

Linking Rural Women Transnationally: Iowa's "First Lady of the Farm" and Post WWII Ethos

Abby M. Dubisar

Abstract: *This essay expands understanding of situated and invented ethos by analyzing the archival writings of Ruth Buxton Sayre (1896-1980), known as "First Lady of the Farm." Rhetorical analysis of post-WWII writings by Sayre, as well as archival photographs and publications about Sayre, position Sayre as a model for constructing negotiated ethos and accessing authority through multiple roles. Ultimately, this essay argues that Sayre had to redefine the accepted characterization of women on farms not only to propel her own pursuits as a rhetor, but also to convince farm women of their responsibilities for postwar reconstruction, positioning them as global citizens.*

Keywords: *archival research, Ruth Buxton Sayre, peace, rural women, rural rhetoric, post-world war II, farm, Iowa, midwest, women's history, Farm Bureau, Associated Country Women of the World*

"The tremendous task that lies before us as organized farm women is to help to create an understanding of world citizenship among farm people."—Ruth Buxton Sayre, "The Farm Woman—a World Citizen" 1935 address to the Associated Women of the American Farm Bureau¹

Ruth Buxton Sayre lived from 1896-1980 and was known during her lifetime as "First Lady of the Farm" because she served as a dedicated advocate for farm women, both in Iowa and across the world. An avid speaker and

1 This archival research was funded by a 2014 grant from Iowa State University's Center for Excellence in Arts and Humanities. I am grateful for the expertise and assistance of archivists Mary Bennett and Charles Scott of the State Historical Society of Iowa in Iowa City. I am also indebted to feedback provided by Ben Crosby, Jane Greer, Maggie LaWare, Lisa Meloncon, and Lisa Shaver as this project evolved. Feedback provided by the two anonymous Peitho reviewers strengthened this article considerably.

well-published writer, she was appointed to President Eisenhower's Agricultural Advisory Committee in 1953 and served in other civic roles. Also, as part of her lifelong mission to link rural women and connect farming people with international affairs, she led the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) as its president from 1947-1953.

While Sayre's archive has much to contribute to rhetorical study, in this article I specifically address two ways that Sayre invented herself as a rhetor: by constructing a negotiated ethos and by establishing multiple types of authority as a model for others. After providing the background of this research and its method, I connect Sayre's work to studies of ethos and transnationality. I then describe the possibilities for women's farm-based peace rhetorics that Sayre's work illuminates, closely analyzing both Sayre's work and publications about her and their representations of negotiated ethos and multiple roles that model authority.

Background and Method

Even though my analysis focuses on Sayre's postwar writing and speaking, her thinking about international citizenship began earlier. Sayre attended Simpson College in her home town of Indianola and graduated with a German degree during World War I. As Hoehnle writes, "she found German teaching jobs hard to come by in the fierce nativist climate of the time," indicating the constraints against which she developed her ideas ("Sayre, Ruth Buxton").

Upon marrying Raymond Sayre in 1918 she moved from Indianola to the Sayre farm, transitioning from a home equipped with modern conveniences to one without plumbing and electricity. This transition helped mobilize her evolving international perspective since she experienced the challenges of farm life that could unite rural women regardless of nationality. By harnessing her education and the connections she built through farm organizations, she wanted to show farm women that their roles linked them to an international network of rural women and could be expansive, not limiting. For example, in "A Country Woman Looks at the World," Sayre states that, "organized groups of women are tackling many of the social and economic problems of world recovery" (2). She goes on to describe the 1941 ACWW memo on reconstruction, which "recommends an immediate postwar program of feeding the starving countries of the world, a long-term program of freer trade in the world-wide distribution of food," ("A Country Woman" 2) and more ideas crafted by rural women advocating for postwar progress.

Sayre's papers are held at the State Historical Society of Iowa in Iowa City and represent the lifework of a rhetor who used all available means of persuasion to make the farm a locus for progressive activity and to shift farm

women's perspectives, challenging them to see themselves as influential beyond their rural, home locations. Occupying eight and a half linear feet, the 32 boxes that make up the Sayre collection include materials dating from 1920 to 1980. As a researcher of women peace activists' rhetorical strategies, I first discovered Sayre due to her interest in peace and international relations. For this article I selected dated, postwar artifacts showing Sayre's ability to strategically and habitually craft an ethos that balanced her acceptable role of farm wife with her evolving role as an international figure, as well as publications from the same time period that feature others' descriptions of her expertise.

Arranged thematically, this article analyzes several 1948 documents from Sayre's substantial archive: Sayre's address at the Tenth National Farm Institute, "The World Situation from a Woman's Point of View"; her *Farm Journal* article, "Peace is Possible"; Martens and Shank's *Farm Journal* article about Sayre, "This Busy Woman Keeps a Gracious Home"; and Hegerfeld's profile of Sayre in *Successful Farming*, "Successful Homemaking." Hegerfeld's profile includes photos of Sayre cooking in her kitchen and is paired with Sayre's article "Farm Women Must Be Good World Neighbors."

In the work covered here especially, she met audiences' expectations for what a farm woman would know and understand in order to gain acceptance and secure authority while she further built her credentials and philosophies to craft herself as an expert on international affairs. Individuals writing about her, on the other hand, emphasized her domestic roles as primary. Ultimately, Sayre strategically balanced multiple roles, those assigned to her and those she promoted for herself and others. At the same time, she worked to help farming communities come to terms with their own international connectedness after World War II, linking together women's evolving roles and the postwar landscape. Thus, Sayre used rhetorical strategies to try to renegotiate women's roles, leveraging the postwar era to do so.

Ethos and Transnationality

My study is informed by understandings of ethos that help reveal how women rhetors invent themselves as authorities (Campbell, Reynolds) as well as feminist rhetoric's recent interest in transnationality (Dingo, Hesford, Richards). In their introduction to the special issue of *College English* on transnational feminist rhetorics, Wendy S. Hesford and Eileen E. Schell define transnationality as "movements of people, goods, and ideas across national borders," a term that points out "forms of cultural hybridity and intertextuality" (463). This concept would have resonated with Sayre because she strove to persuade rural women to see their lives as linked to other rural women around the world, destabilizing the significance of national borders and

networking women who were engaged in farming worldwide. Likewise, Sayre would have appreciated the transnational rhetorical perspective Hesford and Schell promote, one that focuses on “cultural interconnectivity...addressing how cultures transact and interact with one another in a variety of mediums... and through international policymaking and transnational organizing” (465). Sayre knew that the future of agriculture, and women’s leadership roles within agriculture, would be increasingly influenced by international trade policies and other outcomes of globalization. She worked to connect rural women to one another in order to expand their knowledge and influence, convincing them to build an international network of rural women.

The framework of situated ethos (i.e., one’s accepted reputation) and invented ethos (i.e., one’s constructed or performed authority) helpfully shows how Sayre crafts her authority. While situated ethos is one’s established authority and trusted persona, which Sayre relied on and maintained in her civic roles, invented ethos is the character rhetors invent for an occasion, which Sayre had to craft when facing audiences unfamiliar with her background and expertise (Crowley and Hawhee 149). Overall Sayre builds on her community’s assumptions and audience’s expectations for her (situated ethos) and pushes boundaries by inventing new possibilities for farm women’s authority (invented ethos) that are both relevant to her own expertise as a speaker and writer and essential for the influence of all farm women. These two types of ethos must work together, as Sayre understood. In Burke’s words, “the more effective your invented ethos is, the stronger your situated ethos might become in the long run, and vice versa” (22). One builds on the other, and Sayre understood that she could not mobilize audiences’ thinking in new ways without establishing herself as a familiar authority.

Scholars of feminist historiography show how rhetors meet the dual elements of both situated and invented ethos. Writing about Margaret Prior, the first female missionary of the American Female Moral Reform Society, Shaver shows how an understanding of both invented and situated ethos is essential to women advocates and leaders: “In the neighborhoods that she frequented, Prior relied on a *situated ethos* that drew from her reputation and actions... [But] for individuals reading her unsigned missionary reports, Prior used an *invented ethos*, in which she intentionally constructed her character within the discourse” (70). Shaver’s analysis thus shows how Prior met audience’s expectations for what a female missionary should know and how women behave as advocates that promote change in nonthreatening ways.

Writing about the autobiographies of pioneer women who lived a generation before Sayre did, Christoph features the writers’ strategic use of ethos construction to introduce themselves to readers and gain authority. Christoph demonstrates how strategic ethos deployment was essential for

nineteenth-century pioneer women writers, who “did not have access to the political and economic evidence that middle-class men used to participate in debates about westward expansion” (662). She predicts that the “strategies of placement” enacted by these autobiographers can be found in other types of texts as well and this prediction is confirmed in Sayre’s writing and speaking by her portrayal of importance of the farm as a place. Through Sayre’s efforts to craft a negotiated ethos as well as establish and maintain multiple roles that modeled the authority she hoped other farm women would assert, her archived work reveals her skill as a rhetor who understood the need to build one’s authority and invent a place from which to speak and write.

The study of women rhetors is inextricably linked to the study of ethos because such rhetors wrest the authority that is not automatically handed to them by audiences. Feminist rhetoric scholars, too, work to change the very definition of ethos in order to make authority more inclusive. Writing about methodology, Micciche positions feminist constructs of ethos against traditional definitions that “privilege the individual speaking or writing well” (175). Instead, a focus on “collective identity and collaboration as significant to knowledge building and the development of credibility” shapes the intellectual endeavor of feminist rhetoric. Positioning Sayre as part of that effort to redefine ethos illuminates Sayre’s attempts to show all farm women the roles they could play in a global context, redefining in turn the definition of a farm woman.

Likewise, amplifying this redefinition offered through Sayre’s work heeds Dingo’s call to meet the need “to trace the circulation of arguments about women and to look not only at these arguments themselves but how those arguments network to wider contexts such as historical discourses, geopolitics, global economics, and cultural expectations” (145). My analysis of Sayre’s archive can help feminist rhetoric scholars better understand the significance of the current power infrastructures in which women farmers are enmeshed and how definitions of farming women invoke or deny autonomy for rural women in a transnational frame.

Cultivating Women’s Peace Rhetorics from the Farm: Negotiated Ethos and Multiple Roles

Sayre’s path diverges from pioneer and urban women who have been analyzed by rhetorical scholars studying ethos (Christoph; Shaver) as well as from the peace activist women in interwar scholarship (Roskelly; Sharer) because Sayre occupied a liminal space that was continually in flux. She moved between an accepted farm-woman identity, her situated ethos from her private life on the farm, and that of a leader promoting new roles for women and

connecting their identities to international relations and peace, her invented public ethos that she crafted throughout her writing and speaking career.

Negotiated Ethos

While Sayre's archive contains writings and speeches that span her adulthood, her postwar publications most prominently address gender roles, peace, food, and agriculture, and thus articulate how her gendered ethos contends with both situated and invented elements. She consistently addresses audiences with a negotiated authority that draws on her various types of expertise and works across the boundaries of public/private and domestic/professional.

Sayre built her negotiated ethos while using gender norms in order to destabilize them. Using her otheredness as a woman speaking on a topic that was not considered to be within the realm of feminine authority in her 1948 speech ("The World Situation") to the Tenth National Farm Institute, themed "Agriculture and World Reconstruction," Sayre addresses her assigned topic head-on. She employs her platform to focus on gender as a subject of its own, and relying on secondary sources to establish her expertise. This speech was also published in the proceedings, thereby extending its influence beyond the live audience. Sayre knows she must address her situated ethos as a woman before she can invent her ethos as an expert on postwar reconstruction.

The way that Sayre is introduced at the Farm Institute initially keys audiences in to how they should interpret her ethos and outlines her qualifications for speaking. Thus, it opens the discourse by securing her situated ethos as a familiar person, not a threat or provocative expert. She is introduced as "a woman we all know and highly respect. She has been very active for a number of years in community, state and national affairs, and now is president of the Associated Country Women of the World. I am sure this group is going to enjoy this presentation to be brought us this morning by Mrs. Raymond Sayre" ("The World Situation" 58). While Sayre is described as a wife and leader, the framing of "enjoyment" minimizes the purpose of her address over other more serious purposes that a person in her position might have intended. Based on this introduction, the audience could expect to be entertained by this speaker. Likewise, the audience might interpret the description "very active" to mean that Sayre was busy doing volunteer, social activities rather than serving the elected roles that she garnered from being an established expert or a college-educated professional.

In her own terms, Sayre opens in an invitational way. Yet she offers a different type of situated ethos, one embedded in the farm, as she starts her speech by stating, "I don't know just exactly how a woman got on the program today because certainly I do not qualify as an expert...I come right off the farm...What

I have to contribute will be from a woman's standpoint—not as an expert—but as a farm woman" ("The World Situation" 58). From the outset, Sayre destabilizes the notion of expert qualifications. She asks to be interpreted both as an outsider on the Farm Institute's roster of speakers—a woman in a room full of men—and an insider who is engaged in farming.

Sayre initially crafts her negotiated ethos from the farm, a place endowed with consistent meaning, yet her strategies later shift to change the meanings of the farm as an ideological construct. Christoph's "strategies of placement" apply to Sayre's opening since it reveals the contingency of subjectivity that demands ongoing tactics, what some would call the invented part of ethos construction, and the place-based significance of material constraints that define a writer's geography and physical location, as well as ideological position (669). Unlike Christoph's autobiographers, however, Sayre's live audiences require the additional work of securing their interest and sustaining their attention in rural women's experiences and viewpoints.

The photograph in Figure 1 helps illustrate the gender imbalance of the



Figure 1: MS 19 Sayre Collection. State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI), Iowa City, IA. 20 February 2015. Used with permission of SHSI.

contexts Sayre worked in and the audiences she faced throughout her career as a speaker, which justified her need to be interpreted as reassuring at a time when gender roles did not invite women into places of leadership and power in agriculture or world reconstruction. That is, speaking opportunities about world reconstruction did not fall

into women's assumed positions.

Included in an album of photos of groups and committees, the photo in Figure 1 and other photos like it reaffirm how male-dominated the contexts were within which Sayre worked and served. While Figure 1 is not labeled, it illustrates the groups in which Sayre worked as the solo woman, over and

over again, showing Sayre's relevance to writers who address audiences from marginalized positions as well as the fact that she modeled the kinds of roles that women were ready and able to enact.

Enloe addresses the importance of circulating such images, even now:

Most of the time we scarcely notice that many governments still look like men's clubs... We see a photo of members of Russia's cabinet, Wall Street's inner circle, the Chinese Politburo, or Europe's central bankers, and it is easy to miss the fact that all the people in these photographs are men. (28)

As Enloe asserts, "One woman in a photo makes it harder for us to ignore that men are *men*" (28). Likewise, photos of Sayre surrounded by men show the gender norms she was destabilizing with her public presence and leadership. She made a space for herself and other women who followed her path.

Sayre's language choices help create such a welcoming path. Her pronoun use throughout the speech, for example, reflects her understanding of a carefully crafted, negotiated ethos. In the first three paragraphs, as she introduces herself and her approach to her topic, she begins many sentences with I, a reflection of her focus on engaging her audience in the topics of importance to her. She begins the fourth paragraph of her speech with this line: "Everyone knows that our basic social unit, the family, cannot prosper without the full partnership of husband and wife" ("The World Situation" 58). Here she begins to use first person, plural pronouns, and throughout the rest of the speech she starts sentences with we and uses us repeatedly. Thus, she positions herself as being like her audience even though at the start of the speech, she positions herself as different, othered.

This transition between first-person, singular pronouns to communal language shows Sayre's crafting of her audience's ethos, transitioning her listeners from being Farm Institute attendees to themselves being members of families and global citizens. Here she is invoking what Black calls the "second persona" (119), soliciting them with her discourse and linking her style with the audience's outlook on farm values and cooperation. Sayre ends the fourth paragraph with the statement "It is our ability to work together that will determine whether or not we will move forward in our plans for reconstruction" (58), implicating all audience members as being like Sayre, sharing the "woman's point of view" that she outlines. Here she relies on commonly held notions of what it means to be a member of the Midwestern farming community, invoking values of cooperation and growth.

With this speech, Sayre also reinforced her ethos as a trusted authority prepared to comment on gender, an authority that is not necessarily expected of most farm women. Earlier in the speech, she indicated that her audience

would be mostly made up of men, suspecting they would not be interested in a woman's viewpoint. She knows that the homogeneity of the audience, as Figure 1 shows, demands both a carefully crafted ethos and well-supported arguments for her choice to introduce her talk by addressing the topic of women as a central focus. For example, she states, "I am going to talk about women a little bit, and I want you to know my philosophy—that I think we must consider women in the world today not as women but as human beings and as citizens" ("The World Situation" 58). By introducing the key term "citizens" to replace "women," Sayre directs her listeners to expect her to shift the narrative from a gendered perspective to a commentary on human action, opening the possibilities for how women contribute to global communities.

Several months later in the *Farm Journal* article "Peace is Possible," Sayre again emphasizes place and role by positioning her authority between situated and invented ethos in order to mobilize her position while meeting audience expectations. Imagining Sayre writing such articles while sitting at the table in her dining room "office" with a large globe of the world beside her (see Figure 1) helps readers gain a sense of her international perspective as she addresses individuals who might be reading the magazine in their farm homes. Sayre begins the article by drawing on her postwar travel experience, visiting Rotterdam in September 1947 and witnessing the "the ruin that Nazi bombs had wrought" (87). By drawing upon her eyewitness account of postwar Europe, Sayre positions herself as a correspondent, translating postwar conditions for her audience back home. She assumes readers have not traveled to Europe recently or ever and imagines that their curiosity about its conditions can be satisfied by her descriptions.

Sayre crafts her ethos through drawing on her travel experience and then adding the qualifier that not everyone can travel. She writes humbly without expectation that readers want to be like her. She knows that they might not want to travel, yet she feels her message is important for them. Sayre acknowledges her own privilege of mobility and encourages readers to see literacy practices as modes for experiencing the world: "We can't all go to other countries, but we can read and learn about them. We can exchange letters with women in other countries. We go in spirit with the gifts that we send those still standing on the battle line for freedom" ("Peace Is Possible" 88). Here Sayre anticipates arguments that audiences may make against her ideas; they are not able to travel and experience the world, as she has been able to do. Yet suggesting people read, as they are already readers of *Farm Journal*, is a palatable recommendation to individuals who may be feeling isolated after World War II.

In "Peace Is Possible," Sayre constructs her ethos as a negotiator and anticipates that her readers might feel overwhelmed or not know where to begin. She assuages their concern and boosts their confidence:

You are only one person, it is true. But you are one. You make decisions every day. You vote (sometimes). You influence your husband (who does vote or who does make public policy). You affect the opinion of your neighbors. Your opinion is so important that it is popular business to figure out what you think through public opinion polls. (87)

Sayre tried to convey to her readers that their opinions have value. Combining her call to action with reminders about women's influence, including repeatedly noting that women make up more than half of the voting population, she asked women to unite and take on the mission of leading progressive change.

Sayre offered readers an opportunity to enact their authority to engage in peace efforts. Included with her brief author biography at the end of the article is an invitation for readers to contribute to Sayre's theorizing. The biography indicates that Sayre is currently in Geneva, Switzerland, "to be the voice of farm women at a meeting of the Department of Public Information at the United Nations." It continues, "She will welcome your suggestions on what you think about world affairs, and what you think women can do. So will Farm Journal. Write Peace Plans, Farm Journal, Philadelphia 5, Pa. and we will forward to Mrs. Sayre in Switzerland letters that might prove helpful to her" ("Peace Is Possible" 88). Although the archive of Sayre's work does not include these reader letters, so the volume and content of such responses remains unknown, the move shows again Sayre's desire to negotiate authority and to communicate to readers that their perspectives are as important as hers, the author and traveler. While she strives to be seen as an expert, she also welcomes other farm women to be like her and theorize peace roles. Her goal is to inspire others to take on such identities and extend their farm roles, to become globally minded.

Although "Peace Is Possible" reinforces some of the ideas that Sayre developed in other speeches and writings, it features new possibilities that reflect the timeliness of women's opportunities:

Not long ago I sat in a meeting with women representatives from countries who make up the Commission on the Status of Women. This commission makes recommendations for policy and action to the Social and Economic Council of the United Nations. They were

asking us what the women's groups thought and what they wanted done. (87-88)

Sayre urges her readers, then, to understand that the time is right for women to educate themselves, inform their opinions, and bring their ideas to those in authority who are ready to listen and act, making the most of available communication channels.

Sayre's negotiated ethos is also constructed by publications about her. One example of others fashioning her ethos is a profile of her home and her roles within it that was featured in *Farm Journal* several months after it published Sayre's "Peace Is Possible." Authors Martens and Shank mention in the first sentence that despite Sayre's packed schedule, "with no extra help, she manages to keep this gracious home an inspiration to her family—and to other women with their hands full" (156). Such descriptions construct Sayre's ethos by securing her domestic authority and assuaging the ongoing fear that advancing leadership roles for women will negatively affect their performance of traditional feminine roles. The profile reassures readers, then, that the status quo and the nuclear family will remain secure, not at risk, if women become international figures like Sayre. Of course this fear has a long historical lineage. 100 years earlier, women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton had to address this same anxiety about compromised femininity (Buchanan 119).

The comment about independently keeping a home also suggests that readers would be more likely to criticize Sayre's gender performance as a homemaker, perhaps harshly, if she had the choice to hire domestic workers (even though, as Hoehnle notes, a hired girl helped Sayre's mother with daily tasks) than to criticize her theories of world citizenship ("Iowa Clubwomen Rise"). The threat to traditional femininity and women's housekeeping roles may be more frightening for readers than another war. Such anticipation of judgment shows the powerful impact of gender norms to shape audience reactions. That said, by pointing out Sayre's independent caring of her home, Martens and Shank attend to the labor conditions of farm women's lives, acknowledging that in addition to becoming the engaged world citizens that Sayre envisions, readers must also perform the domestic labor essential to keeping the farm home running, the primary responsibilities of many *Farm Journal* readers. Ultimately, this profile probably hoped to attain solidarity between *Farm Journal* readers and writers such as Sayre, convincing readers that writers were just like them and that the magazine reflected authentic farm life.

For the article, Martens and Shank visited Sayre's home, took photos of the interior, and chronicled the decoration choices and kitchen renovations that Sayre made with her family. The focus on Sayre's decisions as a domestic expert (e.g., adjusting kitchen counters to specific heights for various tasks and systematizing other chores related to cooking) highlights her interest

in efficiency and accommodation and secures her situated ethos as a middle-class farm woman. As Sayre describes her renovations, she insists that the entire family was involved, yet the authors position her as the authority and main benefactor of the changes, referring to “her kitchen,” which she re-designed to be a time saver (159). Such publications serve as a reminder that Sayre’s ethos was always in flux and her invented ethos as an international authority was always secondary to her situated ethos as a homemaking farm woman. Sayre likely knew that such framing enhanced her position as a contributor to *Farm Journal* and helped her readers relate to her, which in turn enhanced her future writing opportunities for the magazine.

Others’ crafting of her authority as an everyday farm woman added yet another layer of ethos. As a result, Sayre had to maintain a tricky balance of modeling what she hoped for rural women while maintaining traditions expected of them. Additionally, the smart adjustments she made to her kitchen’s design parallel her (perhaps threatening) insistence that people must revise their rural perspectives in order to become more engaged world citizens, just as any farm kitchen can be renovated in order to become more effective and efficient. As the next section shows, Sayre was invested in maintaining in her work as a rhetor the multiple roles that Martens and Shank featured.

Establishing and Maintaining Multiple Roles to Model Authority

In her own writing and speaking, Sayre strived to be interpreted as a supportive leader of farm women by advocating acceptable change that would not threaten farm women or the farm family structure but instead mobilize readers and listeners. Yet she also had to contend with the multiple roles she embodied and address the gender norms she subverted to accomplish her goals.

Significantly, the emphasis on gender threaded throughout Sayre’s Farm Institute speech ran the risk of turning away some audience members, a possibility that Sayre tempered by striving to unify her audience. Despite its indication of an important topic, her talk’s title, “The World Situation from a Woman’s Point of View,” which, as she notes early in her talk was assigned and not chosen, also marginalizes Sayre’s perspective—the speeches that come before and after hers are not qualified as a certain type of person’s point of view, but are instead positioned as authoritative, not needing justification or special characterization. But she quickly problematizes the habit of breaking issues down in a gendered binary in order to justify her place on the podium and make space for other women to occupy its authorial position:

I'm not exactly happy about the wording of the topic given me. It implies that the problems of reconstruction can be separated along the lines of gender. I have said over and over again that problems do not have gender; they are neither masculine nor feminine. The question of war and peace is not a "man's problem" or a "woman's problem." It is not a question of women for peace and men for war. (58)

Here Sayre takes on essentialism. She qualifies the importance of gender dynamics, and she directly addresses the notion of gendered authority, collapsing the experiences of women and men instead of fulfilling expectations to speak as a woman about women's issues. Instead of meeting assumptions, she mobilizes the conversation and asks to be interpreted as an educated person with a point of view, an expert.

Sayre works to subvert her ethos as a farm woman or even a leader of an international organization of women and instead invents a more nuanced authority on the ways women are misunderstood and underestimated. Women must be assumed to embody multiple roles at once. After describing her philosophy, a justification of addressing the topic of women that included stating that women should be considered as human beings and not marginalized as women, Sayre draws on Mary Ritter Beard's 1946 book *Woman as Force in History*. By featuring such secondary sources, Sayre further moved beyond occupying the podium as a woman to exposing her audience members to sources that may have been new to them.

Sayre wanted to be understood as a public scholar, a person drawing from academic work on how women have contributed to culture, the significant roles they have had. In her speech, "The World Situation," she refers to Beard's work regarding women as discovering the "peaceful art of agriculture" (59), but then she complicates this understanding of women as peacemakers by stating that Beards "points out that women as well as men have promoted wars in order to gain their own selfish purposes and have fought in wars side by side with men" (59). After addressing more ways that women are positioned to contribute to world affairs, Sayre issues a call that all people must act as world citizens and participate in world reconstruction, quoting Mahatma Gandhi on the duty of world citizenship (61) and extending these ideas to the notion of interdependence across the world. Here again Sayre urges her audience to build their own authority and become experts, to transition their roles and knowledge from private farm life to public places beyond the farm.

Sayre positions her audience members as also being occupants of multiple roles. She crafts them as decision makers who need to become informed, just as she has worked to educate herself and position herself as an expert on world reconstruction:

The decisions we have to make in these days are not easy. They are terrible and compelling. But the heart and the core of our choice does not lie in the compulsion of the atom bomb. It lies in the soul of men and women—in their moral and spiritual courage. (“The World Situation” 65)

Thus, Sayre again reiterates that world affairs belong to world citizens who are responsible for future global development.

Sayre’s authority and its multiplicity was also shifted and defined for her by the publications featuring her work. When this speech was condensed and published in *Farm Policy Forum* a few months later, its title was simplified to “The World from a Woman’s Point of View.” When the title appears at the start of the article, the font size for “the world” is much smaller than the font size for “From a Woman’s Point of View,” making obvious the publication’s perspective that Sayre’s gender is more important than her topic. Sayre’s femininity and relationships were again emphasized in the biography offered with the article, which describes her as “an Iowa farm mother.” Again she is positioned in a reassuring, nurturing manner on the farm before her credentials as a leader are described. Trust is secured through established norms before new, *multiple paths to authority* can be engaged.

Another article written about Sayre enhances her construction of multiple roles and adept ability to perform her authority. A description introducing her to readers of the “Successful Homemaking” section of *Successful Farming* represents this prominent feature of multiple roles. As in Martens and Shank’s profile article of Sayre, editor Hegerfeld uses the first sentence of her introduction of Sayre to assuage anxiety over Sayre’s comprehensive control of her domestic context: “Charming, grey-haired Mrs. Raymond Sayre of near Ackworth, Iowa, is energetic proof that a woman these days can be a neighbor to the world—and not neglect her home job, either.” Beyond highlighting Sayre’s appearance and agreeableness, Hegerfeld describes Sayre’s family obligations and notes that “Sunday night waffle-suppers are her delight” (90). On the following page, Sayre’s own article, “Farm Women Must Be Good World Neighbors,” opens with her oft-told anecdote about being in Brussels in the morning and New York in the evening and then turns quickly to her argument that world citizens “all suffer from the same economic and political ills. No longer can any quarantine keep our part of the world immune” (91). This juxtaposition of multiple types of authority reinforces the significance of situated and invented ethos relying on one another to push the boundaries of identity construction and enable a rhetor to perform multiple identities simultaneously. On the one hand, Sayre loves waffles, just like the average *Successful Farming* reader. But on the other hand, she has flown transatlantically and studied economics and politics, setting her apart from her audience.

Sayre's ethos emphasizes the between spaces of farm women's lives, liminally and simultaneously both public and private. Because the postwar era is a time of transition, Sayre helps to model how gender roles can transition too. Using a term like "good world neighbors" in the title again builds on the reassuring, Midwestern, rural values of helpfulness and kindness, giving those upheld characteristics global implications.

Sayre's presence in *Successful Farming* is thus both subversive, since she is pushing on gender norms with her invented ethos of globalized perspectives, and expected, since her situated ethos as a farm woman who cooks for her family must also be pictured to maintain readers' comfort with her. Clearly Hegerfeld believed Sayre needed to be made agreeable to readers of *Successful Farming* or at least to justify why she was a featured authority as a writer for the magazine. If readers were to accept Sayre's authority on world citizenship, it had to be legitimized by her domestic acumen. A photo pub-



Figure 2: Titled "Homebody," the caption to this clipping reads as follows: Mrs. Raymond Sayre of Ackworth, Iowa, is the voice of the American farm woman. Dissatisfied, as a young wife, with farm living conditions, she decided to make the country home the best place in which to live. Now travels thousands of miles, addresses half a million women annually on farm home modernization. Between trips, Mrs. Sayre keeps house and cares for four children. MS 19 Sayre Collection. State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI), Iowa City, IA. 20 February 2015. Used with permission of SHSI.

lished with the article features Sayre positioned at her dining room desk as in Figure 3, this time pointing to a spot on her globe with a fountain pen. Another image shows her peeling potatoes in her kitchen while adjusting the knob on her kitchen radio. Both images are captioned with the sentence, "Mrs. Sayre keeps in touch with world news even during busy days of housekeeping" ("Farm Women" 91). Notably, the cover of this particular issue of *Successful Farming* features a young girl having a tea party with her doll, reinforcing the magazine's commitment to securing feminine roles for women.

Sayre, too, however, maintained her commitment to such roles and knew their essential importance to keep the farm running. Sayre's scrapbooks, evidence of her self-curated ethos, feature side-by-side publicity about her international activities as well as published write-ups and photographs of her domestic work. Figure 2 displays clipping Sayre included in her scrapbook that shows that she valued her family roles as well as her civic roles and wanted to remember all the ways her life was featured in publications. The image shows Sayre as a typical farm woman, resting outside after gathering flowers from her garden. Contrasting this image with the conference room photo in Figure 1 reveals Sayre's investment in maintaining her farm persona as well as her professional identity, both within the private pages of her scrapbook and in public perceptions of her work.

Readers of Sayre's work know that the topics she addressed were much more diverse than domestic matters of the home, and this brief biography buries in the middle the mention of her international work, placing this work within a domestic frame of Sayre's roles as wife and mother. This photo is pasted into the scrapbook without any publication information, yet its presence in Sayre's album shows her desire to include all versions and representations of herself and her lifework. Without the other photos and written artifacts of Sayre's lifework, however, this depiction of Sayre does not fully illustrate the attitudes Sayre hoped to encourage or the expansive nature of her work.

In "Farm Women in the Midwest since 1945," Devine writes that in the years after 1945, "rural Midwestern women encountered both continuity and change in their work lives, families, and communities" (160). Sayre can be understood as someone not only who represented this mix of tradition and evolution, but also as someone who crafted identities that fit within established expectations in order to ultimately push boundaries and create new possibilities for women.

Conclusion



Figure 3: MS 19 Sayre Collection. State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI), Iowa City, IA. 20 February 2015. Used with permission of SHSI.

Studying negotiated ethos and the multiplicity of roles through the work of Sayre models for rhetoric scholars how marginalized writers and speakers work to create new, authoritative positions for themselves. Inventing oneself as a rhetor requires ongoing efforts to maintain multiple types of authority. Understanding ethos historically also requires the effort to save artifacts and make them publicly available, an argument Sayre's archive also makes. One final image of Sayre secures her strategic construction of ethos and embodiment of multiple roles. Figure 3, published with her 1948 *Farmer's Magazine* article "World Situation

from a Woman's Point of View," demonstrates how she constructed herself for audiences and how she wanted to be interpreted as an authority. Pasted in her scrapbook, it serves as an icon of Sayre's negotiated ethos and modeling of multiple roles.

Accompanying a November 1948 article Sayre wrote for *Farmer's Magazine*, Figure 3 features Sayre at the desk she set up in her dining room, a place she refers to as her modified work space. Having arranged this scene for the photographer, she positions herself as a writer with an international perspective, within a home space traditionally set aside for meals served by women to their family and guests. The corner cabinet of dishes provided the backdrop,

making deliberate Sayre's persona of being a public figure who also gains authority from her private, domestic circumstances. She again occupies the space of a housewife, and as a politically engaged writer inviting her readers to see themselves as able to occupy multiple roles, possibly even convert their own dining rooms into spaces where they can think about, and perhaps write about, global issues and their relationship to agriculture.

The iconic globe and plume pen serve as prominent symbols that secure her identity as a globally minded writer and traveler. Sayre's smile, too, invites readers to understand her as a friendly person and not be threatened by her so-called "woman's point of view," the title of her article. She appears proud of her writing space and the work she accomplishes there. Several versions of photos like this one surface in the archive, showing Sayre's need to continually establish herself as a woman who occupies multiple roles.

A 2007 *Des Moines Register* article about Sayre, as well as Hoehnle's profile, speaks to the lasting effects of Sayre's rhetorical strategies. It characterizes Sayre as "Iowa's premier farm spokeswoman, [who] wielded clout throughout the world." Comments on her skill as an orator are also included:

Her goal—always—was to enable rural women to recognize their potential for contributing to society. She inspired women to broaden their views. She was called a dynamic speaker capable of raising goose bumps in her listeners. She was known for her friendly demeanor, bright attitude and common sense. (Longden)

Such an account matches the ambitions and rhetorical strategies exemplified in Sayre's archived materials. Hoehnle reports that in her final years, "Sayre was praised as a woman who never forgot her roots, a 'real farm woman' who remained a 'homey kind of person' despite world travels and acquaintance with presidents and royalty. It was her 'common touch' and 'plain speaking' that had both endeared Sayre to other farm women and fueled her advancement in their ranks" ("*Iowa Clubwomen Rise*" 44). Clearly her negotiated ethos and ability to take on multiple roles in order to model authority left an impression with those who read her writing and heard her speak.

Sayre's artifacts make a significant contribution to rhetoric scholars' understanding of how women crafted rhetorical roles for themselves, especially in light of recent interest in transnational feminist rhetorics and rural rhetorics. For example, Schell's recent work on Wangari Muta Maathai and Vandana Shiva, both children of farmers who draw on their agricultural knowledge and history, links contexts of transnationality, women's rhetoric, agriculture, and peace. Schell argues that Maathai, a Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize winner and leader of the Greenbelt movement, "modeled a form of transnational ecological literacy, feminist rhetoric, and global citizenship that demonstrates her

commitment to her homeland, to empowering rural women to undertake sustainable development, and to cross-border ecological activism" (588). Schell further argues that Shiva, an Indian environmental activist and feminist, makes use of "symbolic action—words, signs, images—and direct action to persuade citizens across the globe to pay attention to the issue of biodiversity" (32). A generation earlier, Sayre worked within the constraints of postwar Midwestern farm life to reach rural women across the globe and prompt them to harness their capabilities for political engagement.

I conduct this archival research on Sayre in order to connect feminist historiography, and its emphasis on amplifying the work of marginalized rhetors, with current research on ethos and feminist transnational rhetoric, hoping to cultivate a historical understanding of women's transnational rhetorical work from the farm and other rural locations. To do so is to reject assumptions that rural citizens were not engaged in the larger world around them and to argue that they in fact saw themselves as global citizens. As Donehower, Hogg, and Schell maintain, "this is an important time to be working on rural literacies, rhetorics, and pedagogies as we confront environmental and economic challenges of unprecedented scope and impact: global climate change, the end of peak oil, rising food prices, and a worldwide economic recession." They note that scholars in rhetoric and composition have already begun to study how rural communities will contribute to global citizenship and sustainable economic development (xv). Analyzing Sayre's archival materials contributes to this effort.

As Ritchie and Ronald put it, "women must first invent a way to speak in the context of being silenced and rendered invisible" (xvii). Likewise, a generation earlier, Sayre strove to prevent farm women from seeing themselves as invisible, silent citizens. Like Ritchie and Ronald, I hope that studying Sayre and animating her archive for rhetorical studies will document "the means women used to claim their rights as rhetors [and ensure] that those means will, indeed, remain available and visible for women" (xvii). Sayre offers a vibrant model to those of us who study rhetoric as a way that people use writing and speaking to change their own lives and the lives of others—a vibrant model that shows how authority can be invented and mobilized, cultivated from the farm and broadcast globally.

Works Cited

Black, Edwin. "The Second Persona." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56.2 (1970): 109-119. Print.

- Buchanan, Lindal. *Regendering Delivery: The Fifth Canon and Antebellum Women Rhetors*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005. Print.
- Burke, Michael. "Rhetoric and Poetics: The Classical Heritage of Stylistics." *The Routledge Handbook of Stylistics*. Ed. Michael Burke. New York, NY: Routledge, 2014. 11-30. Print.
- Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs. "Inventing Women: From Amaterasu to Virginia Woolf." *Women's Studies in Communication* 21.2 (1998): 111-126. Print.
- Christoph, Julie Nelson. "Reconceiving Ethos in Relation to the Personal: Strategies of Placement in Pioneer Women's Writing." *College English* 64.6 (2002): 660-679. Print.
- Crowley, Sharon, and Debra Hawhee. *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*. 5th ed. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, 2012. Print.
- Devine, Jenny Barker. "Farm Women in the Midwest since 1945." *The Rural Midwest Since World War II*. Ed. J. L. Anderson. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014. 160-182. Print.
- Dingo, Rebecca A. *Networking Arguments: Rhetoric, Transnational Feminism, and Public Policy Writing*. Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012. Print.
- Donehower, Kim, Charlotte Hogg, and Eileen E. Schell, eds. *Reclaiming the Rural: Essays on Literacy, Rhetoric, and Pedagogy*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012. Print.
- Enloe, Cynthia H. *Bananas, Beaches & Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990. Print.
- Hegerfeld, Margaret. "Successful Homemaking." *Successful Farming* June 1948: 90. Print.
- Hesford, Wendy S. *Spectacular Rhetorics: Human Rights Visions, Recognitions, Feminisms*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. Print.
- Hesford, Wendy S. and Eileen E. Schell. "Introduction: Configurations of Transnationality: Locating Feminist Rhetorics." *College English* 70.5 (2008): 461-470.
- Hoehnle, Peter. "Iowa Clubwomen Rise to World Stage: Dorothy Houghton and Ruth Sayre." *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* 83 (2002): 30-46. Print.
- . "Sayre, Ruth Buxton" *The Biographical Dictionary of Iowa*. University of Iowa Press, 2009. Web. 14 March 2016.
- Longden, Tom. "Ruth Buxton Sayre." Famous Iowans. *Des Moines Register*. 30 July 2007. Web. 5 September 2015.

- Martens, Rachel, and Naomi Shank. "This Busy Woman Keeps a Gracious Home." *Farm Journal* November 1948: 156-159. Print.
- McDonald, Julie. *Ruth Buxton Sayre: First Lady of the Farm*. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1980. Print.
- Micciche, Laura. "Writing as Feminist Rhetorical Theory." *Rhetorica in Motion: Feminist Rhetorical Methods and Methodologies*. Ed. Eileen Schell and K. J. Rawson. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010. 173-188. Print.
- Reynolds, Nedra. "Ethos as Location: New Sites for Understanding Discursive Authority." *Rhetoric Review* 11.2 (1993): 325-338. Print.
- Richards, Rebecca S. *Transnational Feminist Rhetorics and Gendered Leadership in Global Politics: From Daughters of Destiny to Iron Ladies*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014. Print.
- Ritchie, Joy, and Kate Ronald. *Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetoric(s)*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001. Print.
- Roskelly, Hephzibah. "The Hope for Peace and Bread." *Women and Rhetoric between the Wars*. Ed. Ann George, M. Elizabeth Weiser, and Janet Zepernick. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013. 32-47. Print.
- Sayre, Ruth Buxton. "A Country Woman Looks at the World." *Christian Rural Fellowship Bulletin* 138 (December 1948): 1-5. Print.
- . "Farm Women Must Be Good World Neighbors." *Successful Farming* June 1948: 91, 120-122. Print.
- . "Peace is Possible." *Farm Journal* (May 1948): 87-88. Print.
- . "The Farm Woman—A World Citizen." *The Associated Women of the American Farm Bureau Federation Address at 1935 Annual Convention*. Folder "Talks and Writings." MS 19 Sayre Collection. State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, IA.
- . "The World From a Woman's Point of View." *Farm Policy Forum* April 1948: 48-50
- . "The World Situation from a Woman's Point of View." *Proceedings: Tenth National Farm Institute. 1948*. Box 10, Proceedings. MS 19 Sayre Collection. State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, IA.
- . "This is Women's Business." *Farm Journal* (January 1947): 54-55. Print.
- . "World Situation from a Woman's Point of View." *Farmer's Magazine* (November 1948): np. Print.

- Schell, Eileen. "Transnational Environmental Justice Rhetorics and the Green Belt Movement: Wangari Muta Maathai's Ecological Rhetorics and Literacies." *JAC* 33.3-4 (2013): 585-613. Print.
- . "Vandana Shiva and the Rhetorics of Biodiversity: Engaging Difference and Transnational Feminist Solidarities in a Globalized World." *Feminist Rhetorical Resilience*. Ed. Elizabeth A. Flynn, Patricia Sotirin, and Ann Brady. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2012. 30-53. Print.
- Sharer, Wendy. "Continuous Mediation: Julia Grace Wales's New Rhetoric." *Women and Rhetoric between the Wars*. Ed. Ann George, M. Elizabeth Weiser, and Janet Zepernick. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013. 19-31. Print.
- Shaver, Lisa. "'No cross, no crown': An Ethos of Presence in Margaret Prior's Walks of Usefulness." *College English* 75.1 (2012): 61-78. Print.
- Wagner, Joanne. "'Intelligent Members or Restless Disturbers': Women's Rhetorical Styles, 1880-1920." *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*. Ed. Andrea Lunsford. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995. 185-202. Print.

Figures

Figure 1: MS 19 Sayre Collection. State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI), Iowa City, IA. 20 February 2015. Used with permission of SHSI.

Figure 2: MS 19 Sayre Collection. State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI), Iowa City, IA. 20 February 2015. Used with permission of SHSI.

Figure 3: MS 19 Sayre Collection. State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI), Iowa City, IA. 20 February 2015. Used with permission of SHSI.

About the Author

Abby M. Dubisar researches the intersections of gender, power, and peace. Some of her most recent presentations and publications analyze cookbooks published by women peace activists, the persuasive strategies of women farmers, and food politics' reliance on regressive gender norms. Dr. Dubisar is an Assistant Professor of English and affiliate faculty member in women's and gender studies at Iowa State University, where she teaches classes on women's/feminist rhetoric, activist rhetorics, gender and communication, and popular culture analysis.