more contemporaneous version and the Gage representation.

Truth made her statement on May 29, 1851 and Robinson published his journalistic report of the speech on June 21, 1851, in the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* in Salem, Ohio. As indicated by the name of the paper, the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* was an abolitionist paper. According to the website of the Western Reserve Historical Society, Rev. Marius R. Robinson [1806-1878] was an itinerant lecturer for the American Anti-Slavery Society in Ohio (1836-1839) and later editor of the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* (Salem, Ohio). Born in Dalton, Massachusetts, July 29, 1806, Robinson was an apprenticed printer, bookbinder, and schoolteacher of the Cherokee Nation. He began his Anti-Slavery crusade in Cincinnati in 1836, the same year he met and married Emily Rakestraw [a fellow abolitionist]. In the fall of that same year, he was commissioned by the American Anti-Slavery Society.

Robinson had worked as a teacher among the Cherokee. By 1851, he had already worked as an abolitionist in Ohio for 15 years. Being an outspoken opponent of slavery during this time (1836-1851) was a very dangerous enterprise, since Ohio was indeed a battleground state, with some of the most contentious issues before the Civil War being slavery, abolition, and a range of ideological perspectives

⁷Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996. 125-6.

about the presence of African Americans in Ohio.⁸ There were divisions between pro-slavery and abolitionist attitudes across the state, as well as divisions within the abolitionist group, with some of the more radical elements among the abolitionists based in the northeastern part of the state in sites such as Akron and Salem. Simultaneously, there were also Black Laws in Ohio enacted by the Ohio legislature, beginning with the founding of the state in 1803, to prevent African Americans from entering and staying in Ohio and to constrain their social, political, and economic participation in Ohio communities.

Despite these hostilities, the Ohio River served as a frequent passage for enslaved African Americans to freedom and from which many lines along the Underground Railroad extended, so much so that the African American population in Ohio grew in a lively way during the first half of the nineteenth century. Still, the Underground Railroad was underground because it functioned in defiance of law and practice. Being visible as an outspoken African American or being outspoken as a white advocate for abolition or a railroad agent was dangerous in many areas across the state, and men and women such as Sojourner Truth and Marius Robinson often took their lives in their hands when they engaged publicly in abolitionist activities.

Amid this environment, the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* was an important voice in Ohio for the Abolitionist Movement, and it was, therefore, no surprise that Robinson attended the Akron meeting and took particular note of Sojourner Truth's participation as a frequent fellow speaker for abolitionist causes. In his report of the events, Robinson stated,

One of the most unique and interesting speeches of the convention was made by Sojourner Truth, an emancipated slave. It is impossible to transfer it to paper, or convey any adequate idea of the effect it produced upon the audience.

⁸ For more specific details about Ohio during this era, see: Lupold and Haddad, 1988; Roseboom and Weisenburger, 1996; Hagedorn, 2004; Middleton, 2005; Seibert, 2006.

Those only can appreciate it who saw her powerful form, her whole-souled, earnest gesture, and listened to her strong and truthful tones. She came forward to the platform and addressing the President said with great simplicity "May I say a few words?" Receiving an affirmative answer, she proceeded

I want to say a few words about this matter. I am a woman's rights. I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man. I have plowed and reaped and husked and chopped and mowed, and can any man do more than that? ----- I have heard much about the sexes being equal. I can carry as much as any man, and can eat as much too, if I can get it. I am as strong as any man that is now. As for intellect, all I can say is, if a woman have a pint, and a man a quart – why can't she have her little pint full? ----- You need not be afraid to give us our rights for fear we will take too much, – for we can't take more than our pint'll hold. The poor men seems to be all in confusion, and don't know what to do. Why children, if you have woman's rights, give it to her and you will feel better. You will have your own rights, and they won't be so much trouble. ----- I can't read, but I can hear. I have heard the bible and have learned that Eve caused man to sin. Well, if woman upset the world, do give her a chance to set it right side up again. ---- The Lady has spoken about Jesus, how he never spurned woman from him, and she was right. When Lazarus died, Mary and Martha came to him with faith and love and besought him to raise their brother. And Jesus wept and Lazarus came forth. ---- And how came Jesus into the world? Through God who created him and the woman who bore him. Man, where was your part? --- But the women are coming up blessed be God and a few of the men are coming up with them. But man is in a tight place, the poor slave is on him,

woman is coming on him, ---- he is surely between a hawk and a buzzard. [Original punctuation]

Consider this rendering of the Truth statement through the lens of the Abolitionist Movement. Robinson presents it as the perspective of an emancipated slave, with no particular attention drawn by Robinson, beyond Truth's statement itself, to the fact that she was a slave woman. Robinson acknowledged "her powerful form," and he emphasized her "whole-souled, earnest gesture," and her "strong and truthful tones." In other words, he noted her rhetorical presence and power and her physical prowess and forwarded this image and performance as embodied testimony against slavery. Notably, this version was not presented in a visual rendering of African American dialect, but as a less dramatic journalistic report. The Gage version was different.

A Twice-Told Tale: The Gage Version

Published twelve years after the Akron meeting, more than a decade removed from the original context and occasion, the rhetorical occasion for Frances Dana Gage's account was not to chronicle the original event as the news of the day. It was, as it was called, the reminiscences of the writer. The question, is how this re-use of the event function for a new social circulation. What were the occasion, imperatives, and purposes of the re-use?

Nell Irvin Painter's quite thorough study of the life of Sojourner Truth (*Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol*, 1996) documents the details surrounding the Gage publication. According to Painter, during the Civil War, Gage was a volunteer who went to Parris Island, South Carolina, in 1863 to serve the Union cause as a teacher and nurse. In April of that year, she read an article, "Sojourner Truth, the Libyan Sybil," published in *The Atlantic Monthly* by well-known writer, Harriet Beecher Stowe.⁹ Less than a month later, on April 23, 1863, the New York *Independent*

⁹ See Harriet Beecher Stowe, "Sojourner Truth, the Libyan Sibyl," *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 1863): 473-81. See also Chapter 17 in Painter (1996, 151-63) for a critical analysis of

published an essay by Gage focused on her reminiscences of Sojourner Truth. Gage introduces her essay in this way

The story of "Sojourner Truth," by Mrs. H.B. Stowe, in the April number of *The Atlantic* will be read by thousands in the East and West with intense interest; and as those who knew this remarkable woman will lay down this periodical, there will be heard in home-circles throughout Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois many an anecdote of the weird, wonderful creature, who was at once a marvel and a mystery.

Mrs. Stowe's remarks on Sojourner's opinion of Woman's Rights bring vividly to my mind a scene in Ohio, never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it. In the spring of 1851, a Woman's Rights Convention was called in Akron, Ohio, by the friends of that then wondrously unpopular cause. I attended that Convention. No one at this day can conceive of the state of feeling of the multitude that came together on that occasion . . . (as quoted in Painter, 164-5)

With this introduction, Gage proceeds to offer the dramatic account of Truth's speech that has come to be known as the "Ain't I a Woman" speech.

Painter's research has now well-established that the Gage version of the speech is greatly flawed and arguably much farther from being "authentic" as a representation of Truth's actual speech than the Robinson version. For example, Gage represented the speech in a stereotyped Southern black dialect. By contrast, Truth's actual speech pattern was defined and shaped by the fact that Dutch was her first language, not English. She was sold at nine to an English-speaking family who was extremely impatient with her for not understanding or speaking English and beat her constantly. She learned English, then, under the lash. What were the sounds of a Dutch-influenced, uneducated English dialect in the nineteenth

Stowe's article. Painter establishes that, like the Gage article, the Stowe article is also flawed in terms of accuracy.

century? Quite likely, the sounds were not one and the same as those that we recognize as stereotyped Southern black dialects, or even as the dialectical patterns that would have been evident in 1863 in South Carolina or on the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina, where there were very strong Africanisms present in the language practices of a population that was fairly isolated on their island plantations.¹⁰

Evidence suggests that Gage also added ideas that were not actually spoken, assigning to Truth several assertions, such as the statement that Truth could bear the lash as well as a man; that no one ever offered her the traditional gentlemanly deference to a woman; and that most of her 13 children were sold away from her into slavery. In contrast, Painter documents that the actual evidence of Truth’s life suggests that in her talks Truth focused instead on work rather than physical abuse and on her strength rather than a desire for deference to her femaleness. Moreover, we know that, while Truth was one of 13 children herself, all of whom were sold from their parents, she gave birth to only 5 children, with one son being sold away at one point. (In contrast to the typically forced separation of a child from his or her parents through a sale, we know that Truth petitioned the courts for her child’s return, one of the few African American women to fight back through the legal system during this era. She was successful, and her son was indeed returned to her.)

In addition, Gage represented the atmosphere of the meeting as hostile to the white women who were attending and to the idea of Truth speaking. Other reports of the convention suggest, however, that the audience was quite congenial, filled mostly with abolitionists who were supportive of both women’s rights and civil rights. Still, it is quite likely true that while some of the women in attendance may have been anti-slavery, since such attitudes are already well documented throughout the course of the American

women’s rights struggles, these anti-slavery women may not have wanted their own cause as elite white women to be conflated with and tinted by the abolitionist cause of Black people.

So a reasonable contrast to the image painted by Gage is that, to the extent that there was hostility in the room, it might more likely have been directed toward Truth as a person with whom some in the room may not have wished to be identified. This possibility suggests that Truth did not “save” the day for the white women present, as the prevailing master narrative suggests. Instead, it is likely that she redeemed the day rather radically, not for white women, but for the inclusion of African American women’s vision and experiences as part of the discourse on women’s rights, a point of contention between white women and African American women that would resound through the decades and continues to do so even now.

As a “creator” of a historical narrative, Gage was successful, as confirmed by the length of its use and re-use over time, in presenting a profile of Sojourner Truth that was capable of competing with the profile presented by Harriet Beecher Stowe in *The Atlantic Monthly*. Stowe presented Truth from an informal encounter at a social gathering. Gage presented Truth based on a compelling moment at a political event. Perhaps more meaningfully in the long run is that, in creating her narrative, Gage was astute in capturing, whether consciously or not, the intersectional eloquence of Truth’s speech, and in preserving for future generations what has now become a bedrock view of the social construction of “woman” as a category. One might make the argument, then, that, while Gage may perhaps have been motivated in 1863 by a perceived professional rivalry with Stowe, she nevertheless spent time in her narrative making more audible the silences between Truth’s ideas and then connecting the dots to make clearer the intersections of race **and** gender as the lived experience that Truth was proclaiming.

I suggest that Gage in doing this did not simply grab the authority to speak for Sojourner Truth and present a fiction.

¹⁰ See Turner, 2002 and Rickford and Rickford, 2000.

Rather, she took the authority and license of a writer, a storyteller, a composer of a narrative moment to use her rhetorical skills to dramatic effect, to tell a good and convincing story, one that was likely to bring recognition to herself as a leader and writer as well as recognition to Sojourner Truth as the person whom she was profiling. She wrote her memoir, of course, without indicating in her narrative that she was filling in conceptual logics and without confirming which details in her essay were factual and which were exaggerated or that she presented any exaggerations at all. She presented her reminiscences as the “truth” of Truth.

In exhibiting these skills and taking such bold liberties with the narrative, Gage succeeded, consciously or not, in offering not just a rhetorical display of her own worth as a writer and her personal knowledge of Sojourner Truth as the subject of her essay, but also a creative and cleverly rendered view of nineteenth-century womanhood. Again, consciously or not, she endowed the profile that she created with a version of womanhood that was not embodied by herself or by the particular white women present at the convention, but rather deeply embodied by the physical presence of Sojourner Truth in their company. This view of woman overtly recognized the richness of the category “woman” as gendered, raced, and also classed, a view that continues to resonate in the hearts, minds, souls, and experiences of women today—especially in terms of the continuities of oppressions imposed in American society by the intersections of race, gender, social status, and material experiences. So, in essence, Truth spoke on a specific occasion within a specific context from her own standpoint, and Gage wrote for a different occasion within a different context from her understanding of this standpoint. Both, in their own ways, were successful in mirroring their perspectives for others—Truth in her personal performance at the meeting; Gage in her re-invention and amplification of that moment twelve years later in the interest of achieving a different effect.

Shifting the Perspective

As a journalistic report, Robinson’s article did capture, nevertheless, some of the same discursive flavors as the Gage narrative, even though Robinson did not himself highlight the intersection of race and gender issues in Truth’s speech. His version offers an instructive balance to the Gage version for considering the nature, scope and impact of Truth’s performance as a singular rhetorical event in its own space and time. For example, both writers note Truth’s compelling physical presence and her oratorical power, and they both attribute to her similar figurative language. By contrast, Robinson’s version is shorter, less cohesive, and shows less evidence, thereby, of an experienced rhetorical hand, exhibiting by these means more markings of the extemporaneous speech that both Robinson and Gage categorized it to be.

Given the proximity in time between the speech and the Robinson article, we might easily conclude that Robinson’s journalistic version is likely to be closer to Truth’s actual speech than the Gage narrative one. This conclusion underscores the point that the Gage version was significantly separated from Truth’s performance moment in time and space; it emanated from a different exigency; and it shows more evidence of a writerly hand, a “composition,” as it were, rather than an account—as described in the analysis below. A simple interpretation, therefore, is to say that the Robinson version suggests that Gage engaged in a considerable amount of invention. Most certainly, she took considerable creative license in dramatizing and amplifying the details. By the same token, though, we must also take the Robinson version with caution. Though less dramatic in effect, his version is also quite likely not “fact,” as we defined by contemporary standards of evidence.

In matters of fact, with both the Robinson and Gage texts, what we know about what Sojourner Truth actually said within this setting comes to us second-hand. Both reports are part of a tertiary

cycle in the circulation of public memory and public lore. In other words, the extemporaneous speech delivered by Sojourner Truth was rendered differently in texts by two members of the listening audience. Over the decades, though, the Robinson version was ignored and Truth’s speech has been memorialized via the Gage version as a vibrant part of public memory. Obviously, at the time of her speech, Truth was not electronically recorded. We are unable, therefore, to hear the speech for ourselves as an original real-time speech. Further, there is no written text from which Truth spoke. Beyond the presumption that Truth was illiterate, the speech, in fact, was not from a prepared text but the result of a kairotic moment and an extemporaneous opportunity to express Truth’s vision, ideas, feelings, and observations, all of which were grounded in her lived experiences. The texts that exist, then, are both second-hand versions of an expressive moment, a function of how two members of the audience,—one male, one female—experienced the performance moment, remembered and rendered the words, and interpreted the experience as members of the listening audience. At the end of the day, instead of historic documentation of an event via these two textual renderings, what we have might be better characterized as two credible witnesses and their persuasive testimony of a remarkable moment.

Based on what we now know and acknowledge about the event, we must accept, therefore, the questionable status of the authenticity and veracity of the textual renderings. Despite the factual breaks, especially as evidenced in the Gage version, dialectical and dialogical viewpoints suggests that both the journalistic account and the memoir are still grounded by Truth’s performance, by the experiences and observations that Truth shared, and by the realities and responses that her performance invoked in the hearts, minds, stomachs, and backbones of (i.e., pathos, logos, and ethos conveyed to) the listening audience. We can accept the flaws, therefore, as substantial, but we can also consider a different analytical springboard.

Instead of yoking analysis to the accuracy of the rendered texts, we have the strategic option of weighing and balancing the written testimony of these witnesses dialogically and dialectically and situating our assessments of them within the context of the rise of the Gage version as an iconic (though often historically inaccurate) story, i.e., as a mythos in order to take advantage of the opportunity to gain a different perspective of the ongoing impact and success of the moment. Without a doubt, whatever Truth actually said that day, we have learned and can still learn more about race and gender discourses over time and about Sojourner Truth’s participation in these discourses. By examining how the Gage version has migrated from one social circle to another to another and by acknowledging both the agency and instrumentality of Truth’s roles in the creation and functioning of this version, we gain a clearer understanding of how the moment has been used and re-used in fomenting public discourses and social change for well over 160 years.

If we concentrate not just on the critical amount of documentable evidence that is missing, but also on the body of evidence that is actually present, the challenge becomes using the balancing of evidence and gaps in evidence as an invitation to dig deeper. In contemporary feminist rhetorical studies, we have an inclination to go beneath such surface interpretations. We recognize now that the analytical imperative is to develop inquiry frameworks that permit us to excavate—to go beyond basic notions of documentable evidence and “accuracy” in a situation like this one to ask questions capable of adding illumination, not only for the nature and scope of the rhetorical performance, but also for its ongoing impact and meaning in the grand schema of rhetorical knowledge and practice.

We might start in this case by asking What are the truths that we know? Well, we know that there was a convening of elite white women and men in Akron, Ohio, from May 19-20, 1848. We know that Sojourner Truth attended this meeting as part of her speaking circuit with George Thompson, the abolitionist with whom she

was traveling. We know that her habit on such occasions was to speak about anti-slavery and women’s rights, in recognition of the multiple jeopardies with which African American women are compelled to function, and to share her personal experiences as a slave. We know some other things as well.

We know that, by 1848 and the rise of the nineteenth-century women’s movement, Sojourner Truth was one of the most recognized African American women in the United States, and she was becoming even more so with William Lloyd Garrison’s private publication of her autobiographical narrative, as dictated to Olive Gilbert. We also know, that Truth was drawn to the Akron convention, not only by opportunities to speak out for justice and equality, but also by opportunities for a different imperative. Truth was entrepreneurial and practical (Painter, 1996). She wanted to sell books so that she could re-pay the considerable sum that she owed Garrison and so that she might garner an income that was sufficient enough to support herself. Thus, even though Truth had multiple reasons for attending the convention, she was still, in effect, an un-invited, though not totally unexpected, participant in a meeting that was not designed with women like her (by race, class, condition, or rank) in mind.

We know that the presence of Sojourner Truth and the incidence of her memorable statement at the convention was not officially noted in the documentary record. Truth’s name was not mentioned, neither in the proceedings from the meeting (*Women’s Rights Convention, Akron, Ohio, 1851: The Proceedings*), nor in the opening speech that Gage made on May 28th (*Women and Social Movements*). Despite the mythologies that surround Truth’s participation in the convention, she was not recognized in the documentary evidence of the meeting as present or as an “official” speaker. Instead, we can surmise that Truth was a self-authorized speaker—a woman who stood up, spoke up and out, and was tolerated, rather than invited. According to the reports from both Robinson and Gage, she did not actually assume the podium. She

made one, creating a space for herself to speak, rather than giving a “speech,” as others were doing as authorized participants.

The bottom line, though, is that Truth’s speech has migrated well beyond its original moment and context and well beyond the original purposes and intentions of the speaker as an entrepreneurial performer, eloquent rhetor, and intersectional thinker. Consequently, instead of laboring over the existence or non-existence of textual facts that will never be fully in evidence, we might benefit more from considering the impact of the public lore surrounding the speech as it has circulated over time in social context and look more closely at how the speech as this type of memorial, rather than as a historical text, functions as a socio-political symbol, a mythos, and as a curious and rather complex and strategic occasion for action.

For example, we can start by acknowledging that Gage’s narrative was a memoir, i.e., her own perception of a moment, a moment that re-emerged for her kairotically twelve years later as a rhetorical mechanism for claiming a relationship as an author to a bigger-than-life historical figure—as indicated by her statement, “Mrs. Stowe’s remarks on Sojourner’s opinion of Woman’s Rights bring vividly to my mind a scene in Ohio, never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it” (165). In essence, Gage talks back to Stowe and says, “I knew her too.” Moreover, twelve years after that, Gage again leverages her memoir about Truth by putting it forward in the effort of the National Woman Suffrage Association to historicize the women’s movement at the turn of the twentieth century and keep it energized. Within such a context, we can view Gage’s depiction of Truth as functioning within the territory of what Sharon Crowley (2004) explains as the use of ethical proofs.

By these terms, consider Gage’s description of Truth’s persona¹¹ as an indication, not of fact, but of Gage’s sense of Truth’s ethos—a use of Truth’s situated ethos, rather than an accounting of the

¹¹ All quotations from the Gage text are taken from Stanton, Anthony, Gage, and Harper. (1889, 115-17).

invented ethos which Truth persistently fashioned for herself throughout her career. In other words, the “Ain’t I a Woman” speech is Gage’s representation of the moment, not Truth’s self-representation of the moment. The reminder is that Truth was neither writer nor collaborator in the Gage account. The point of view over the distance of 12 years was Gage’s. Gage described Truth in this way

The leaders of the movement trembled on seeing a tall, gaunt black woman in a gray dress and white turban, surmounted with an uncouth sunbonnet, march deliberately into the church, walk with the air of a queen up the aisle, and take her seat upon the pulpit steps. A buzz of disapprobation was heard all over the house, and there fell on the listening ear, ‘An abolition affair!’ “Woman’s rights and niggers!” “I told you so!” “Go it, darkey!”

With this description, Gage created an icon—and, as we now know 160 years later—the creation was successful. We carry with us the image of a strong African American woman with a commanding personal presence. Gage went on to say

There were very few women in those days who dared to “speak in meeting”; and the august teachers of the people were seemingly getting the better of us, while the boys in the galleries, and the sneerers among the pews, were hugely enjoying the discomfiture as they supposed, of the “strong-minded.” Some of the tender-skinned friends were on the point of losing dignity, and the atmosphere betokened a storm. When, slowly from her seat in the corner rose Sojourner Truth, who, till now, had scarcely lifted her head. “Don’t let her speak!” gasped half a dozen in my ear. She moved slowly and solemnly to the front, laid her old bonnet at her feet, and turned her great speaking eyes to me. There was a hissing sound of disapprobation above and below. I rose and announced, “Sojourner Truth,” and begged the audience to keep silence for a few moments.

The tumult subsided at once, and every eye was fixed on this almost Amazon form, which stood nearly six feet high, head erect, and eyes piercing the upper air like one in a dream. At her first word there was a profound hush. She spoke in deep tones, which, though not loud, reached every ear in the house, and away through the throng at the doors and windows . . .

With these words, Gage deepened the iconic image, such that at our point in history, the Gage rendering as well as the public lore that has followed it have so conflated our sense of Truth, the historical figure, with the “Ain’t I a Woman” speech as represented in Gage’s memoir, that, in effect, the icon has replaced metonymically whatever the original sense of reality we might have otherwise had for the historic figure and for the historic moment—whether the words were actually spoken by Truth or not.

After Gage shares her rendering of Truth’s words, she says
Amid roars of applause, she returned to her corner leaving more than one of us with streaming eyes, and hearts beating with gratitude. She had taken us up in her strong arms and carried us safely over the slough of difficulty turning the whole tide in our favor. I have never in my life seen anything like the magical influence that subdued the mobbish spirit of the day, and turned the sneers and jeers of an excited crowd into notes of respect and admiration. Hundreds rushed up to shake hands with her, and congratulate the glorious old mother, and bid her God-speed on her mission of “testifyin’ agin concerning the wickedness of this ‘ere people.”

With Gage’s narrative, both she and Sojourner Truth moved boldly into public lore and into our circuits of discourse, looming rather magnificently in and out of our imaginations as we have made and re-made this event to suit ever-evolving purposes. What we know from our twenty-first century perspective is that, unlike

the Robinson version, the Gage narrative did not end its social circulation with its publication in *The Independent*.

A Thrice-Told Tale: The Gage Version in Social Circulation

In 1875, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Ida Husted Harper published the first volume of a six volume set entitled *History of Woman Suffrage*. The editors stated in the Preface

In preparing this work, our object has been to put into permanent shape the few scattered reports of the Woman Suffrage Movement still to be found, and to make it an arsenal of facts for those who are beginning to inquire into the demands and arguments of the leaders of this reform.
(7)

These editors composed their history of woman suffrage from the point of view of their own organization, the National Woman Suffrage Association and from the viewpoints of individuals whose thoughts and experiences they deemed worthy of inclusion. The publication was designed to bring renewed visibility to the women’s movement and to re-energize activism on women’s issues, including still the right to vote, which in the 1870s had indeed not yet been granted to women.

Among the women whose viewpoints the editors solicited was Frances Dana Gage. Her contribution to the volume included a letter, a newspaper article on the 1853 Ohio women’s convention, and her previously published “Reminiscences by Frances D. Gage of Sojourner Truth.” By this mechanism, the “Ain’t I a Woman” speech found new generations of audiences as the women’s movement re-formed itself and gained momentum, well after the Civil War and the ending of slavery, after the passing of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the United States Constitution, and amid the rising concerns for woman suffrage, women’s rights to education,

and their rights to their own agency and authority as citizens and human beings.

With the re-publication in *History of Woman Suffrage*, Volume 1, and the 1881 and 1889 re-prints of the volume, the Gage’s version of “Ain’t I a Woman” was well on its way to becoming an iconic speech, not as a memoir, but rather as a quintessential example of women’s rhetorical performance, African American women’s eloquence, and intersectional analysis, along with Sojourner Truth as a female activist rising in regard as one of the best known and most highly respected African American women leaders.

To clarify this point, I offer one last example of re-use of Truth’s speech under the iconic umbrella of performance, eloquence, and intersectional analysis. I underscore that whatever Truth said in Akron in 1851 provided an occasion for the emergence of a mythical moment. Gage’s reminiscence functioned as the memorializing instrument. Fast forward to the twentieth century and the story continues. One hundred and thirty years after Truth’s extemporaneous performance, in 1981, bell hooks published *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. With this publication, hooks, an African American feminist writer and public intellectual, established herself as a key figure in re-setting the framework and terms of engagement for the late twentieth century development of American feminism as it grew out of the modern Civil Rights Movement and as a bellwether for the emergence of a distinctive, intersectional perspective for conceptualizing freedom, justice, and power as a global concept for all. In the Introduction for *Ain’t I a Woman*, hooks states

When I began the research for *Ain’t I a Woman*, my primary intent was to document the impact of sexism on the social status of black women . . . The book then evolved into an examination of the impact of sexism on the black women during slavery, the devaluation of black womanhood, black male sexism, racism within the recent feminist movement, and the black woman’s involvement with feminism. It

attempts to further the dialogue about the nature of the black woman’s experience that began in 19th century America so as to move beyond racist and sexist assumptions about the nature of black womanhood to arrive at the truth of our experience. Although the focus is on the black female, our struggle for liberation has significance only if it takes place within a feminist movement that has as its fundamental goal the liberation of all people. (13)

hooks credits Sojourner Truth with being one of the most outspoken African American women on these intersectional insights and honors Truth’s vision by naming her book after the clause with which Truth was most identified, i.e., “Ain’t I a Woman.” While hooks does not re-use the actual speech in her book, she makes clear in her introduction that her analytical interests are in furthering the classic intersections of race and gender from the nineteenth century, as suggested by the “Ain’t I a Woman” statement, and in thinking through the impact of these social hierarchies in the lives of African American women. She also makes clear that, through her research, she comes to understand that the struggles of African American women for liberation are viscerally linked to liberation struggles by all people, a viewpoint that, from a twenty-first century human rights perspective, seems a logical amplification of the ideological framework of race, gender, class, and status that is embedded in the “Ain’t I a Woman” speech.

In her twentieth century circle of engagement, hooks pushes forward the “Ain’t I a Woman” iconic message to a twentieth century context in quite a pointed way. She makes a new space for African American women’s experiences and intellectual power. In effect, she takes back the speech from public lore and from the purview of woman’s suffrage and the nineteenth century women’s movement, and she re-situates this intersectional viewpoint more explicitly within the ongoing lives and experiences of African American women. As a Black woman’s standpoint, the iconic message of “Ain’t I a Woman” assumes, as it quite likely did in

the actual delivery by Sojourner Truth, a provocative, in-the-flesh authority, and it constitutes a lever for formulating from its twentieth century perspective a more inclusive and a more generative feminist analysis within a modern socio/geo-political context. Thus “Ain’t I a Women” garnered new life at the end of the twentieth century and continues to be a resource for action into the twenty-first century, illustrating the importance of paying attention more explicitly to the values added by social circulation as an analytical tool.

Conclusion

Two questions remain for this analysis. First, what is the point here? As researchers, scholars, and teachers in rhetoric, composition, literacy, and digital studies, we certainly have the opportunity to note the methodological implications of seeing more and thinking more critically about the ways and means of accuracy, authenticity, and veracity. What seems more at stake for us is whether we have the capacity to articulate and to analyze kairotic moments and their impact and consequences on the trajectories of the subsequent flow of discourses. In effect, both Robinson and Gage re-used the Sojourner Truth incident for their own purposes—Robinson for abolitionism; Gage for her own career moves and in support of the history of women’s rights. Gage’s re-use held greater sway over time in functioning as a cleverly appropriated lever for powering a social movement. Ultimately, the momentum that Gage carries forward to the twentieth century was picked and forwarded in compelling ways by bell hooks.

Given this analysis, it should be emphasized that the same judgments against Robinson and Gage can also be made regarding our own contemporary re-uses of Truth. Contemporary writers have viewed Truth’s speech as a kairotic moment and re-used it for their own purposes. Using it as a lever for social advocacy, political activism, and socio-political change. Truth was “recovered”/brought back into social circles in the late twentieth century, not

only by bell hooks in re-setting the terms for feminist engagement, but also by Truth’s induction into the National Women’s Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls in 1981; by the making of a commemorative postage stamp of her by the United States Postal Service in 1986 to serve as a symbol of women’s activism, leadership, and achievements; by the naming of a number of organizations and publications in her honor in recognition of intersectional resistance to disempowering socio-political hierarchies; and so on.

By all accounts, in her own day, Truth was a powerful historical figure and an eloquent rhetor. With the help of Robinson, Gage, and others through the decades who have re-used her words and sentiments, her rhetorical itinerancy has continued across these many, many decades. Moreover, she remains still in the twenty-first century an icon that stands, with or without her own sanctioning, as a symbol of resistance to multiple oppressions and as an exemplar of the spirit of justice, equality and personal power.

The second question is what more do we learn from these types of analytical considerations? What does this type of approach inspire or set in motion as feminist practices in our field? What are the values added? What are the issues and concerns that emerge? These types of questions and more are what Gesa Kirsch and I raised in *Feminist Rhetorical Studies: New Directions for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy* (2012). In this volume, we suggest that, at this critical juncture in the history of feminist rhetorical studies, we face two quite fundamental challenges. One is keyed by three basic questions: What makes feminist discourses feminist? What are the values added? What differences do feminist informed practices make? We address these question by examining what we determined to be some striking habits of scholarly and pedagogical behavior that are linked, for example, to

- poly-logical patterns of inquiry,
- textually and contextually grounded analyses,
- the connecting of local analyses to more global enterprises,

- a consistency in linking ethical concerns more explicitly to our commitments to responsible rhetorical action.

We assert that these habits constitute patterns of engagement in feminist rhetorical analysis.

The second challenge is keyed by critical questions as well: What constitutes excellence in feminist rhetorical analyses? What is the evidence that these types of analyses are operating with consequence in the field more generally instead of functioning mainly at the periphery of concerns? In this case, we use a rather organic approach in trying to identify the critical edges of work in feminist rhetorical theory, history, criticism, and pedagogies. In turn, we pay attention to the extent to which such work has been gaining a clearer presence in our scholarly arenas and to the ways in which this work in the United States seems to be connecting in ethically and socially responsible ways to local and global concerns.

In that volume, Kirsch and I conclude that the good news is two-fold. First, in feminist rhetorical studies, we have developed and are continuing to refine a remarkable set of analytical tools (e.g., the use of social circulation) that are useful in getting us to another phase of operational strength in understanding rhetorical performances more fully. Second, there is a new and vibrant cohort of colleagues in rhetoric, composition, and literacy—regardless of gender—who see the importance of taking up this cause and who have a passionate desire to corral their energies to do the very hard work that remains to be done.

Challenges, of course, do indeed remain. We need to create broader and deeper knowledge of rhetorical practices, performances, and processes as a global enterprise. We need to connect rhetoric with ethically and socially responsible action. We need to hold as precious the hope and expectation that functioning well as teachers and scholars in our field has a huge capacity—not only to build knowledge about language well used; to nurture the heart as we find better ways to work with our students—to affirm the soul as we learn more generative and more dynamic ways to

make our knowledge do good work in the worlds that surround us. Considering the social circulation of Sojourner Truth’s iconic speech is just one example. In re-telling a familiar story, there is still value to be gained from shifting traditional paradigms and by considering different lines of sight in order to strengthen the quality of our vision and to enable a better understanding of things rhetorical.

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This Speaking Leaf: Vera Connolly's *Good Housekeeping* Crusade for the Indian Cause

Paige Conley

I was so deeply impressed by your articles . . . that I am planning to include (them) in a course on the American People which I am teaching at the Sunset Hill School for Girls . . . the meager reports from Congress which I have seen from time to time in papers and magazines are most unsatisfactory . . . I intend to have our class write to our Senators and Congressmen this winter urging them to forward the course.”

—Letter from Rowena C. Drake to Vera L. Connolly,
August 14, 1929

“I am writing you this speaking leaf to tell you that I have read your articles in *Good Housekeeping* magazine about the Red people. . . . I am glad when I read your story for I know that it will reach the eyes of many white people.”

—Letter from Whame Whyama to Vera L. Connolly,
January 2, 1930

In June of 1928, *Good Housekeeping* magazine hired popular writer Vera Leona Connolly to investigate and report on certain “Indian matters” that were drawing some limited attention in the nation’s capital. After conducting a six-month inquiry, Connolly prepared a three-part series documenting horrific levels of starvation, wide-spread abuse in government-run boarding schools, profound poverty affecting many tribal communities, and a federal Indian Bureau engaged in fraud and severe neglect—issues largely ignored by the contemporary press. Connolly’s work stirred her *Good Housekeeping* readers to action. Many

wrote letters, petitioned governmental representatives, and advocated publically for political reform. Their cries of outrage forced the resignation of one key official and created a groundswell of public support for further Senate investigations which led swiftly to legislative changes and increased federal appropriations of more than three million dollars.

In addition to spurring a remarkable level of civic interest and public action, Connolly's text moved far beyond the typical *Good Housekeeping* readership, provoking comments from new readers. Her written work circulated throughout diverse social spaces, opening new avenues of political activism for *Good Housekeeping* subscribers but also providing a meaningful discursive space for other marginalized voices. Connolly's writing in *Good Housekeeping* magazine—her “speaking leaf”—gave voice to articulations generally silenced within dominant society and ultimately led to many more speaking leaves, many new textual utterances designed to foster public dialogue, as well as political action.

This article explores how *Good Housekeeping*, a publication designed for “housewives” thought to be focused primarily on the domestic arts of cooking, cleaning, and child-rearing, came to actively embrace and promote more public forms of civic action. I argue that this female-oriented magazine published in the late 1920s provided an essential and transgressive textual space for civic engagement. I first recover Vera's Connolly's work on the “Indian Cause”¹ from 1928 and 1929 for *Good Housekeeping* magazine and then identify and analyze some of the socio-cultural contexts shaping and influencing this specific rhetorical event. I conclude by examining what this discursive legacy might represent in terms of its rhetorical possibilities and its rhetorical limitations. As we expand our understanding of women's creative and often radical means for participating in public rhetoric beyond the speaker's platform, as we remap rhetoric from previously marginalized viewpoints, I seek to redefine rhetorical efficacy in more expansive and more complex ways by recovering and closely examining the important roles that Vera Connolly

¹ This paper generally presents the terms “Indian,” “Indians,” and “Indian Cause” in quotes in order to reflect an understanding that these discursive constructions, though widely used in American society (particularly during the early twentieth century), do little to signify meaningful notions of identity, subjectivity, ethnicity, or community. For an extended discussion, see Deloria and later sections of this same article.

and *Good Housekeeping* magazine played during the early twentieth century to promote civic awareness and political activism.

Research Methods and Analysis

The methods of research and analysis within this work draw primarily upon Vicki Tolar Collins' concept of material rhetoric, as described in her *College English* article, “The Speaker Respoken.” As Collins notes, questions regarding who is speaking and who is silenced are core issues within the study of rhetoric from a feminist perspective. To avoid problems of anachronism, appropriation, and decontextualization often associated with the recovery of overlooked or silenced voices within historical texts, Collins urges scholars to approach these texts rhetorically, engaging in an examination of what she terms “material rhetoric.”² Collins defines this process as a multi-layered form of close reading that focuses not only on the rhetorical aims and functions of a core text, but also takes up broader considerations of the ways that a text can shift and change through situated, material processes of production, distribution, and reception. As Collins explains:

In order to understand and critique the function of women's rhetoric in the cultural formation of women's lives, feminist historians of rhetoric need to read closely not only the disembodied content of rhetoric written by and for women, but also the embodied texts, the material elements of their production and distribution, with particular attention to how publishing decisions and practices affect ethos as it functions in women's texts and women's reading. (546)

Material rhetoric begins by looking closely at the rhetorical functions in relationships among authors, text(s), publishing authorities, discourse communities, and readers, then moves to a consideration of rhetorical

² While I acknowledge the scholarly concerns raised by Catherine Chaput and Danielle Mitchell regarding the application of a materialist methodology within Collins' own work, I find the notion of material rhetoric as articulated by Collins to be a useful heuristic for my analysis here. In my application of this concept, I adopt Collins' view that the term “material rhetoric” can be used without invoking larger theoretical considerations of materialism, relying instead upon this term to examine more closely how ideologies regarding women (and other marginalized voices) are embedded and enacted through certain material practices associated with the editing and publishing of women's texts. See Chaput and Mitchell 530-33; “(Collins) Burton Responds” 534-36.

accretion, which Collins defines as a process where “additional texts become layered over and around the original text” (547-48). This later aspect of material rhetoric—examining textual accretion—can further illuminate ways that initial articulations, particularly utterances from women and other marginalized voices, “become respoken” or reappropriated and refigured within dominant discursive formations.

Material rhetoric offers both a concrete method for recovering significant texts and a methodology for interrogating these texts, once recovered. Applying material rhetoric as a methodology allows scholars to more thoroughly address the unstable nature of textuality; it provides a means for addressing the shifting forms of discursivity a text assumes, embeds, or discards as it moves through the various phrases of its own embodied materiality—from production, through distribution, to reception. More particularly, material rhetoric provides opportunities for feminist scholars to examine closely the layers of the control—forms of cultural silencing or cultural reshaping—that might influence the inception of a core text and its subsequent circulation within society. As a heuristic, material rhetoric provides a useful means for scholars to assess the ways that writers, production authorities, market forces of distribution, and ultimately, readers, intended or actual, can resist, refigure, or reappropriate texts over time.

Applying material rhetoric as a research method means to address key questions of production, distribution, and reception, looking simultaneously for ongoing evidence of rhetorical accretion. To interrogate a text’s initial production, one asks: What are the embodied qualities of this initial text? What or who authorized the material shift from earlier forms of articulation to published text? In what community was the writer writing? In what historical and political situation? For what audiences? For what rhetorical purpose? To interrogate distribution, one examines questions of cost, general availability, and affordability. Concluding levels of interrogation take up material considerations of reception: Who is reading this text; what are their responses? Whose needs are met by this text as it moves through society? What larger conversations influence its circulation? (Collins 551). This deeply contextualized analysis allows scholars to trace the ways that a text becomes layered with multiple rhetorical aims, functions, and effects. Material rhetoric provides a means for tracking, with greater

intentionality, the rhetorical influence of disparate voices—how speakers are respoken—over time.

Notions of material rhetoric, which provide a means for examining both textual materiality and the polyvalent discursive formations created within or through textual space, provide an appropriate lens for reclaiming and reviewing Vera Connolly’s early twentieth-century work in *Good Housekeeping* magazine. Connolly crafted her three-part series from a myriad of voices, deriving her primary text from congressional testimonies, interview transcripts, and witness statements. From its inception, Connolly’s text engaged in a process of “respeaking” in the most fundamental sense. Our challenge is to not only recover these layered textual voices, but to also trace their rhetorical aims, their discursive effects, and their dynamic interrelationships in and through Connolly’s text as it moved across time and space, from production and distribution to reception and recirculation. The following discussion will first take up considerations of production and distribution within female-oriented trade magazines, one of the widely available textual forums of the period for women. The discussion will then move to a specific review of Vera Connolly’s articles published in *Good Housekeeping*, and finally attempt to analyze textual reception and recirculation—the significant ways that Connolly’s text came to be “respoken.”

Production and Distribution within Available Discursive Forums: Trade Magazines for American Women, 1890-1930

The post-civil war years—with the rise of mail-order marketing and advertising revenue, the sale of fashion sheets for dress patterns, and burgeoning newspaper clipping services—led to a profusion of publications issued solely for consumption by American women. By 1890, six new journals designed specifically for female readers³ could be found

³ Within this paper, I adopt the views of Susan Jarratt, Celeste Condit, and many other feminist scholars who encourage historical researchers to think in terms of social constructions of gender, rather than social constructions of “female,” “woman,” or “women.” Notions of gender are contingent, fluid, and performative—rhetors adopt or select from an assortment of stylistic features coded as masculine or feminine in order to adapt ethos and discourse to specific rhetorical situations. While I use terms such as “woman,” “women,” or “female” throughout this discussion, I employ these terms as

in millions of homes across the country. These “Big Six” included *Ladies Home Journal*, *McCall’s*, *Delineator*, *Pictorial Review*, *Woman’s Home Companion*, and, of course, *Good Housekeeping*. According to historian and trade magazine scholar Mary Ellen Zuckerman, advances in printing technology and new methods of mass production and distribution, including rural free delivery, allowed these publishers to print and sell millions of magazines on an annual basis (“Old Homes” 719). Upper- and middle-class female readers formed the largest part of this magazine market. As Zuckerman notes, “It is unlikely that the budgets of most working women allowed them to purchase luxuries like magazines; when they read these journals, it was through passed-along copies (721,748).

Over time, the Big Six journals increased in size, the quality of their print improved greatly, and their contents became more diversified; they offered one of the major ways for women to stay informed about social, political, and cultural issues, particularly before the widespread use of radio and television. These magazines worked to entertain women, to provide household information, and to offer guidance, education, or insights on life beyond the home. By 1920, the financial stability secured by the Big Six afforded each of these magazines more editorial freedom and more journalistic experimentation than other existing trade publications (Zuckerman, “Old Homes” 727-28). Abundant advertising dollars made it possible to invest in high quality feature articles, fiction pieces by well-known authors, and engaging forms of illustration. Feature articles between 1920 and 1930 spanned a wide range of topics, offering views on national politics, suffrage, social reform, venereal disease, women’s presence in the workplace, and higher education.

While many of the Big Six magazines provided ample space for wide-ranging discussions of civic life, it remained rare for any of this magazine space to be devoted to specific calls for civic engagement or overt political activism. Between 1928 and 1929 in particular, the prevailing “cult of domesticity,” which had initially developed during the nineteenth century, continued to influence significant aspects of many American women’s lives. Popular literature, magazine articles, and a burgeoning movie industry generally encouraged women to believe that their

shorthand for a much larger kind of inquiry intended to examine the gendered nature of discursive acts.

economic security and their social status, to a large extent, depended on a successful, traditional marriage.

In addition, despite women’s newly won right to vote and the visibility of many females as public figures, an unease about women’s civic roles remained. Much of the American public still adhered to a belief in “separate spheres”—women’s roles and men’s roles should not overlap; women should concern themselves with home, children, and religion while men took care of business and politics.⁴ Although working-class women and men of all classes had always worked outside the home, middle-class women continued to be associated with, and pushed into, the domestic sphere. Women had achieved enfranchisement but many encountered resistance when they attempted to participate more actively in civic life. Indeed, the “separate spheres” ideology remained readily apparent in many pages of the Big Six.

Of equal note, the Big Six, including *Good Housekeeping*, depended heavily upon advertising support; their primary function continued to be the ability to induce readers to consume products from an ever increasing market of “essential” household goods. As Glenda Matthews notes, the advertising industry came of age in the 1920s:

Not only did the volume of advertizing rise during the period but also copywriters pioneered new styles of layout, used photographs more extensively, and developed non-rational styles of appeal to the consumer. ‘I want advertising copy to arouse me,’ the associate editor of *Advertising and Selling* had written in 1919, ‘to create in me a desire to possess the thing that’s advertised, even though I don’t need it.’ During the next ten years the industry became increasingly sophisticated about this goal. (179-80)

Within the pages of women’s magazines, both in articles and in advertisements, editors engaged in a concerted effort to break down women’s resistance to new products by advising them continually to purchase, purchase, purchase—new frozen foods, new appliances, new household products, even new beauty aids (Matthews 172-96). Scientific “experts” hired by the magazines to test products or write feature articles worked to make consumption seem credible, if not essential; the *Good*

⁴ For this history, see DuBois and Dumenil; Matthews; Mintz and Kellogg.

elaborate irrigation system at a cost of over a million dollars. When built, this destroyed the Indians' old canal system, which had adequately met their needs, and THE WHOLE HUGE COST OF THE NEW SYSTEM WAS SADDLED AS A DEBT ON THESE INDIANS AS A TRIBE. Later it became a lien against their individual allotments of land. Today these Indians have to get permission each time they want water from these ditches, and the maintenance charges are constantly accumulating against their land. The Indians' land will thus be consumed in time, and they will become homeless.

One Instance of Injustice
Mrs. Stella M. Atwood, whom the Indians lovingly call "Mother" in gratitude for all she has done for them through twelve years of concentrated effort, told me, in California last summer, of the following occurrence:
"One day the Navajos wired me to come. Come on the next train! They needed help. Vast tracts of land belonging to them had been leased to a white cattle man without their consent, and the Indians' cattle were to be put off at once. When I got there I found that the captain at Fort Wingate had leased eleven thousand acres of the Navajo grazing land to this white cattleman for a dollar a year! This part of the reservation had been taken over by the War Department during the War. It was still a military reservation, the officer claimed. "He had no right to take such a step, in any case, without competitive bids! A court-martial was possible. I kept the wires to Washington hot. The white cattleman had himself made deputy sheriff and was planning to put the Indians' cattle off in twenty-four hours. The Indians' distress was terrible! This land had been the grazing ground of the Navajos for generations. There was no place for them to go. Some of them were old Scouts, or pensioners from the Government. "They came streaming down Sunday morning to confer with me; and we were just ready to open council meeting, when an Indian came galloping across the plain, waving a telegram. It was from the War Department. A reprieve! "Suspend all operations until investigation." It was the result of my wires, as Chairman of the Indian Welfare Division of the Federated Women's Clubs. The white cattleman swung up on his horse and rode away. He was never heard from again."
On another occasion, in 1924, just after the Indians had been made citizens, Mrs. Atwood was summoned in desperate haste to the Crow Reservation in Montana. The Indians informed her, in their wise, that the county authorities had come in without their approval and arranged to corral all the horses on the reservation, and kill them and skin them, and sell the hides for sixty-five cents apiece to pay the Indians' taxes. "I happened to know," said Mrs. Atwood, "that neither a trust fund, nor anything bought with trust money, is taxable; and I also knew that the burden of proof would lie with the county. So I wired to the Indians to get an attorney, promising I would come at once. "When I got to the Crow Reservation I was met by an Indian who was then Republican nominee for sheriff of Big Horn County. With him was Robert Yellowtail—a brilliant, educated Indian who had just been defeated, by a very few votes, in the primaries for Congress. These were highly intelligent men, educated men, able to fill public office. They took me up to their attorney. He said he had not a doubt in the world but that an injunction would be granted. The legal action was pressed, and the Indians' horses were saved. "The Indians there told me of the awful tyranny and oppression under which they were living. They described how they had tried to get a petition to Washington, asking the removal of the Superintendent. The petition had, of course, to go through his hands. So during a political meeting on the Agency grounds the Indians called the Superintendent out and presented the petition to him in the

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PARSONS' loosens dirt and grime, cuts grease, and saves time and labor in cleaning all fabrics... all utensils... all surfaces. For over 50 years critical housewives have used it—and recommended it to their neighbors.
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Stop lifting Water
in and out
of Your Washing Machine
★ Scott Drainer and Filter
Cures this most annoying ailment of the wash-day water mechanically. Saves your back and time and keeps the hardest work left to washing.
In all greatly resistant to both hot and cold water and is not damaged by acids.
To empty connect to cold water faucet only, and let hot water overflow to sink.
Made of special white tubing that will withstand boiling water for years. Cost for \$1.00 in cents wherever washing machines are handled by you.
SCOTT PUMP COMPANY
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3 Times faster than Siphon.
Every Housewife will be interested in the Silver Polish of 101 uses. Comes in cream paste form—no dust—no water. Ideal for silver, brass, chrome, cut glass, mirrors, windows, etc. Add your order for Metalpolish or send 10¢ in coin postage and packing mail on.
Metalpolish Mfg. Co., Box 60, Mansop, N.H.

In using advertisements see page 6

Figure 1: A page from the March, 1929 issue of Good Housekeeping magazine; Connolly's article appears in the middle column.

Housekeeping "Seal of Approval" for many household products, for example, became a popular magazine feature.

Inconsistencies between paid advertisements and feature articles from esteemed "experts" could often be found within the pages of the Big Six, confounding readers and perhaps diminishing the impact of non-commercial messages appearing within this same forum. A feature article on diet and nutrition, for example, might appear on the same page with an advertisement for tempting, high calorie food (Zuckerman, "Old Homes" 755-56). In fact, large ads for mundane household goods and routine beauty products dwarf, and possibly trivialize, nearly every page of the space afforded to Connolly's articles written for *Good Housekeeping* in 1929 (See Figure 1). At a minimum, Connolly's text and the civic concerns she strived to highlight had to compete with omnipresent commercial messages continually refocusing her readers' attention on less socially just concerns.

Producing a Particular Text: Vera Connolly's *Good Housekeeping* Crusade for the "Indian Cause"

Widely known for her sound reporting, Vera Connolly (See Figure 2) published work in popular American magazines from the 1920s through the 1950s. Although Connolly served for brief periods of time as an editor or staff writer on several national publications, for most of her professional career she worked as a free-lance writer, often struggling financially to make ends meet. Connolly liked to be known as a "stirrer-upper" or a "crusader," and her investigative skills, despite her lack of steady employment, were highly valued throughout the industry. Writing in 1920, Oscar Graeve, an editor at the *Delineator*,



Figure 2: Vera Leona Connolly, circa 1920.

noted: “Whenever we have an idea for an article where tact, good judgment, and the ability to dig up facts are required, I always try to get Miss Connolly to do it for us. She is the soundest of investigators!”

Connolly’s most provocative articles appeared almost exclusively in women’s journals which may account for her relative obscurity today. Connolly completed many of her influential essays between 1925 and 1950, writing generally for the Big Six (Zuckerman, “Progressive Journalist,” 80-81). More interested in social reform than many of her professional contemporaries, Connolly worked to expose a wide range of social ills, including problems encountered by young runaways, the abusive treatment of juveniles within adult penal systems, the widespread need for prison reform, and labor abuses within the textile industry.

Appearing within mainly female-oriented textual mediums both limited and shaped Connolly’s work. She wrote less about corrupt politicians and businesses than other journalists, and more about children, education, family, and social improvement, subjects commonly thought to be of particular interest to women.⁵ Setting herself apart from the muckraking style of many turn-of-the-century writers who preceded her, Connolly often provided a list of practical steps for her readers to take in order to alleviate the social problems she identified.

The most celebrated writing of Connolly’s career can be found in the three-part series of articles appearing in the February, March, and May, 1929 issues of *Good Housekeeping* magazine. With limited financial support from *Good Housekeeping*, Connolly spent six months—the latter half of 1928—preparing her investigative article. She spent this time traveling and gathering information—observing, listening, and

⁵Mary Ellen Zuckerman argues that Connolly’s nonfiction writing reflects a form of optimism about “the changes possible from educating the populace” and a belief held by many social feminists that emphasized “women’s special role” as “natural reformers” (“Progressive Journalist” 81-82). While discursive evidence clearly exists within Connolly’s texts to support these assertions, in my view, Zuckerman fails to account fully for the complex interplay of social and cultural forces shaping Connolly’s investigative work. In order to get published at all, Connolly may have needed to write within dominant, limiting discourses of femininity and domesticity, while simultaneously calling for other kinds of social reform. See also Matthews, who argues that prevailing discourses of femininity and domesticity, while limiting, also provided a means for women to access more public arenas as a perceived need for “home values” within society more generally came to legitimize women’s civic involvement in particular kinds of social reform.

corresponding with members of the Senate Investigating Committee on Indian Affairs and American Indian Defense Association member John Collier, a well-known Progressive. Collier crusaded publically for national reform throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and ultimately served as the Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1933 through 1945.

Archival evidence suggests that the politically astute Collier strongly encouraged Connolly, and her editor, William F. Bigelow, to consider addressing “Indian matters” within the pages of *Good Housekeeping* during the late spring and early summer of 1928. In a letter to Connolly dated June 17, Collier states:

We are starting Tuesday and will meet the Glavises either at Klamath Or. or (in) Northern California. I have written Mr. G reminding him to send word to *Good Housekeeping* editor . . . Everything points, more surely than at the time we talked, to the public interest in the Indian matters and the abundance of startling and unexploited material. Indeed, I hope G. Hkpg. may go forward and that we will have you in the SWest.⁶

By the summer of 1928, a number of reform groups had been working urgently, but often obscurely, for decades to secure improved conditions for many native communities.⁷ Collier had strong connections to many of these groups, particularly the American Indian Defense Association, which he founded in 1923. He also worked closely with Stella Atwood, a social reformer from California, who had been leading the national Indian Welfare Committee of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs since 1921—an organization at that time with more than two million members (Huebner 344). By 1926, many of these reform efforts had led the Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work to commission a government-sanctioned study of federal Indian policy. Published on February 21,

⁶Historian Kenneth R. Philp asserts that Collier believed the moment promised “every condition favorable to a large reorganization of Indian affairs.” Philp notes that “to insure this confidence Collier helped Vera Connolly write a series of three articles for *Good Housekeeping*” (93). Philp fails to provide any scholarly evidence for this assertion and does not describe what he believes Collier’s involvement entailed.

⁷For an extended discussion of these efforts, see Holm; Hertzberg; and Cox. The Indian Welfare Committee of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs had also been consistently agitating for “Indian Reform.” For this history, see Tyler and also Huebner.

1928, the results of this study, commonly known as the “Meriam Report,”⁸ documented extensive acts of fraud and misappropriation by government agents, highlighted wide-spread abuses in boarding schools for native children, and further confirmed that many provisions of the Dawes Act had been used illegally for years to deprive indigenous communities of land and essential resources.

Collier recognized the importance of the Meriam Report and would ultimately concur with many of its findings, but he did not believe that the study could lead to the extensive reforms that he desired. Along with Senator William King of Utah, and Representative James A. Frear of Wisconsin, Collier worked for most of 1927 to establish a separate, more rigorous form of legislative review. On February 2, 1928, swayed in part by the efforts of Collier and Frear, the Senate voted to establish a separate investigatory process, creating the Senate Investigating Subcommittee on Indian Affairs (Prucha 790-813; Philp 82-91). Hearings conducted by this subcommittee began in November, 1928 and did not formally conclude until August, 1943.

Collier’s June 1928 efforts to interest Connolly and Bigelow in these “Indian matters” stemmed in part from his concern that more national attention needed to be focused on the subcommittee’s investigation. In his view, the Meriam Report would not be enough. Given his extensive connections to Atwood and the GFWC, Collier would have been well aware of the potential interest and support that could be tapped through clubwomen of this period. However, he realized that Atwood’s influence within the GFWC was waning—indeed, she found herself deposed as chair of the national Indian Welfare Committee⁹ during the GWFC’s biannual convention in July of 1928. Thus, during the early months of

1928, Atwood and Collier searched for another female-oriented medium in an effort to continue to reach this larger national audience. According to subscription records from this period, *Good Housekeeping* could provide access to more than one million readers (Endres and Lueck 124). Moreover, Collier and Atwood both knew the importance of publicity. In an undated letter which appears to have been sent to Connolly in February or March of 1929, Stella Atwood remarks that Collier, “is the biggest publicity man in the United States and is the best informed in his subject.”

William Bigelow also talked to, and corresponded with, Collier and Louis R. Glavis, an attorney friend of Collier’s, who had recently been appointed to coordinate the Senate investigation. These contacts proved to be persuasive. Even though the subject of federal Indian policy promised to be a departure from the standard articles featured within *Good Housekeeping*, on July 11, 1928, Bigelow issued a letter of introduction for Connolly to use during her investigative travels: “To



Figure 3: Vera Connolly and William F. Bigelow, circa 1933.

Whom It May Concern, Miss Vera Connolly, the bearer of this note, is traveling as a representative of *Good Housekeeping*. Any courtesies that may be extended to her will be appreciated” (See Figure 3).

Connolly traveled to Washington State, Oregon, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Wisconsin, escorted by Collier, Glavis, or Frear for many parts of her trip, returning to New York City in late August or early September. During this early period of her investigation, Frear, Glavis, Collier, and Atwood all continued to provide key

⁸ Issued under the title, *The Problem of Indian Administration*, the Meriam Report had been completed under the auspices of the Institute of Governmental Research, an independent organization that later became a division of the Brookings Institution. See Prucha 808-12.

⁹ Letter from Stella Atwood to Vera Connolly dated August 13, 1928: “Here is a piece of news. I am deposed . . . This dear little President of the Federation, Mrs. John Sipple (sic) is so obsessed with the idea that women should be in the home that my aggressive work in Congress simply doesn’t appeal to her . . . However, I shall carry on the fight more actively than ever and use the Indian Defense Association as a medium. I have been a director in it all this time, but never have done much through that channel because of the Federation, of course. Now I am free to hurrah around just as much as I please.”

information to Connolly. They secured many background documents for her, and helped her to establish personal contacts so that she could make site visits, conduct personal interviews, and collect witness statements.

Connolly noted in a letter to Bigelow dated September 3, 1928:

Here is the article by Congressman Frear. After you have read it, I am sure there will not be left in your mind a shadow of a doubt as to the criminal treatment our Indians are receiving. Some of his facts I can personally vouch for . . . I have visited some of the very sections Congressman Frear mentions, and have obtained, from individuals as reliable as those quoted here, facts even more startling.

I have such an abundance of material—field notes, interviews with Indians and whites in six or seven states, Senate hearings in printed form, letters, affidavits (sic), newspaper clippings, medical reports, copies of Indian treaties with the U.S.—that I could write not three, but ten articles on this subject.

Later language within this same letter reveals just how much of a departure from regular textual content this article represented for *Good Housekeeping*, and the “stir” Connolly anticipated her work would create:

But . . . let me say once more, if you still have doubts, if you still think perhaps there is not the story, in the condition of the Indians, which you thought there might be, I need not write the articles for *Good Housekeeping*. You are under no obligation to go ahead. You sent me out there to see whether or not the story really was there. I assured you, from Albuquerque, from San Francisco, and on me (sic) return to New York that the story IS there. But still you seem uncertain. Probably any editor would. It’s dynamite.

Writing back on September 6, 1928, Bigelow assured Connolly that *Good Housekeeping* would move forward: “All I am concerned about is that we shall tell the truth, the whole truth—unless it would make unfit reading—and nothing but the truth. So let’s get to it.”

Connolly’s three-part series appeared in the February, March, and May 1929 issues of *Good Housekeeping*. Connolly explains to her readers that the series arose as “rumors . . . caused the Editor of GOOD HOUSEKEEPING to send me West to the Indian themselves to ascertain certain facts” (“The Cry” 226). The first article notes that the series will set

out to document “A Story of Injustice and Cruelty as Terrible as it is True” (30-31). As Connolly states:

The writer of this article found that the information she was obtaining was of three sorts—personal wrongs, maladministration of property, and suggestions as to a solution of the Indian problem. She has therefore prepared three articles, one devoted to each of these phases . . . This first article will deal with the personal wrongs. (230)

Consequently, Connolly’s second article entitled, “We Still Get Robbed” which appeared in *Good Housekeeping*’s March, 1929 issue focused specifically on land and property fraud. Her third piece entitled “The End of the Road,” published in May, 1929, urged readers to take specific public action to remedy the grave injustices Connolly presented. Each



Figures 4 and 5: Illustrations by Herbert M. Stoop on the opening pages of Vera Connolly’s second article entitled “We Still Get Robbed” appearing in the March, 1929 issue of *Good Housekeeping* magazine.

article opened with somber illustrations by the renowned Herbert M. Stoops (See Figures 4 and 5) and ran at least six pages in length, but did not appear as a referenced “feature” on any of the published covers for the three *Good Housekeeping* issues in question.

Connolly begins her first essay with quotes from men she interviewed in Taos, New Mexico. This opening serves to personalize a sweeping national problem and further heighten her reader’s engagement with the

detailed policy discussion to follow. These initial interview statements describe horrifying conditions for tribal communities throughout the West and Midwest: poverty, starvation, tuberculosis, lack of health care, and a lack of adequate housing. Connolly supplements these narratives with concrete (though often unattributed) statistics, noting for example that “The Indian death rate increased 62 percent from 1921 through 1925” and “21 percent of all Indians, or more than 60,000, have trachoma” (“The Cry” 231). Connolly also focuses in this first article on the dire conditions existing at many of the boarding schools established for Native American children, describing these sites as “prison-like” with rotting, vermin-infested food supplies, inhumane labor practices, and disciplinary procedures which included chaining children to their beds, placing them in rat-infested basement “dungeons,” repeated whippings, and forcing young children to wear a ball and chain as punishment for running away (235-36).

Connolly draws from the Meriam Report and documents originating from the ongoing Senate Investigation to frame and authenticate information for all three articles, but she does not mention the Meriam report by name in her first or second article, vaguely labeling it instead as the “Institute Report.” To introduce her initial discussion of off-reservation boarding schools, for example, Connolly notes that her interviews with members of the Taos Council led to her reflect back on more “official” sources of information: “I recalled then some of the statements in the official reports that I had seen—that Indian boarding schools are overcrowded, unsanitary, and filled with two diseases—tuberculosis and . . . trachoma” (“The Cry” 228). This neat sleight of hand authenticates both the interview testimony she is passing along to her readers—because it confirms existing “official” documents—and the testimonials themselves, as they are seen to confirm and authenticate existing, government-sanctioned reports. Connolly continues with these framing and authenticating techniques throughout her first article, but deepens this maneuver in at least one instance by creating a kind of internal dialogue that she invites her readers to share:

Partly as a result of her own fleeting observations, but chiefly through her interviews and study of authentic reports, among them the one submitted a year ago by the Institute for Government Research after a fifteen months’ investigation made

at the request of the Secretary of the Interior—the writer found abundant verification of all that had been claimed in the Taos Council regarding the boarding schools. And she also discovered that this wrong being done the Indian people is one of many! (“The Cry” 228)

Throughout this section, Connolly speaks in the third person (“she,” “the writer”), effectively creating more distance between herself, as author, and the information presented. This textual maneuver creates a sense of objectivity and formality for Connolly’s audience, inviting readers to confirm certain conditions on the ground for themselves. This distancing, a clever rhetorical move, allows “fleeting observations” to be perceived more readily as established facts by the readers.

The third and final article in Connolly’s series opens with an explicit reference to the study commissioned by Secretary Work in June of 1926, and subsequently undertaken by the Institute for Government Research. Led by Lewis Meriam and his esteemed staff of investigators who worked as “scientific specialists,” the Institute produced an 872-page book entitled “The Problem of Indian Administration (“End of the Road” 44). As Connolly explains:

This book is the most restrained, yet the most heartbreaking analysis ever made of the health, education, and human needs for the Indian. Obtain a copy of it. Read it. Learn—with a sense of shock and dismay—what conditions the Institute’s scientific investigators found on Indian reservations and in Indian boarding schools. (44)

In this final article, Connolly quotes directly, and at length, from sections of the Meriam Report, continually urging her readers to review this tome more closely: “Let me urge again earnestly—obtain it and read it! It is one of the authoritative sources from which these articles are drawn” (“End of the Road” 44-45, 153).

Overt references to the Meriam Report in Connolly’s final article are probably due to an intervening controversy which delayed the initial April publication of Connolly’s article until the May, 1929 issue. *Good Housekeeping* decided to withhold Connolly’s third article from the April issue after the Indian Bureau publicly charged that Connolly’s first article had been “full of misrepresentations” (45). *Good Housekeeping* editor William Bigelow offered Commissioner Charles H. Burke the

chance to dispute Connolly's findings, but Burke could not effectively do so, and publication resumed. According to magazine historian Mary Ellen Zuckerman, Commissioner Burke "reacted angrily to the (first two) articles in part because he feared their effect, with good reason: these articles reached a wide audience."¹⁰ By May of 1929, given the very public nature of the discussion Connolly had raised within the pages of *Good Housekeeping*, Connolly could more easily reference the government documents shaping and informing her work. Invoking the Meriam Report by name in her two previous articles may have politicized the discussion in ways that Connolly had hoped to avoid. Connolly wanted to raise awareness for the general public, but not agitate powerful constituencies opposing Indian Bureau reforms.¹¹ When Burke publically denounced Connolly's work, any effort to avoid this kind of scrutiny became irrelevant and the Meriam Report could be mentioned by its common name.¹²

¹⁰ Zuckerman, "Progressive Journalist" at 84, 88 citing to Nelson Mason, clerk of the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs who wrote to Connolly on October 31, 1930: "Everywhere we go we meet people who know of the injustices to the Indians and which can generally be traced back to the *Good Housekeeping* articles." Writing to Connolly on November 11, 1929, John Collier also states: "the affect (sic) of your GH series has been wide and permanent."

¹¹ Connolly notes in her September 3, 1929 letter to Bigelow, "Let me tip you off to this: do not expect the oil men and their families, the lumber kings and their employees, the whites who are fattening on the grazing or farm lands of the Indians, Indian Bureau employees and their hangers-on, or any of the poor-white fringe found in and about every Reservation, to sympathize with these articles . . . I expect them to leap on me."

¹² A brief statement found on the opening page of Connolly's third and final article notes: AS WE advised you last month, Miss Connolly's third Indian article was withheld from the April issue to give the Indian Bureau a chance to prove that the first article was, as it charged, 'full of misrepresentations.' Had Miss Connolly been discredited, the present article would not have been published, and we should have apologized to our readers and to the Indian Bureau. But in not one essential particular could Miss Connolly's statements be disproved. Conditions on some reservations are not as Miss Connolly stated, but the changes have been made since the investigation was made last summer. As a matter of fact, Miss Connolly has understated, rather than overstated the condition of the Indians. Not on all reservations, to be sure—there seem to be many bright spots in the Indian country—but on so many of them that the indictment stands as drawn. And so we are publishing here the third, and last, article in Miss Connolly's series. Read it." ("End of the Road" 44-45)

The public controversy with Commissioner Burke also provided Connolly with an opportunity to issue even more strident calls for comprehensive education, public discussion, and political action. Connolly pushed full steam ahead, urging her readers to "to read . . . and to study deeply" (153,158) in order "to learn the conditions today" by following contemporaneous Senate proceedings, noting:

And now, in 1929, at the hearings being held in Washington, D.C. before Senators investigating the Indian problem, conditions as bad and much worse are being described by sworn witnesses, as existing on numerous reservations and in numerous Indian boarding schools *today!*" ("End of the Road" 154)

Connolly includes statements from several leading government officials who each encourage Connolly's readers to blame the Indian Bureau, not Congress for these worsening conditions, and Connolly further exhorts her readers to adopt "Mr. Collier's plan" for this is "the program which most of those who love the Indian race seem, today, to approve" (164-65).¹³ Her final article concludes with a section on "What You Can Do To Help" which suggests that women "write to your Senators and Congressmen, and to President Hoover . . . and form within your churches and clubs, permanent Indian welfare groups, resolved to fight on through the years if necessary" (170). In effect, Connolly provides a blueprint for social action: study deeply and become informed in order to participate meaningfully in ongoing civic discussions designed to effect political change.

Archival reviews to date indicate that editors at *Good Housekeeping*, particularly Bigelow, did little to shape or control Connolly's writing—or her ethos—for this series. File drafts do not contain marginalia or any written directives from editors or reviewers; there is limited rhetorical accretion at this stage of production which evidences textual changes not specifically directed or selected by Connolly herself. Nonetheless, a typed note from Bigelow to Connolly dated January 22, 1929 states,

Your last article is very interesting—a bit better than the second one and almost as good as the first. I do not however, like your ending. It seems to me that something might be done to end on a

¹³ Notably, Connolly fails to address what leading indigenous activists, like Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, or many members of the tribal communities she interviewed, had to say about Collier's plan.

better note. That story of the old Indian makes one shudder, and that may keep readers from taking the active part we hope they will take.

The final published version of Connolly's third article concludes, as noted earlier, with the short, action-oriented section recommended by Bigelow.

This limited comment from Bigelow indicates that Connolly's editors supported a very public role for women around the issue of federal "Indian" policy. Given that John Collier, Stella Atwood, James Frear, and probably Louis Glavis, all kept a close eye on the developing *Good Housekeeping* series, Bigelow in particular may have wanted to ensure some measurable response—evidenced through letters—from his *Good Housekeeping* readers for this deeply interested group of reformers. Whatever machinations occurred at the editorial level between Bigelow, Collier, and Collier's supporters, we do know that in one instance Bigelow asked Connolly to shift from a focus on pathos and emotion to very concrete forms of political action. Although this was a discursive space Connolly had already created for herself as an accomplished writer and reporter, she claimed it far more forcefully within this particular *Good Housekeeping* series, and she claimed it for her readers, as well.

Connolly's standard writing practices, specifically her reliance upon engaging, intimately-focused emotional appeals, extensive statistical information, direct forms of address, and a frequent use of clear imperatives all worked to enhance and support the action-oriented ethos found within this core text.¹⁴ Connolly also relied heavily upon exclamation marks and italicized emphasis for key phrases. While these two textual practices could be found more commonly in journalistic work of the period, as linguistic devices they may have nonetheless lent a credible air of urgency to the federal policy concerns Connolly strove to highlight in this instance.

¹⁴ Given that this article focuses specifically on textual production, distribution, reception and accretion, this discussion does not conduct a thorough, rhetorical reading of each article found within Connolly's *Good Housekeeping* series. The need for this type of scholarly review in future evaluations of Connolly's work remains.

Textual Reception and Recirculation—the Speaker Respoken

Connolly's persuasive, hard-hitting articles triggered a tremendous public response. Senator W.B. Pine of Oklahoma asked for her first article to be read into the Congressional Record on January 29, 1929, just hours after its release. In a letter to John Collier dated January 30, 1929, Connolly states that editor, William Bigelow, "has never published anything which has brought in such a quantity of letters and the article has only been on the newsstands for five days." On May 1, 1929, immediately upon the release of Connolly's third article, Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana sought to have Connolly's final essay read into the Congressional Record. In addition to provoking the resignation of Commissioner Burke on March 4, 1929, this public support seems to have facilitated a large appropriation of more than 3.1 million dollars by the Hoover Administration in 1930 designated to improve conditions for pupils attending native boarding schools (Black 388-90; Prucha 813, 921-25).

The many letters that Connolly received in response to the *Good Housekeeping* series appear, materially, to come from several different socio-economic brackets, indicating that Connolly's text circulated far beyond the typical *Good Housekeeping* reader. While a number of letters are written on embossed or engraved linen stationery, an equal number appear on lined school paper or cheap brown wrapping paper. The letters originate from every region of the country, reflecting both rural and urban return addresses. On January 25, 1929 Marvie Bartlett of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin writes: "Thank you for opening my eyes to this disgraceful blot on our American honor." Addressing Connolly on February 3, Mrs. Georgia B. Hills of Atlanta, Georgia states, "I, as a mother, cannot resist writing you before I go to bed this night, and ask, if you do not know of some way we, who have done so much for the children of other nations, can heal this reeking sore on our own body?" "I am shocked beyond words," Helen Mason of Philadelphia notes, "—it is unthinkable that these conditions should exist in America." Nor did Connolly's articles appear to lose any shock value over time: "I have just read your March issue," says Nellie Trenholm of Ashland, Massachusetts, "and it is enough to make me boil over and wince."

Almost to a person, the letters written to Connolly express continued interest and a desire for sustained engagement with issues affecting native communities: “I would like to see some real action taken by our own Woman’s Club, the W.C.T. U. and the churches in our town,” writes Ruth Sturtevant of Amherst, Massachusetts on February 6, “I await with interest your two coming articles on the subject.” Margaret Bluthardt of Kenilworth, Illinois states on February 7: “I have a group of Campfire girls who have heard about this tragedy and want to do something for the Indian children in boarding schools. I do not know how much a small group of girls can do, but we can spark others’ interest, at least . . . I know we could enlist our whole town, small though it is.” Mrs. E.J. Reinhardt of Indianapolis, Indiana states in her letter of February 26, “I would not even know whom to write for a report of the Committe (sic) as you suggested in the beginning of your article. However I do not feel I could sit here and not do the little I might do . . . Hoping this letter does not sound too dumb to you and hoping to be of a little service.”

Arguably, Connolly’s articles worked to establish ongoing discursive formations at local and regional levels, facilitating conversations intended to be educational, civically-minded, and proactive. Writing on March 12 from Springfield, Massachusetts, Lesbia E. Dillie notes her intention to start a club of “city-wide women interested in the legislative side of the question” as these efforts “might be a worthwhile contribution to the cause.” Mrs. Harry Schwab of Indianapolis states that, after reading the first two articles by Connolly, her local Wednesday Afternoon Club, “decided to build programs for the next year around the American Indian problem (and are) hoping that our study of these abused people may bear some good fruit.” On May 6, after reading the final article of Connolly’s series, Mrs. E.F. Eberstadt of East Orange, New Jersey writes: “As Chairman of the Program Committee of the Women’s Association of the Munn Avenue Presbyterian Church . . . I welcome the opportunity to acquaint the members with existing conditions . . . with the hope of awakening their active interest . . . Could you make it possible to come to us with this message?”

Efforts by Stella Atwood and John Collier to reach beyond the national GFWC leadership in order to secure more broad-based support from GFWC’s general membership also succeeded. The *Good Housekeeping* series reached many GFWC members spread throughout vast regions of

the country. These regional GFWC members could embrace the “Indian Cause” at state and local levels, disregarding individual GFWC leaders on the national level who might otherwise oppose such efforts. Mrs. Helen Conley, for example, writes to Vera Connolly on February 6 from Albany, Georgia and states: “being a member of the Woman’s Club here I write to ask in what ways we could act, to help . . . The State President is a personal friend and I am sure would be willing to take any step necessary—writing to Washington or whatever step you would advise. I think each District President could be interested and in that way every Club in the State could act.” On March 11, Mrs. Stephen Faull from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania reports that her “Woman’s Club (is) willing and anxious to help better conditions.” Writing several months after the appearance of Connolly’s final article in May, Mrs. John F. Bickel, Jr. of the wealthy and influential Morgan Park Women’s Club in Chicago, notes on August 14, 1929: “We have space on our next year’s program for a thing of this kind—and we are writing to you to learn how we might obtain a speaker.”

Connolly’s articles appear to have circulated beyond reading spaces typically divided by gender as well. Walter Compton of Bonner Springs, Kansas writing to Connolly on March 4 states: “I am a Senior in the Bonner Springs High School . . . I hope to represent my school in an oratorical contest . . . For my oration I have chosen your subject, the treatment that the American Indian is today receiving . . . I am greatly interested in this subject and want to tell all of the people in my community of this great injustice.” Virginia Moe of Gary, Indiana notes on May 2:

My father is greatly interested in your articles on the Indian problem . . . I am writing for him to see if you could suggest a form of procedure that might be used in presenting the subject to the noon-day clubs and other organizations . . . In closing, I might add that I have been surprised to find that the Indian problems mentioned in the dailey (sic) papers . . . and *Good Housekeeping* have struck a deep response in the many young people with whom I have discussed it.

Four years later, when Connolly uses a brief opinion column to urge her *Good Housekeeping* readers to support to the National Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, drawing upon the foundation of informed

knowledge and political engagement that she had helped to foster in 1929: “The outcome of the battle will depend—to an enormous degree—on you!” (“End of a Long, Long, Trail” 51). While complex social problems remained, Connolly’s 1934 call for political action evidences that the avenues of activism she helped to establish in 1928 and 1929 could be sustained and re-activated over time.

When we review more closely the discursive choices made in 1928 and 1929 by Connolly as she worked within the medium of *Good Housekeeping* magazine, we can see that Connolly recognized and played specifically to dominant social expectations for women; she invoked notions of piety and virtue in order to call her readers to care about indigenous populations and to advocate on their behalf. Despite her carefully documented investigative work with men of power and influence, Connolly continually argues in her *Good Housekeeping* series that the “Indian” problem should be of particular concern to women who are naturally driven by virtue and compassion for others. Connolly states in her opening article, “Perhaps, when the facts are told, there will be a crusade of . . . American . . . mothers” (“The Cry” 234). In her second article, Connolly tells of assuring some Navajo men that “many great-hearted American men—and all women who heard anything about the Indian’s plight—did care!” (“Robbed” 35). She later notes in this same article, “One hopeful sign on this horizon is the awakening of public interest. Especially the growing indignation of American women!” (251). As noted earlier, William Bigelow, as acting editor, did little to rework aspects of Connolly’s text, but he may not have needed to—as a seasoned professional, Connolly would have understood the standard discourses of femininity and domesticity a writer generally needed to adopt in order to be published within that particular medium.

Intriguingly, Connolly’s articles also provided an opportunity for those individuals living within, or in close proximity to, many native communities to enter into a dialogue over issues and concerns that had long been suppressed or overlooked in dominant culture. Certainly, no words could adequately address the material conditions occurring on the ground as lived experience. As Andrew Thickstun of Reno, Nevada notes on January 29, 1929: “I was raised among the Sioux in South Dakota . . . there is only one thing wrong with your article—and that is no fault of yours—the English language is inadequate.” Despite this purported

semiotic gap, Connolly’s work clearly memorializes some degree of suffering, serving as a permanent, widely accessible record of injustice. Dave Buffalo Bear notes in a letter to Connolly which she received on May 14: “Your courageous work will, I know be extol by all the North American Indians, also will remain a memorial as long as there is one Creditable Indian left on Earth.” As Dr. V. Berry of Okmulgee, Oklahoma notes: “It is as bad as you say, and worse.”¹⁵

Many letters engage in a process of witnessing, corroborating abuse and further grieving past harms. E.A. Towner of Salem, Oregon, for example, notes on June 15, 1929:

When I was a student at the Chemawa Indian School I suffered a broken ear drum and several broken bones . . . at the hands of an employee who is still at the school . . . Thanking you again for your noble work in this matter and assuring you that my people are grateful to you and others who have a vision of a cleaner democracy.

Beyond providing a space for voice, for story, for assertions of resilience and survivance, Connolly’s articles provided an opportunity to resist local socio-political constructions and participate, with some degree of agency, in larger, often more official discursive communities. Many letters from this group of *Good Housekeeping* readers contain offers to assist with ongoing investigations. On February 2, James Russell of Towaoc, Colorado writes to confirm ill treatment children had received at the local Indian School as Connolly described, but he also states: “While I think my name should not appear in public in connection with this matter, I am quite willing that it should be given to any investigating committee.” Susie Peters of Fort Cobb, Oklahoma writes: “If you go farther in this good work and have not been to Kiowa Agency of Andarko, Okla. I will take great pleasure in writing you some facts for investigation, or I will help you personally.”

¹⁵ Dr. Berry explains

I have lived for 38 years in intimate contact with the Indians . . . It is as bad as you say and worse, a continual story of graft and cruelty . . . no aid, medical or otherwise from any sources. I saw Chippewa families living in holes dug in the hillsides, in absolute squalor, unspeakable filth, and in all stages (of) tuberculosis, and trachoma.



Figures 6, 7, and 8: Cover illustrations for the February, March, and May, 1929 issues of *Good Housekeeping*.

These letters—these speaking leaves—confirm that Connolly’s series achieved some measure of success in meaningfully articulating indigenous concerns, but fail to answer questions related to limiting discourses of “the Indian,” tropes of sentimentality generally found within the pages of *Good Housekeeping*, and forms of misrepresentation that inevitably occur when one speaks for another. While Connolly engaged in thorough research, paying close attention to what we might call “authentic” voices, her project is one of translation, remaining unstable at best. Connolly’s work stirred her many of her readers to action, but her sometimes quaint, sanitized narrative and its appearance within a “sentimentalized” format (See Figures 6, 7, and 8) may have compromised more realistic, more sustainable visions for social and political reform, particularly with regard to issues of sovereignty and survivance so critical for native populations.¹⁶

Vera Connolly reached a much larger audience, and garnered more political support for indigenous concerns than any of her journalistic contemporaries, but the choice to employ the forum of *Good Housekeeping* may not have been invoked without long-term, and perhaps severe, rhetorical consequences. Colorful advertisements depicting prevailing racial stereotypes—bare-skinned natives trading thick animal pelts, for example—appear within the same *Good Housekeeping* issues carrying Connolly’s articles on the “Indian Cause” (See Figure 9).

¹⁶ For further discussions of the term “Indian” as a social construction, see Deloria, Dilworth, and Dippie. For discussions of the links between sentimentality and assimilation or colonization, see Warrior and Carpenter.

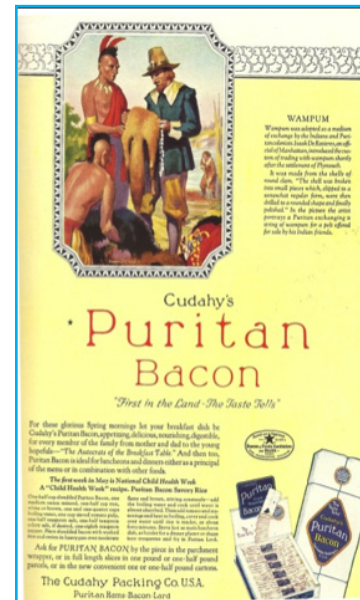


Figure 9: Advertisement in the May, 1929 *Good Housekeeping* issue for Puritan Bacon, with the magazine’s “Seal of Approval.”

Moreover, Connolly’s own presentation style does little to deviate from prevailing insensitivities. Certainly, Connolly both transcended and remained constrained by the social and cultural forces of this period, but illustrations which accompany all three of her articles reinforce dominant notions of indigenous cultures as exotic, if not primitive, with men frequently appearing half-clothed or in loincloths (See Figures 4 and 5). While the inclusion of these images may have been beyond Connolly’s editorial control, Connolly repeatedly refers to the individuals she meets outside of New York City as exotic others, noting they are “Like Arabs . . . swathed in cotton blankets” and as “bizarre as gipsies” [sic] (“The Cry” 30; “Robbed” 34). She generally presents indigenous cultures as helpless or in need of rescue (“Robbed” 255; “End of the Road” 169-70). Her failure to break with these longstanding misperceptions—particularly during a moment when her discursive abilities seem least constrained—may be the most ironic and the most disappointing aspect of her legacy for contemporary scholars to address.

Conclusion

This article attempts to look beyond the efforts of one individual rhetorical agent to a much larger range of discursive considerations, considerations of both process and product. While the article focuses most specifically on the journalistic work of Vera Connolly, its discussion addresses textual artifacts created from, and distributed to, a myriad of voices. This scholarly review confirms the richness of a methodology like material rhetoric for historical recovery and feminist inquiry, revealing through close reading and deeply contextualized forms of thick description some remarkable instances of textual autonomy and textual agency for voices that might have otherwise been silenced.

More scholarly work needs to be done to identify the rhetorical possibilities, and the rhetorical limitations, associated with the discursive spaces female-oriented trade magazines provided during the first half of the twentieth century. Despite the limitations we perceive here upon closer review, we can still celebrate the possibilities this rhetorical event so clearly evidences—moments of sustained inquiry, moments of close collaboration, moments of commitment and civic concern. In this regard, Vera Connolly's early twentieth-century work within *Good Housekeeping* and the diverse articulations her textual creation engendered should clearly resonate with many twenty-first century scholars and rhetors. Indeed, we still seek to recreate and sustain very similar kinds of civic discourse—to create our own speaking leaves, perhaps—but most certainly to promote those public conversations that can lead to more effective, more inclusive, more community-oriented forms of interest, engagement, and action.

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Review: *Beyond the Pulpit: Women's Rhetorical Roles in the Antebellum Religious Press*

T J Geiger II

Shaver, Lisa J. *Beyond the Pulpit: Women's Rhetorical Roles in the Antebellum Religious Press*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2012. Print.

Lisa J. Shaver's *Beyond the Pulpit: Women's Rhetorical Roles in the Antebellum Religious Press* makes a significant contribution to the study of women in the history of rhetoric. A project that uses an astounding range of theoretical resources, attends carefully to a stunning array of primary materials, and sheds light on an important subject, *Beyond the Pulpit* brings into focus the lives and words of women reproduced in Methodist publications in the first half of the nineteenth century. By examining texts written by women, about women, or directed toward women in three major Methodist publications, Shaver manages not only to reconstruct for readers significant dimensions of the textual communities in which women were involved, but also make a convincing argument about the rhetorical power of roles women chose for themselves and those to which they were assigned. In Christianity, the belief that death precedes new life—resurrection—is foundational. Thus, it seems wholly appropriate that Shaver opens her book's introduction with a resurrection scene. Shaver recalls the stories Methodist women told about her grandmother at the bereavement dinner following her funeral. This memory launches Shaver's account of how she came to trace the rhetorical activity of Methodist women through existing scholarship. She claims that more attention is

needed to the “little narratives” (as opposed to grand, sweeping narratives) of women outside the clearly public and institutional space of the pulpit. Shaver draws on scholarship from feminist rhetorics, literacy studies, religious history, and cultural geography alongside voluminous primary materials to reshape the standard historical account, which offers a trajectory in which women were transformed from active rhetorical participants in religious efforts during the eighteenth century into a constituency silenced by the increasing institutionalization of denominational structures in the early nineteenth century. Shaver details in her first chapter the emergence of the monthly periodical *Methodist Magazine* and the central place of memoir in that publication. A posthumously published account of an individual’s life and death composed by another, the memoir serves a ritualistic and rhetorical function. These stories of men and women “dying well” transform them, through compositional and editorial decisions, into evangelists who embody a Methodist theology of death: death could serve as a moment of spiritual perfection and an encouragement to others in their lifelong process of conversion.¹ It is primarily through memoirs, through physical death and a genre-enabled resurrection, that women appear in the pages of *Methodist Magazine*.

Turning to women’s memoirs in her second chapter, Shaver argues that these published stories elevate religious women to roles with rhetorical power akin to that of a minister, a role officially denied them in life. Preceding the development of women’s deathbed scenes as a popular American literary trope, nineteenth-century Christian women’s memoirs often focus on words spoken from their deathbeds. Through memoirs and especially deathbed scenes, women become “iconic ministers” whose actual

¹ In this review, I followed Shaver’s occasional lead in using the present tense to refer to what is conveyed within the publications. She argues that the memoirs are not strictly histories, but rhetorical and (at times) semi-literary creations. Though not done consistently throughout the book, Shaver at times stylistically and rhetorically reinforces that argument by writing about the content and effects of these texts as one might about literature, in the present tense.

or represented holiness encourages others to ongoing spiritual development (37). Though memoirs were significantly shaped by men (frequently composed by ministers, introduced with letters from family members, and edited by publication officials), they sometimes include women’s journal and letter excerpts. Journal writing is a central practice of Methodist spirituality (a debt owed to John Wesley) and was more likely to be engaged in by women than men as a means to self-construction.

The “Ladies’ Department” of the *Christian Advocate*, the subject of Shaver’s third chapter, appears at the back of the popular republican and evangelist weekly magazine. Shaver situates the Ladies’ Department as part of the nineteenth-century domestic canon that both generated and policed the rigid gender boundaries that relied on an ideology of separate spheres of activity for men and women: public and private, respectively. Even as the Ladies’ Department encourages women to a narrow range of roles (holy mother and virtuous wife), Shaver insists that in the process of bolstering such traditional roles, these representations point to women’s expanding rhetorical influence through activities that were once the province of ministers: the spiritual edification of men and children.

Attending to those representations of women within the *Christian Advocate* that appear outside the Ladies’ Department, Shaver’s fourth chapter is also her longest. By examining stories (sometimes composed by women themselves) of women’s individual and collective benevolent activity, Shaver argues that women become privileged models to be emulated and agents in history who gained a range of rhetorical and organizational proficiencies. According to Shaver, these skills and activities laid the groundwork for the next generation of women’s political and reform work in the late-nineteenth century that often receives more attention from rhetorical scholars. As Sunday school teachers depicted in the *Christian Advocate*, women further a key nationalistic and evangelistic project: the spiritual development

and denominational instruction of children. In this role, they also moved spiritual literacy curricula away from simple memorization and into a dialogic and dynamic encounter. Shaver demonstrates that depictions of ministers' wives and women missionaries (sometimes not actually given that title) reveal the fact that women engaged in these efforts negotiated not only increasingly public roles, but also traditionally gendered domestic expectations and labor.

Shaver's final chapter examines the *Ladies' Repository*, a Methodist periodical specifically addressed to women. This Methodist "version of *Godey's Lady's Book*" (107) promotes women's reading for intellectual and moral development. Contributors and editorial comments frequently entertain the nineteenth debate about women's education, calling for women's education to be equal to that of men. Through a discussion of letters to the editor, poetry, and scriptural exegesis published in the *Ladies Repository*, Shaver documents the ways in which this periodical offered ordinary women a range of opportunities to exercise their rhetorical powers.

In a short epilogue, Shaver evokes the image of women heralding the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment (and, thus, women's voting rights) in the House of Representatives by singing the Doxology, a prayer sung in many Protestant liturgies. Shaver confronts the modern readers' potential sense of this scene as odd or illegible by reminding readers of the religious motivations and contexts that frequently informed U.S. women's public speaking. Those historical women also found justifications for their speaking in Christian scriptures. Despite this history, Shaver notes ironies both historical and contemporary. Historically, the caricatures late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century churchwomen and feminist activists held about each other often prevented mutually beneficial action around shared concerns. Contemporary rhetorical scholarship focuses on those historical women whose reform projects align more closely with today's normative political project and often forgets those women engaged in what might ostensibly

seem like more conservative endeavors. Shaver urges attention to the histories and women this frame leaves out.

While there is much to recommend *Beyond the Pulpit*, I'll focus on three features that make it a particularly important study, and the features I call attention to run throughout the entire text. First, the approach Shaver takes to locating religious women's rhetorical activity is brilliant. By engaging not only religious periodical pieces penned by women, but also those depictions composed by men, Shaver points to unlikely but richly layered sites that demonstrate women's rhetorical influence. In this way, she provides a model for how to recover the rhetoric of ordinary women when records of their own composition are few. Second, Shaver consistently illustrates how the women who populate the pages of the U.S. religious press defy the notion that a reader can easily identify (and thus dismiss) any given rhetorical moment as simply a mobilization of traditional gender roles or the idea of separate spheres. Even when men filtered and controlled women's representations, Shaver points to the enabling potential such representations contain. Moreover, supposedly private spaces are consistently transformed into rhetorical spaces with a deeply public feel: deathbeds made into pulpits, homes turned into sites for evangelism, and Sunday school classes transformed into missionary fields. Third, and connected to the second point, Shaver portrays the complicated agency women achieved through roles both selected and assigned. Whereas another scholar may have primarily seen in women's memoirs as troublingly narrow constructions of women at the hands of male religious leaders, Shaver identifies how they point toward women's acquisition of ministerial powers that through publication and consumption would not be confined to the deathbed. Likewise, with those socially scripted roles of mother and wife, Shaver highlights the complex motivations women brought to the roles and the rhetorical power women gained from these roles in order to exert a measure of control over their circumstances.

Even as I thoroughly recommend *Beyond the Pulpit*, I do wish Shaver had more fully addressed issues that speak not just to the fraught nature of the gender ideology in which her subject participated, but national and class ideologies as well. For example, Shaver does note the “cultural imperialism” in which Christian women engaged through missionary work (87) and the *Christian Advocate*’s romanticizing of women in poverty (79). However, the former is definitely downplayed and that also seems the case with latter. Citing multiple times the church and Christian women’s work among Native Americans as well as the role of religious periodicals in connecting Christians during the U.S.’s westward expansion, Shaver’s treatment would have been enriched by accounting more thoroughly for the cultural and political imperialism Christian women furthered both abroad and at home. Responding to potential critiques of how the *Christian Advocate* might be interpreted as, at times, encouraging women in poverty to simply accept their circumstances, Shaver claims that such objections deny “the evangelical context and culture” of the women and the publication (79). To my mind, critiquing or acknowledging the consequences of a community’s rhetorical actions (about non-Christian peoples or poverty) does not mean dismissing evangelical motivations. Rather, it means treating all ancestors with the utmost respect. Furthermore, such acknowledgement would further our understanding of the complicated dynamics in which Christian women participated.

Despite this qualm, let me reiterate that *Beyond the Pulpit* is convincingly argued and well-supported. Shaver’s investigation adds invaluable depth and texture to our understanding of the rhetorical activities and agency of Christian women in the U.S.

About the Author

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M.A. in English as well as a Graduate Certificate in Women’s Studies from Texas Woman’s University. His research focuses on advanced writing pedagogy and history, computers and writing, religious rhetorics, and feminist rhetorics. His articles have appeared in *CCTE Studies* and *Peitho*, and he has an article forthcoming in *College English* about religion in the writing classroom. He is currently completing his dissertation, a two-institution study of the undergraduate writing major through student surveys, interviews, and written work.

Review: *Techniques of Pleasure: BDSM and the Circuits of Sexuality*

Nicholaus Baca

Weiss, Margot. *Techniques of Pleasure: BDSM and the Circuits of Sexuality*. Durham: Duke University Press. 2011. Print.

Techniques of Pleasure: BDSM and the Circuits of Sexuality, by Margot Weiss, explores the intricacies and the complexities of the underground world of bondage, domination and sadomasochism (BDSM or, just SM—As Weiss uses BDSM and SM interchangeably, I also will do so throughout). Written as an ethnography that chronicles the practices of BDSM practitioners in the San Francisco Bay area, Weiss explores the relationships between sexuality and capitalism, between desiring bodies and consumer culture, between the techniques BDSM practitioners use in order to experience pleasure, and the tools, toys, prosthetic devices, and bodies that are used to both cultivate and create those techniques. *Techniques* explores BDSM not from any type of evaluative perspective—Weiss does not impose any judgment of BDSM as deviant sexual behavior; rather, the book recognizes BDSM as a highly discursive community, where practitioners affectively develop and hone skills over time.

In “Introduction: Toward a Performative Materialism,” Weiss situates her research by “[d]eparting from a Foucault-inspired analysis of the radical alterity of BDSM practice” and complicates the ways in which SM has been typically understood (6). Rather than continue to see SM from either the radical feminist “anti-SM” position or the “queer pro-sex” position, Weiss explores the

dynamic ways in which SM practices both reflect and propagate neoliberal capitalist culture and provide spaces where categories such as race, gender, and sexuality operate within the locations of both the public/private, and the social/individual, ultimately blurring the boundaries of any such dichotomization. Weiss works at providing a contextualized understanding of how she will proceed in her ethnographic project, and at mapping out the theoretical underpinnings she uses in order to both challenge and inform current scholarship that deals not only with BDSM but that also concerns how the current trends of SM practice are in many ways tied to neoliberal capitalism, the ways in which SM informs and furthers our understanding of Butler's notions of performative identity, and complicates traditional ways of reading SM practices that see it as transgressive.

In Chapter 1, "Setting the Scene: SM Communities in the San Francisco Bay Area," Weiss provides a detailed history of BDSM culture in the Bay area. Weiss notes early on that she will be exploring "the change from Folsom Street to Palo Alto, from the old guard to the new, providing a cultural history of this new scene and its practitioners in relation to the socioeconomic contours of the Bay area" (35). According to Weiss, "the shifts [in the socioeconomic conditions of the Bay area] in the 1980s and 1990s produced a flourishing new guard scene" (37). Where prior to the 1980s, the SM old guard scene of the Bay area typically consisted of gay men, the new guard took on a much more white heterosexual demographic. As the economic conditions in the Bay area became more and more conducive to middle-to-upper-class white heterosexuals, the old guard leather scene slowly (though not at all completely) dissipated. However, still understood as a symbolic space of sexual freedom and liberation, the BDSM culture of the Bay area by no means disappeared; rather the old guard was supplanted by white, largely, heterosexual professionals. In her thoughtful and detailed analysis, Weiss provides a well-articulated and provocative historiography of the very specific ways in which

the socioeconomic conditions catalyzed the transition from the old guard to the new. She provides useful discussions of the history of San Francisco as the "queer capital of the United States"; the ways in which communication technologies radically transformed the socioeconomic landscape of the Bay area; and the ways networked technologies, that is, digital spaces, provided the means through which the new guard scene rapidly took shape.

In Chapter 2, "Becoming a Practitioner: Self-Mastery, Social Control, and the Biopolitics of SM," Weiss "analyzes the emphasis on rules and regulations, classrooms and guidebooks, safety procedures and dungeon monitors" of the new guard SM in order to explicate "the ways in which people become SM practitioners by producing, policing, mastering, and debating the boundaries between safe (acceptable or correct) and dangerous (unacceptable and wrong) play" (62). In detailing the very specific ways in which BDSM communities have come to be self-regulatory, Weiss shows how practitioners who strictly adhere to rules and regulations become more and more entrenched into the very communal practices of the BDSM culture. In other words, the bureaucratization of a codified set of rules and standards becomes the way in which practitioners can and do enter into the discourse. Ultimately, according to Weiss, in order to become a successful practitioner in the new guard SM scene, an individual must cultivate a discursive relationship with a community of practitioners by refining techniques through self-mastery and continued communal practice.

In Chapter 3, "The Toy Bag: Exchange Economies and the Body at Play," Weiss discusses the importance of commodities such as whips, gags, bags, bondage devices, dungeon equipment, leather, and others in order explain "the place of toys in . . . [the] circuits between capitalism and embodiment," that is to say, "the relationship between toys and consumer-players in terms of *technological prostheses*, broadening both terms to include not only technology but also the knowledge practices of *techne*, and not

only literal prostheses but also changing forms of embodiment” (103-4). According to Weiss, not only do the various commodities associated with BDSM culture function as means through which to master techniques, but the very objects themselves, as consumer goods, operate as gatekeepers, deflecting people of color, and they reflect the dynamic ways in which consumerism, capitalism, and hegemonic ideologies permeate sexuality, desire, and sexual practices.

The last two chapters, “Beyond Vanilla: Public Politics and Private Selves” and “Sex Play and the Social: Reading the Effective Circuit,” take a look at a series of very specific individuals and situations in order to draw implications to larger sociopolitical and socioeconomic issues. In Chapter 4, Weiss analyzes the ambivalence three white HMDs (heterosexual male dominants) express in relation to their privileged subject positions in order to show how “racialized and sexed gender is itself a mimetic performance, a copy that can only ever seek to replicate a phantasmatic original” (182). Weiss concludes the book by looking at a series of highly controversial scenes (a slave auction, a Nazi prison interrogation scene, and a minoritized mugging scene) in order to show how

“SM performance is not [simply] a repetition of social power; [but] it carries and produces the complexities of social relationships, relationships shot through with contradictions unresolved—indeed, erotically and politically powerful precisely because they remain in tension” (230).

While *Technique of Pleasure* provides a very detailed and thoroughly explicated ethnography of a certain brand of the new guard BDSM subculture of the San Francisco Bay area through detailed interviews and relevant historicization, I would have liked to have been introduced to more of the alternative forms of SM that seem to have been slighted in order to posit a rather uniform and coherent theorization of heterosexual SM culture. In other words, gay men, although largely credited with the inception of

BDSM culture, are largely forgotten, suggesting they are the relics of a distant past. And perhaps a more thorough examination of more of the “deviants” (even within the scene) may have provided a more complicated and nuanced analysis. That said, I think this is a fascinating, sophisticated, and original look at the ways in which we might begin to rethink how we view alternative iterations of expressions of sexuality. Not only does this book provide new and insightful ways through which to think about SM culture, Weiss also provides interesting observations about how to imagine and reimagine “sexuality as a social relation—interarticulated with hierarchies, institutions, national imaginaries, and local spaces of practice—rather than an escape,” where sexuality can never be extracted from the social and material conditions from where it manifests, and, as such “can never be merely private/sexual but is always public/political” (231,203). I thoroughly recommend this book to anyone interested in areas of sexuality, critical race theory, gender studies, biopolitics, and even discourse analysis.

About the Author

Nicholaus Baca is a Ph.D. student at Bowling Green State University in English, specializing in Rhetoric and Writing. He teaches first-year-composition for the General Studies Writing Program. Originally from Southern California, he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in English from University of California, Santa Barbara. He received his master’s degree from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, also in English, specializing in Rhetoric and Composition and Renaissance Literature. Nick’s scholarly interests include writing studies and writing studies research, literary and critical theory, psychoanalysis, queer theory/gay and lesbian studies, gender studies and sexuality, and virtual identities.

Review: *Wit's End: Women's Humor as Rhetorical and Performative Strategy*

Mariana Grohowski

Zwagerman, Sean. *Wit's End: Women's Humor as Rhetorical and Performative Strategy*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010. Print.

A new season of television starring comedic women is upon us. Though women have long held starring roles in comedy television, it appears that the fall television lineup is saturated by a record number of successful comedy television shows with women in starring roles.¹ Although it pleases me that women have claimed primetime comedy television as their own, I often consider the roles women play as well as the shows in which they star as simply perpetuating stereotypical and marginalizing gender roles, which prevents me from appreciating said shows. However, my perception of television's funny women has changed considerably upon reading Sean Zwagerman's book *Wit's End*; I now perceive these women as using humor in complex and purposeful ways.

Although he focuses on women with starring roles in twentieth-century American literature, Zwagerman's analysis of the complexity of women's humor offers implications that far surpass complicating and complimenting our television viewing experiences. Through a feminist approach and with a feminist agenda, using rhetorical theory, speech-act theory, and literary

¹ Three successful shows that premiered last fall are back for second seasons (e.g., NBC's *Whitney*, Fox's *New Girl*, and CBS's *2 Broke Girls*), adding to NBC's *30 Rock* (now in its seventh season and final season), ABC's award-winning *Modern Family* (now in its fourth season) and Fox's *The Mindy Project* (premier season).

and textual analysis, Zwagerman's research allows us to "consider what [humor] does in the hands—or on the lips—of speakers traditionally denied both performative authority and the right to use humor" (4). In his analysis of works by authors James Thurber (Chapter 2); Zora Neale Hurston (Chapters 2 & 5); Dorothy Parker (chapter 2); Edward Albee (Chapter 3); and Louise Erdrich (Chapter 5), Zwagerman uses literary representations in order to showcase "the total speech situation and the 'transideological' potential of humor" (5) because, according to Zwagerman, such has largely been unconsidered by speech-act (which Zwagerman refers to as "performative") and rhetorical theorists.

Zwagerman's work makes many contributions to advancing the study of women in the history of rhetoric, even though the women he studies are fictional. One contribution is the exigency for a broader consideration of how women's humor can "be conservative and stabilizing as radical and 'decentering'" (6). This focus offers those studying women's epistemologies something feminist scholar Linda Gordon once advocated:

...choosing topics or sources of information that allow us to see only domination or only areas of women's autonomy can be illegitimate. Our collective goal ought to be to advance a theoretical framework to our scholarship that transcends... dualism[s] and incorporates the varied experiences of women. We need...work that insists on presenting the complexity of the sources of power and weaknesses in women's lives. (25)

Gordon's standard for scholarship is upheld by Zwagerman in his ability to carefully consider multiple and differing positions; in his ability to collectively synthesize those works in meaningful ways; and in his ability for showing the various roles women using humor have played in American literature. Zwagerman's demonstration of the ways in which humor enacts and prevents women's agency upholds Gordon's standard in providing a more complex understanding of women's multiple roles.

Chapter 1's title and subtitle, "Like a Marriage with a Monkey': An Argument for the Use of Speech-Act Theory in the Analysis of Humor," reveal the chapter's argument. In his examination and support for the work of speech-act theorist J. L. Austin, Zwagerman situates his works in relation to the work of Austin, Jacques Derrida, and John R. Searle in order to claim that every humorous speech act has an intention worthy of attention. Near the end of the chapter, Zwagerman demonstrates the multifaceted nature of humor within a single speech act by focusing on an interaction between a husband and wife, in which the husband pleads, "I was only joking!" Zwagerman supports his argument for the complex intentionality of a given performative, by explaining how a single statement ("I was only joking") can mean one of fifteen different kinds of speech acts (35-9). This section models the kind of feminist critique Gordon advocates, in that it accounts for a multiplicity of meanings. Thus, this section, like the entirety of Zwagerman's book, productively advances research of women in the history of rhetoric and composition, by showcasing a fuller picture of the multiplicity of women's experiences, through a consideration of the various ways humor can be used to enact or limit women's agency.

Chapter 2, "Subversive Potential Meets Social Resistance: Women's Humor in Thurber, Hurston, and Parker," is broken up into the sections, "James Thurber and the fear of the Humorous Women" (42-52); "The Realization of Humor in *Seraph on the Suwanee*" (52-73); and "Dorothy Parker and the Dance of Humor" (73-91). The chapter begins with an examination of Thurber's use of dominant women and submissive men, which "upset roles and expectations" (48-9), demonstrating the complexity, specifically, the possibilities and limitations for women's agency in Thurber's chosen performatives for women's interactions with men. Moving on, Zwagerman compares Zora Neale Hurston's use of humor in *Seraph on the Suwanee* to Thurber, in order to carefully and thoroughly explain the possibilities and constraints of Hurston's

female character Arvay's use of humor as agency enacting. Comparing Thurber's women to Hurston's Arvay, Zwagerman notes that "though humor can be the performative mode of the oppressed, it is not magically effective against that oppression" (71). In the final section of the chapter, Zwagerman examines Dorothy Parker's "The Waltz" to showcase how Parker allowed women to use humor to perform in "a man's world" demonstrating how "humor can critique, reframe, or rename constructed reality (social facts)" (75-76). The comparative analysis Zwagerman undertakes in this chapter upholds Gordon's earlier call for scholarship that accounts for the various degrees of power women hold. Zwagerman's willingness to show the various roles afforded to women using humor in their interactions with men provides a fuller picture of women's agency and how women can use humor to possess various degrees of power.

Chapter 3, "Generally Unhappy: The Deconstruction of Speech Acts and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*," addresses the limitations of J.L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* before discussing the limitations of Derridian epistemology. The majority of the chapter is an analysis of the humor in the exchanges between characters Martha and George in Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* This analysis, according to Zwagerman, provides the best example of "Derrida's theory of speech acts in practice" (102). Thus, this chapter might be of particular importance for those studying Derrida and/or speech-act theory, as Zwagerman does an excellent job breaking down Derrida's complex epistemologies clearly and concretely.

Chapter 4, "Comic Relief: A Stand-up Performance by J.L. Austin and the Consequences of Not Getting It," makes the case for Austin's rhetorical genius by outlining the many mis-readings of Austin by scholars such as Derrida, Felman, Miller, and Sedgwick, thus providing the exigency for a reconsideration of Austin's contributions to the study of rhetoric, speech-acts, and feminisms. Zwagerman claims that Austin used humor to comment on humor

in ways that were overlooked (and looked over) by many scholars. Zwagerman compares Austin to Charlie Chaplin, stating, "neither Chaplin nor Austin is *really*—accidentally or unexpectedly—falling down: it's an act. Austin enacts failure as a form of humor and humor as an epistemology, as not just a saying or a doing, but a way of doing thinking, of calling knowledge into question" (148 emphasis in original). Such a comparison, coupled with his thorough literature review, persuaded me to accept his position of Austin's rhetorical genius.

Chapter 5, "Failure Revisited and Authority Regained: Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*," is a comparative analysis of the ways in which two women from twentieth-century American literature used humor. Zwagerman begins by discussing Hurston's Janie from *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, who goes on trial for killing her husband Tea Cake. He compares Janie's weak use of humor to *Love Medicine's* Lulu Lamartine use of humor during her trial. This comparative analysis demonstrates the various performative acts available to these female characters. According to Zwagerman, Lulu is able to use humor more authoritatively than Janie. We see Lulu as performing a power usually only afforded to men; her exercise of power makes the men in the courtroom uncomfortable and provides Lulu with a considerable amount of agency. This chapter allows us to see a spectrum of power afforded to women through their intentional uses of humor.

In the final chapter "Sisyphus's Punch Line: Intentionality and Wit as Treatment for Postmodern Depression," Zwagerman argues for the degree of intentionality in a given performative speech act, arguing for humor's importance in language epistemologies. Citing Rollo May, Lloyd Bitzer, Kenneth Burke, Stanley Fish, and of course, J. L. Austin, Zwagerman explains how humor and intention can be used to express sincerity. Near the end of the chapter, Zwagerman states:

there is no better performative strategy than humor. The constructive, destructive, deconstructive, reconstructive

speech-action of humor gives voice to the belief, hope, and desire (not just the intent) that things are not—and need not be in the future—always already what they seem. (207)

Zwagerman sees things as they are: his work thoroughly upholds the standards and agendas of feminist research and accounts for the multiplicity of meanings and experiences in analyzing humor—specifically women's use of humor. Zwagerman's rigorous and integral scholarship advances women's studies by carefully considering many perspectives, effectively upholding Gordon's call for productive feminist scholarship.

If there is a limitation to this text, it may be the many voices Zwagerman considers and the amount of space Zwagerman allows each speaker in a given chapter. Like other feminist scholars who quote their research subjects at length, Zwagerman includes paragraph-length quotations for most theorists and characters. For example, in Chapter 2, it is difficult to follow each speaker and their connection to Zwagerman's claims. Although Zwagerman is careful to synthesize voices and claims, readers must be alert and active readers, as Zwagerman wastes no space in his book frontloading or restating key points. On the other hand, affording multiple speakers ample space promotes equality in the consideration of multiple (and oftentimes) differing perspectives—a rhetorical strategy that upholds Gordon's standard for feminist critique. Thus, this may not be a weakness but a *benefit* of Zwagerman's work.

Another clear benefit of Zwagerman's work is that it offers substantial implications for teacher-scholars in rhetoric, women's studies, and literary and textual analysis. Perhaps the following questions Zwagerman poses are some of the best for providing agency to potential readers:

What interpersonal, social, or political aspects of a particular scene of exigence might make humor seem the most strategic, potentially felicitous form of speech?
Why might certain speakers, particularly those of marginalized status *as* speakers, chose the indirection of

humor, and what does that say about humor's potency that its use by marginalized speakers—women, for instance—is often discouraged as inappropriate?" (31 emphasis in original).

These questions urge teacher-scholars to consider humor more substantially. In addition to the above questions, Zwagerman offers many other important ideas and implications that offer new possibilities, new connections, and new ways of thinking about the intentionality of humorous speech acts giving humor and its ability to foster women's agency. Thus, Zwagerman's work may cause us to more greatly appreciate television's funny women. For, as Zwagerman contends, funny women are much smarter and more powerful than we give them credit for.

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About the Author

Mariana Grohowski is a second-year PhD student. Her research examines the cultural ideologies and literate activities of servicewomen of the U.S. Armed Forces. She has taught courses in first-year writing and service learning, and has worked as a writing consultant in a university writing center. She earned her M.S. in Rhetoric and Technical Communication from Michigan Technological University. Her work has appeared in the *Community Literacy Journal*, *Reflections*, and *Enculturation*.



Call for Proposals: Ninth Biennial Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference

The Program in Writing and Rhetoric and the Hume Writing Center invite proposals for the Ninth Biennial Feminisms and Rhetorics conference, to be held at Stanford University **September 25-28, 2013**. Our emphasis this year is on links, the connections between people, between places, between times,

between movements. The conference theme—Linked: Rhetorics, Feminisms, and Global communities—reflects Stanford's setting in the heart of the Silicon Valley, a real as well as virtual space with links to every corner of the globe. We aim for a conference that will be multivocal, multimodal, multilingual, and interdisciplinary, one in which we will work together to articulate the contours of feminist rhetorics.

Building on the 2011 conference, with its focus on the challenges and opportunities of feminism, the 2013 conference will seek to explore links between and among local and global, academic and nonacademic, past and present, public and private, and online and offline communities. In particular, we invite conversations about cross-cultural and global rhetorics, science and technology, entrepreneurship, outreach, or intersections among these.

With the overarching goal of facilitating and complicating links, we invite proposals (panels or individual submissions) that explore a wide range of topics, including but not limited to:

- Historical investigations of feminism
- Feminist Rhetoricians
- Rhetorics of the body
- Disability and the (medical) body
- Rhetorics of race and feminism
- Queer Studies and feminism
- Sexual and gender identification rhetorics

- Feminist models of mentoring
- Political rhetoric and feminism
- Feminist pedagogy
- WPA work and women
- Feminist critiques of power structures
- Feminist critiques/uses of the rhetoric of science

The following list of questions demonstrate some possible links to consider:

- What links do we make or fail/neglect to make in the work we do (in communities, in our field(s), in the classroom setting, across cultures)?
- How are cross-cultural rhetorics embodied?
- How do feminist rhetorics intersect with/operate in global, social, financial, activist, and communication networks? How can we use these links for productive outreach?
- How does or can writing link multimedia worlds?
- What are the specific spaces (geographical, virtual, etc.) where solidarities (strategic, impermanent, etc.) are formed? How do new audiences, contexts, ideas, movements emerge in these spaces? How are the feminisms of the 21st century “linked in”?
- What kind of genderings/racings/classings happen in the rhetorical situations of internet-based social networks?
- What kind of genderings/racings/classings happen in the rhetorical situations of classrooms, departments, working groups?
- How does the link between feminism and rhetoric help us interrogate nationalism, fundamentalism, violence, and/or war?
- How does the link between feminism and rhetoric help us interrogate composition, writing program administration, departmental debates?
- How does the link between feminism and rhetoric help us interrogate productive links between disciplines?
- What can feminist theory/ies bring to cross/intercultural communication? How can entrepreneurial or social-entrepreneurial efforts help us redefine or improve cross/intercultural communication and outreach?
- How might the study of intercultural rhetorics enrich and complicate accepted narratives of feminisms, western rhetoric and science?

Deadline for submission: **February 1, 2013**

250 word limit

Send questions, comments and submissions to: femrhet2013@stanford.edu

