

Peitho

SPRING/SUMMER 2016
VOLUME 18, ISSUE 2

The Journal of the Coalition of Women Scholars
in the History of Rhetoric & Composition



Editors

Jennifer Bay, *Purdue University*

Patricia Sullivan, *Purdue University*

Associate Editor

Wendy B. Sharer, *East Carolina University*

Editorial Assistants

Cover Design

Liz Lane, *Purdue University*

Production Assistant

Rebekah Sims, *Purdue University*

Jennifer McVeigh, *Purdue University*

Design and Layout

Carrie Grant, *Purdue University*

Erin Brock Carlson, *Purdue University*

Trinity Overmyer, *Purdue University*

Editorial Board

Lindal J. Buchanan, Chair, *Old Dominion University*

Katherine H. Adams, *Loyola University*

Nancy C. DeJoy, *Michigan State University*

Jessica Enoch, *University of Maryland*

Lynée Lewis Gaillet, *Georgia State University*

Cheryl Glenn, *Pennsylvania State University*

Tarez Samra Graban, *Florida State University*

Nan Johnson, *The Ohio State University*

Barbara L'Eplattenier, *University of Arkansas, Little Rock*

Andrea Lunsford, *Stanford University*

Kelly Ritter, *University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*

Shirley K. Rose, *Arizona State University*

Aparajita Sagar, *Purdue University*

Wendy B. Sharer, *East Carolina University*

Hui Wu, *University of Texas at Tyler*

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 peitho.cwshrc.org.

Peitho (ISSN 2169-0774) is published twice a year, in the Spring and Fall. Access to back issues of *Peitho* are part of the Coalition membership package. Coalition membership is \$10 for graduate students and \$25 for faculty; more information is available at cwshrc.org.

Copyright © 2016 by the Coalition of Women Scholars
in the History of Rhetoric and Composition

Cover Image: Vindolanda Tablets Online II. Used with permission.

Gentium Basic: Copyright © SIL International, 2003-2008 (SIL OFL 1.1)

Gentius: Copyright © SIL International, 2003-2014 (SIL OFL)

Open Sans: Digitized data copyright © 2010-2011, Google Corporation
(Apache License 2.0)

Peitho

The Journal of the Coalition of Women Scholars in
the History of Rhetoric & Composition

Volume 18

Number 2

Spring/Summer 2016

Editors' Welcome and Farewell

Jennifer Bay and Patricia Sullivan

2

ARTICLES

Claudia Severa's Birthday Invitation: A Rhetorical Analysis of the
Earliest Artifact of Latin Written by a Woman's Hand

Richard Leo Enos and Natasha Trace Robinson

4

We're Creating Ourselves Now: Crafting as Feminist Rhetoric in a
Social Sorority

Faith Kurtyka

25

Recognizing the Rhetorics of Feminist Action: Activist Literacy and
Dr. Jill Stein's 2012 Green Party Campaign

Virginia Crisco

45

Forget the Master's Tools, We Will Build Our Own House: The Woman's
Era as a Rhetorical Forum for the Invention of African American
Womanhood

Katherine Fredlund

67

Finding the Grimké's in Charleston: Using Feminist Historiographic
and Archival Research Methods to Build Public Memory

Amy Gerald

99

BOOK REVIEWS

NeCamp, Samantha. *Adult Literacy & American Identity: The
Moonlight Schools & Americanization Programs.*

Jane Greer

124

Eble, Michelle F and Lynée Lewis Gaillet. *Stories of Mentoring: Theory
and Praxis.*

Lisa Ede

130

Harrison, Kimberly. *The Rhetoric of Rebel Women: Civil War Diaries
and Confederate Persuasion.*

Molly Wertheimer

137

Eldred, Janet Carey. *Literate Zeal: Gender and the Making of a New
Yorker Ethos.*

Sean Zwagerman

141

Editors' Welcome and Farewell

Jennifer Bay and Patricia Sullivan

We welcome you to *Peitho* 18.2, an issue that highlights the gamut of what is available to women who seek to invent, hone, and wield rhetorical power. Each essay provides a different perspective on research methods that allow for feminist scholarship, both on individual women rhetors and on larger women's groups.

Richard Lee Enos and Natasha Trace Robinson introduce us to "Claudia Severa's Birthday Invitation: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Earliest Artifact of Latin Written by a Woman's Hand," an article that expands our knowledge of women's contributions to the earliest forms of epistolary rhetoric. Amy Gerald's "Finding the Grimké's in Charleston: Using Feminist Historiographic and Archival Research Methods to Build Public Memory" shows how we might use the archive to lead to feminist inquiry, which ultimately allowed Gerald to build a public memory of the Grimke sisters in Charleston. In "Forget the Master's Tools, We Will Build Our Own House: The Woman's Era as a Rhetorical Forum for the Invention of the African American Woman," Katherine Fredlund examines *The Woman's Era* as a publication in which African American women found both personal and political strength through its various networks. Each of these pieces focus on historiographic approaches that can expand or limit our ability to highlight women's contributions to rhetorical history and theory.

Faith Kurtyka brings us into the 20th century to examine how one contemporary women's organization, the sorority, serves as a site of empowerment. Kurtyka describes how a group of sorority women "adopt a creative and critical approach to sorority life, explore alternative roles as sorority women, and theorize their sorority as an alternate formation of sorority culture." Finally, Virginia Crisco's "Recognizing the Rhetorics of Feminist Action: Activist Literacy and Dr. Jill Stein's Green Party Campaign" comes at an appropriate moment as we debate candidates for the 2016 Presidential election in the United States. Crisco demonstrates the rhetorical strategies that Presidential candidate Jill Stein used in her 2012 campaign and argues for an activist literacy that leverages feminist possibilities for action in a neoliberal democracy.

With this issue, we bid you farewell as editors of *Peitho*. We want to thank all of the people who have helped us grow the journal over the past 3 years: the journal's first editorial assistants, Carrie Grant and Christine Masters; our current editorial assistants, Trinity Overmyer, Rebekah Sims, Erin Brock Carlson, Jenny McVeigh, and Elizabeth Lane; Coalition webmistress Caitlan Spronk; our Editorial Board, led by Lindal Buchanan; Associate Editors, Lisa

Mastrangelo and Wendy Sharer; and all of the many manuscript reviewers and Advisory Board members who have reviewed for the journal over the past three years, especially those who reviewed as part of Volume 18: Kate Adams, Risa Applegarth, Lisa Arnold, Sara Arroyo, Anita August, Jean Bessette, Christine Blair, Lindal Buchanan, Kelly Cameron, Erin Frost, David Gold, Melissa Goldthwaite, Jane Greer, Laurie Grobman, Lisa Mastrangelo, Kristen Moore, Kelly Pender, Staci Perryman-Clark, Clancy Ratliff, Krista Ratcliffe, Thomas Rickert, Hui Wu, K.J. Rawson, Kristen Seas, Lisa Shaver, Eileen Schell, Don Ungar, and Shirley Wilson-Logan.

We thank you for your assistance as we have built the infrastructure to continue publishing solid feminist scholarship. But perhaps most of all, we thank all of the graduate students and junior faculty who read *Peitho*, attend the Feminisms and Rhetorics conference, and submit their scholarship to the journal. You continue to build up the work of feminist scholarship, pushing it beyond its limitations and challenging all of us to create new spaces of rhetorical power for all peoples. We wish Jen Wingard all the best as she continues this work as the journal's new editor.

Claudia Severa's Birthday Invitation: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Earliest Artifact of Latin Written by a Woman's Hand

Richard Leo Enos and Natasha Trace Robinson

Abstract: *In the last few decades our discipline has greatly benefited from research focusing on the recovery of women in the history of rhetoric. This same research has made major contributions, but has also exposed the limitations of our historiography, calling attention to the need to reflect on our methods of analysis and the retrieval of our sources. A striking example of this need to discover new primary sources and new methods to analyze these sources emerged in 1973 when artifacts of ancient Roman writings were unearthed by archaeologists from a garbage dump whose damp, natural environment had sealed off oxygen and thereby miraculously preserved over 850 writing tablets from a remote Roman garrison in northern England. Among these priceless artifacts is evidence of the wives of Roman soldiers writing to each other as a normal feature of everyday activities. These artifacts of epistolary rhetoric provide a new perspective on the written rhetoric of women in c. 100 A.D., revealing yet another dimension of rhetoric undertaken by women in the history of our discipline. One particular artifact, Tablet 291, is especially relevant to our purposes, for it reveals a correspondence between two women concerning an invitation to a birthday party. Of special interest is the post-script that provides convincing evidence of the earliest specimen of a Latin text written by a woman's hand. Benefiting from the inclusiveness of multi-modal research, this essay first summarizes and reviews archaeological and palaeographic research that provides a context for understanding the environment and conditions from which this artifact emerged and by which it was preserved. Subsequently, a rhetorical analysis of Tablet 291 is offered in order to lay groundwork for a more thorough and sensitive perspective of women and their uses of rhetoric in the history of our discipline.*

Keywords: *archaeology, ars dictaminis, epigraphy, epistolary rhetoric, epideictic rhetoric, ethopoiia, Latin rhetoric, Vindolanda, women's rhetoric.*

"The letter is probably the single most common genre of writing, practised by women and men, slaves and free, poor and rich, and even, mediated through scribes and lectors, the illiterate as well as the literate Despite this, it has been comparatively understudied in rhetorical scholarship" (Carol Poster, "The Rhetoric of 'Rhetoric' in Ancient Rhetorical Historiography" 13-14).

Introduction: The Challenge of Laura Cereta

One of the great arguments about intellectual equality between genders was made by the fifteenth-century Italian humanist, Laura Cereta. Exasperated over the demeaning manner in which women were stereotyped as intellectually inferior to men, Cereta composed her now famous statement, "Letter to Bibulus Sempronius, Defense of the Liberal Instruction of Women" (Bizzell and Hertzberg, 1st ed. only, 495-98). "Bibulus Sempronius" was a fictitious character created by Cereta for the purpose of standing in for all men who considered women to be intellectually inferior and therefore unworthy of advanced education. Cereta's second audience was women who would not, in her view, develop their talents and therefore indirectly, in Cereta's opinion, perpetuate the inferiority stereotype that she sought passionately to destroy. The crux of the argument is that Cereta was offended when she and a handful of other women were considered "exceptional" because their intelligence only reinforced the prevailing stereotype of female inferiority. Cereta did not realize that her letter would one day have yet another, third audience: historians of rhetoric. As historians of rhetoric we should respond to Cereta's challenge to document not only the exceptional but also the ordinary in order to reveal that the talents of women—in this case their abilities in rhetoric—were not limited to the rare and exceptional but widespread and shared across their gender.

Cereta's call for extending the boundaries of our historical perspectives on women is in harmony with prominent scholars of women's rhetorics. Charlotte Hogg, for example, shares agreement not only with the principles of Cereta but her own contemporary colleagues who call for studies in the history of women's rhetorics to be much more inclusive, expansive, to have a commitment to openness in order to move past "reductive binaries" and the inclination to study only those manifestations of women's rhetorics that are compatible with our own ideologies (Hogg 404 *et passim*). Our intent here is to focus on Cereta's charge in respect to ancient rhetoric by concentrating on a single, but important, manifestation of literacy among women in a remote Roman garrison in northern England named Vindolanda. It is our intent to demonstrate that the findings presented here will not only bring new insights

to the rhetoric of women in our history, but will also serve as an inducement for engaging in the kind of research that makes apparent the benefits of retrieving and analyzing non-traditional evidence and using non-standard research methods.

As mentioned above, earlier work has sought to contribute to Cereta's challenge by discovering evidence that the creativity of women in rhetoric was widespread and sophisticated in Antiquity (e.g., Enos and Peterman). In addition to specific studies, recent scholarship focusing on the general objective of advancing a better understanding of "the lives of ancient women" by presenting "them within their historical and cultural context" has indirectly made evident the pervasiveness and range of literacy throughout ancient history and across social groups (Fantham *et al.*, p. vii *et passim*). Moreover, recognizing the breadth of literacy among women has not been limited to the ancient Greek and Roman societies, for recent studies have also demonstrated the literate skills of women in non-Western ancient cultures (e.g., Lipson and Binkley, *Rhetoric Before and Ancient Non-Greek*). As early as the Old Kingdom period of Egypt, for example, there is evidence that royal women engaged regularly in correspondence, although the scribes were male, since women of this period "were not scribes" (Fischer 14-15, 24; Tyldesley 114-18). Although training for the prestigious vocation of "scribe" was not open to women in ancient Egypt, that constraint does not mean that Egyptian women were excluded from writing their own works. Joyce Tyldesley reveals in her book, *Daughters of Isis: Women of Ancient Egypt*, that education and literacy (including the likelihood of writing) is evident "beyond doubt" among Egyptian women (118-19). Tyldesley notes that depictions of Seshat, the goddess of writing, implies clearly the association of women and writing (119). In fact, there is even evidence that women writing was not limited to upper-class Egyptian society. For example, ostraca (potsherds used for writing messages) that were unearthed at Deir el-Medina provide evidence that women of common status used writing as an aid to memory for the functional recording of their daily household tasks (Tyldesley 119-20). In short, even the earliest non-classical sources of evidence reveal writing practices of women and make evident the resources that await further, more detailed, examination.

For the objectives of scholarship in the history of rhetoric, awareness of a range of literacy among women has made evident the need for more specific, in depth studies of primary artifacts so that the particular rhetorical skills become available for detailed study. As Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald have argued: "The act of invention for women, then, begins in a different place from Aristotle's conception of invention" (xvii). Ritchie and Ronald's edited volume, *Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetoric(s)*, is intended:

to point to the ways that women have discovered different means of persuasion, often based in contexts other than those Aristotle might have imagined: the kitchen, parlor, and nursery; the garden; the church; the body women have redefined and subverted the traditional means and ends of argument and in the process have reinvented rhetoric based in epistemologies more varied than Aristotle's (xvii).

To meet Cereta's challenge of fairly representing the abilities of women, however, we must continue to seek non-traditional evidence as well as review our standard sources so that we can discover, analyze, and more thoroughly understand the traits and talents of women in the history of rhetoric. Revealing the range and manifestations of women's rhetorics requires that we complement our traditional research procedures with non-traditional, and often innovative, research methods. Ronald captures this point so well in her excellent essay, "Feminist Perspectives on the History of Rhetoric," when she echoes Jacqueline J. Royster's view by emphasizing that "recovery work demands a different measure of evidence, a different perspective on history" (Ronald 148). Such an opportunity for evidence and perspective literally surfaced when new primary evidence of women in the history of rhetoric was excavated in 1973.

New Evidence, New Research Challenges

In 1973, in the northern hinterland area of England, new evidence vital to our understanding of women in the history of rhetoric was unearthed. Excavations in the Roman military outpost of Vindolanda and its environs of modern-day Chesterholm have yielded priceless archaeological treasures. Initially, we may be inclined to think that discovering artifacts of literacy at a military garrison, let alone evidence of writing among women, is an odd or at best, unlikely site for discovery. We tend to think of sites and sources of literacy in academic terms and located at intellectual centers where reading and writing is taken to be a feature of the highest levels of advanced study. However, a military community must also be a literate community. To be sure, a military garrison is not a Greek *polis* or a Roman *urbs*, but it is nonetheless a community, one where the demands for organization and coordination of activities are possibly even more critical than in civilian communities (Lewis 125-26). It hardly needs to be stressed that effective communication, then and now, is indispensable in military operations with evidence dating back to the earliest civilizations. In fact, the critical need for effective literacy among the military is long established, with evidence—with respect to the West only—dating back to the Spartans of classical Greece (Enos, "The Secret Composition Practices").

By the time of the Roman Empire, the ability to communicate well in military settings became so sophisticated that Romans had developed semaphore signal-stations so that, with the aid of fire signals—or highly polished metal shields and bright sunny days—the result of a battle fought hundreds of miles away could be relayed back to Rome in a matter of hours (Hershbell). Both within the life of the garrison and within the heat of battle, the advantages of literacy were indispensable and even vital in military life.

Archaeological evidence reveals that the fortification at Vindolanda had a range of centers that would require literacy for their operations. Commanding officers' residences, granaries, hospitals, workshops, and supply centers all would benefit from writing for their various tasks and indeed extant inscriptions at Vindolanda reveal texts that include accounts of food supplies, clothing needs, etc. (Bowman). In addition, and more relevant to the purpose of this study, archaeological evidence has unearthed private letters, a letter of recommendation, and even drafts of compositions (Bowman). Among these private letters is correspondence by and between women. In short, it is not unreasonable to expect a high degree of literacy at Roman military outposts—and attendant civilian settlements—since communication is vital not only in times of battle but in everyday garrison activities of peace-time functions. From this perspective, we can extend our notion of literate communities. We tend to think of cities such as Athens and Rome as centers of literacy in the ancient world but now we should extend that view to include the inhabitants of military outposts as well. To our good fortune, and through the efforts of archaeologists, we historians of rhetoric now have a new set of primary evidence that can add to our knowledge of women and literacy in the ancient world.

What does this wealth of new primary evidence add to our knowledge of women in the history of rhetoric? The necessity for effective literacy in military operations also had an impact in the social life of Roman military outposts. We know, and as will be discussed in detail later, that military wives performed a wide variety of daily functions that would also have necessitated literacy and the evidence of these writing tablets only offers further proof of the high degree of literacy that existed for functional purposes in such military encampments. "Enough has already been said to assure us that at Vindolanda," Alan K. Bowman writes, "the writing of official and private documents and letters was absolutely standard and existed over virtually the whole period of pre-Hadriatic occupation" (83). The range and mass of documentation unearthed since 1973 bears testimony to warrant Bowman's claim that "the environment at Vindolanda was a literate one" (82). There are writing artifacts at Vindolanda involving women that invite the sort of rhetorical analysis that this case offers. For our purposes, our in-depth treatment should make clear the benefits and

the need for continuing research on this aspect of women in the history of rhetoric.

Among these findings are the oldest handwritten Latin artifacts in Britain. Of particular interest to us is Tablet 291, where a woman named Claudia Severa writes an invitation to attend a birthday party in ink on a wooden tablet to another woman named Sulpicia Lepidina. Written about 100 A.D., this letter, along with two other tablets by Severa (i.e., 292 and 293), "constitutes the earliest known specimen of Latin written by the hand of a woman" (Hartnett 87). From just these three letters—and in the commentary of the online collection—we may justly infer that the familiar tone of correspondence means that letter-writing was a common activity between women in and between different camps, for "this letter gives a clear indication of the regularity of correspondence between Severa and Lepidina" ("Vindolanda Tablets Online II," Tablet 292). Other tablets in this collection provide insights to the composing habits of women in this environment. For example, Tablet 294 also provides clear evidence of correspondence between women because of the Latin use of feminine endings such as "*salua*" ("Vindolanda Tablets Online II" Tablet 294). These artifacts of women's writings in this archaeological find are very revealing, and Tablet 291 is an excellent illustration of the potential for rhetorical research procedures as well as new primary evidence. To that end, Tablet 291 is analyzed here as a detailed illustration of the potential to contribute to the growing body of evidence about women in the history of rhetoric. Providing a vivid example of a woman writer composing to a woman reader, Severa's letter to Lepidina, is not "exceptional" for, as Bowman observes: "The correspondence between Lepidina and Severa was not an isolated phenomenon in the equestrian officer class" (57). In fact, the catalogue of these hundreds of tablets reveals "the widespread writing of good Latin, with common formats, methods and patterns" not only with the officer class and their wives but across class lines (Bowman 95-96).

In one sense, the discovery of this writing by and for women is akin to what we learned from examining the graffiti at Pompeii. That is, the tragic preservation of artifacts that were frozen in time by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius—at about the same time (i.e., 79 A.D.) that Tablet 291 was written by Severa—gives us a view of everyday life in that Roman city. The scratches on walls, the scrawls that expressed love, hate, admiration, and commercial advertisements all gave us personal insights to daily life that otherwise may never have survived the ravages of time (e. g., LaFleur, *Scribblers, Sculptores, and Scribes*). So to, albeit in a much smaller scale than Pompeii, this artifact—miraculously preserved for thousands of years—provides a view of the everyday writing practices of women that was largely unavailable to historians of rhetoric who have sought artifacts of literacy composed by women. Archaeologists have

uneearthed Tablet 291, philologists have translated Tablet 291, and palaeographers have identified the script-type. The tablets themselves have undergone virtually every type of computer-automated data and linguistic analysis including Think Aloud Protocols or TAPs (Terras 44 *et passim*). What is needed now is to analyze what this writing tells us about women in the history of our discipline and thereby enrich our understanding of this new manifestation of feminine rhetoric.

Vindolanda Writing Tablet 291: Claudia Severa Invites Sulpicia Lepidina to a Birthday Part



Figure 1 (front). Wood writing tablet with a party invitation written in ink, in two hands, from Claudia Severa to Lepidina. Description exact from BM [British Museum] record: <http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/TVII-291> (Tab. Vindol. II 291). This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Alike 3.0 Unported (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en>)license. Attribution: Fae. Used with permission.

A. Epistolary Rhetoric and Physical Properties

Tablet 291 is a Roman example of epistolary rhetoric. Letter-writing would eventually evolve into *ars dictaminis*, one of the three Medieval arts of rhetoric (Murphy 194-268). Yet, in this earlier Imperial Period we see nascent forms of *ars dictaminis* used by Severa and others. At this date (c. 100 A.D.) rhetoric was in the Silver Age of Latin literature and the conventions of letter-writing were established, formulaic and appropriated from such oratorical works as Cicero's *De inventione* and his later *Partitiones oratoriae*. As is the case with

Latin Text

(full text in upper and lower cases)

Front

1. Cl(audia). Seuerá Lepidinae [suae.
2. [sa] | [u]tem
3. iii Idus Septembr[e]s, soror ad diem
4. sollemnem natalem meum rogó
5. libenter faciás ut uenias
6. ad nos iucundiozem mihi
- ii
7. [diem] interuentú tuo facturá si
8. [.] [c.3]s *uacat*
9. Cerial[em t]uum salutá Aelius meus .[
10. et filiulus salutant *uacat*
11. *m2uacat* sperabo te soror
12. uale soror anima
13. mea ita ualeam
14. karissima et haue

Back

15. *m1* Sulpiciae Lepidinae
16. Cerialis
17. a S[e]urea

Figure 2. Latin text, with slight modifications of epigraphical markings made by authors for clarity: <http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/TVII-291> (Tab. Vindol. II 291). Used with permission.

Tablet 291, the tablets generally show the standard format of epistolary rhetoric with formulaic introductions and conclusions, the conventional *topoi* of phrases, and even a high degree of consistency in spelling (Terras 73). This diptych (i.e., hinged or attached “plates”) was composed on two wood slats that had been milled into thin, flat pieces the approximate size of today’s postcard (Hartnett 83). The Vindolanda tablets used birch, alder, and oak wood that was local to the area (“Vindolanda Tablets”). This “letter” could be (and was) folded with the address written on the “back.” The composition was not scratched on

the wood surface—as might be suspected with other more durable surfaces such as stone—but written upon by carbon-based ink (British Museum). The ink itself is a mixture of carbon, gum arabic, and water (“Vindolanda Tablets”). The carbon properties make it likely that the ink came from local geological sources in northern England. Other examples of ink-writing in Antiquity sometimes used natural fluids extracted from such animals as the octopus. In all, from materials to use, we see writing as indigenous to the locale, and (therefore) clear evidence of functional rhetoric.

Formerly housed at the British Museum, today the tablets are preserved in a controlled, oxygen-free environment at the Vindolanda Museum. They were unexpectedly discovered in March 1973 when a pipe trench outside of the excavation areas was being widened (Terras 5). The findings amounted to an ancient dump heap. When discovered, the tablets were naturally encased in an environment that was also virtually oxygen-free and the damp anaerobic conditions helped to preserve the otherwise fragile wood and numerous other artifacts of everyday life that women experienced in Roman Britain (Hartnett 83). To date, over 850 writing tablets have been discovered from the general area of this site. These writing tablets reveal the pervasiveness of writing both in terms of functions but also in terms of composers, some of whom were women.

The unique Roman cursive script initially baffled palaeographers and philologists, but it is now grouped under the category of Old Roman Cursive (Wallace 22; Bowman 89; Terras 86). The distinctive feature of this style is that it was done in “capitals” or majuscules, a style normally associated with more formal epigraphy such as marble inscriptions of sacred texts. Here the Old Roman Cursive is done but in a less formal, rustic fashion (Wallace 22). In fact, the style of the writing makes the invitation appear as an example of the next phase of Latin script, Rustic Capitals. Cursive or “running” script is normally the consequence of writing with speed and often includes abbreviations that help to simplify the message. However, the care and deliberativeness of this message is a clue to the intent to be elegant and formal. In this sense, this “letter” is akin to formal printed wedding invitations that are sent out today to announce a celebration in an elegant style that befits the importance of the occasion. In contrast, however, the post-script is far different from the stylized invitation. The individual letters and the message of the post-script itself is far less meticulous, appearing to be irregular in spacing and scrawled after-the-fact: all of the features of the post-script point to the possibility that Severa herself jotted down a personal message before dispatching the invitation to a courier. In other tablets discovered at the site we see Severa performing the same habit and in the same hand (see Figure 5, Tablet 292; Figure 6, Tablet 293). In his book, *By Roman Hands*, Matthew Hartnett offers a transliteration

Transliteration

(partial, in conventional capitals)

CL SEVERA LEPIDINAE [SVAE
SA]L[V]TEM
III IDVS SEPTEMBR[E]S SOROR AD DIEM
SOLLEMNEM NATALEM MEVM ROGO
LIBENTER FACIAS VT VENIAS
AD NOS IVCVNDIOREM MIHI

[DIEM] INTERVENTV TVO FACTVRA . . .

Figure 3. Transliteration portion of text provided by Matthew Hartnett, in his volume, *By Roman Hands*, 2nd ed., 87 (no. 141). The “Herculaneum” font is used here by the authors to simulate conventional Latin script in a capital style. Used with permission.

of the cursive Latin pictured above in Figure 1 in a “capital” style that is clearer for readers. The above is a partial transliteration intended to clarify and complement the original inscription appearing in Figure 1 (above). This style of cursive, capital script (see Figure 1) would lead to the belief that the formal feature of the letter was dictated to a scribe by Severa (e.g., Bowman 88, 93). It is, of course, possible that this composition was dictated to a scribe, who may have also been a woman. We know that there were, in fact, female slaves in the Roman society of this period whose task it was to be scribes for upper-class women. Vespasian’s life-partner, Caenis, was once a freedwoman of Antonia who, according to Suetonius, copied manuscripts and took dictation (“*et a manu dilectam*”) to be an amanuensis for Roman women of the patrician class (*Divus Vespasianus* 3. 21; *Domitianus* 12. 3; see Enos and Peterman 7-8). These features provide a context to assist in a rhetorical analysis of this primary source.

B. A Rhetorical Analysis of Tablet 291

English Translation

(First Hand)

"Claudia Severa to her Lepidina greetings, On 11 September, sister, for the day of the celebration of my birthday, I give you a warm invitation to make sure that you come to us, to make the day more enjoyable for me by your arrival, if you are present (?). Give my greetings to your Cerialis. My Aelius and my little son send him (?) their greetings."

(Second Hand)

"I shall expect you, sister. Farewell, sister, my dearest soul, as I hope to prosper and hail."

(Back, First Hand)

To Sulpicia Lepidina, wife of Cerialis, from Severa."

Figure 4: English translation, slightly modified by authors to underscore partitions: <http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/TVII-291> (Tab. Vindol. II 291). Used with permission.

A birthday invitation hardly appears to be a document of singular importance. Usually, a piece of writing that invites another to participate in a very common activity would seem to be of little interest to historians of rhetoric. In Roman society a birthday (*natalis dies*) was a celebratory occasion and, in that sense, an epideictic event for family, friends, and patrons. In fact, guidelines for birthday orations are found in Greek treatises of epideictic rhetoric (*OCD* 244, 629-30). On such annual occasions, banquets were accompanied by gifts and offerings with prayers and speeches; in fact, Roman poets created the *genethliacon*, a poem functioning as an *encomium* for the honored guest (*OCD* 630). From this perspective, we can say that not only is the birthday itself an occasion for epideictic rhetoric, but Severa's invitation itself is a form of epistolary rhetoric, for her message of joy is a plea to have Lepidina and her family participate in this festive occasion.

The importance of the document, why it should be considered rhetorical, and what a rhetorical analysis will tell us counters our immediate impulse to ignore this piece of everyday graffiti that was discarded in a dump heap almost two thousand years ago. First, the fact that this document survived since 100 A.D. alone merits our attention. This is not writing passed down through the centuries from scribe to scholar but rather an artifact that speaks to us directly from Antiquity. Second, this piece of writing is rhetorical because it expresses thoughts and sentiments from one woman to another, in this instance a plea or request, giving us the opportunity to view the values and customs of a culture in everyday social interaction. Third, a rhetorical analysis offers the possibility to understand the mentalities of women in social situations, and to learn more not only about the composition but also the heuristics of its construction.

This study also illustrates the benefits of multi-modal research. We are fortunate that this priceless work was discovered by archaeologists after being discarded and hidden for so long. The fact that it has already been translated by philologists into English is itself another benefit. However, there is still a need to review the Latin by historians of rhetoric because the translation offered above (Figure 4) was not done for the purpose of isolating and identifying rhetorical features of composition. Often translations of such works are done by philologists who do not have a knowledge of the heuristics of rhetoric and therefore may not realize the subtleties of meaning in words and composition patterns that otherwise appear commonplace. A rhetorical analysis can tell us not only about this particular specimen of epistolary rhetoric but, in a much larger sense, what this unique piece of evidence tells us about women in the history of rhetoric. In short, the cooperative efforts of researchers who come at the same object of study from different perspectives, and with different methodologies for analysis, offer a richer, more layered understanding than one approach might hope to yield.

There has been some discussion about the authorship of this hand-written composition. Was this composition, as was the case with the "writing" of Margery Kempe, a work that was dictated to a scribe—or, in the case of Kempe, a priest—and not the work of the Kempe herself (Glenn, "Reexamining *The Book*" and *Rhetoric Retold*; Ritchie and Ronald, 43)? There is one feature of Tablet 291 that leads to the belief that at least part of the letter was *written* by the hand of Severa. There is clearly a post-script scrawled at the end of the letter (see bottom right corner of Figure 1). What is fascinating about this piece of rhetoric is that the formal invitation is written with the care and exactness of a scribe but the "post-script" looks like a hastily written, personal after-thought that most likely would have been dashed off ("Vindolanda Tablets" n. 10, see Bowman 85). As mentioned above, the handwriting at the end of

this tablet is informal and distinct from the elegant script of the formal invitation. This parenthetical comment added at the end of the invitation leads researchers to believe that while the formal letter would have been dictated, the more intimate “personal greetings [are] in her own hand” (Clackson 510). There are examples of such a practice in other ancient cultures. Aurelia Charite, a prosperous landowner from Hermopolis (Egypt), proclaiming herself to be “literate” in her sales receipt of May 27, 348 A. D., nonetheless used a scribe to record her transaction but provided her personal signature on the last two lines of the papyrus (Rowlandson 242-43). Evidently, writing her own signature (i.e. “signing-off”) was a register of authenticity as well as providing a personal touch. Although separated by centuries and cultures, this same personal touch is apparent in the tablets of Vindolanda.

Examination of other letters at Vindolanda, both female and male, reveal that it was common for a clerk, scribes or amanuenses to write the formal message but for the “author” (as opposed to the “writer”) to add directly some sort of personal closing statement (Bowman 88). Adding a final statement in one’s own hand may have been done to verify authenticity, to add a personal touch to a more formalized statement, or just to include an after-thought. Regardless of intent or motive, the practice of (literally) having the final word in one’s own hand was a convention that reveals the literacy of this group of women. In sum, most palaeographers believe that the actual composition was, at least in part, composed by Severa herself.

Further, it should be mentioned that while the scripts do appear to be of two different hands, it is possible that the formal invitation was done in a meticulously detailed style by the author and that the post-script was jotted down in much the same way that we would pen in a remark to a computer-generated letter that makes it appear all the more personal. Severa also adds post-scripts to other tablets (Tablets 292 and 293) that appear to be in the same hand. These features of her composing habits lead to the view “that the author is Severa herself” and that with virtual certainty “these are the earliest know[n] examples of writing in Latin by a woman” (“Vindolanda Tablets Online II”). Thus, in whole or in part, the hand(s), most researchers agree, was that of a woman or women, for the female presence of direct authorship is beyond reasonable doubt and skepticism.

Although more open to debate, there is another feature of this invitation that our rhetorical analysis reveals that points toward a feminine composition. Writing by different genders tends to include phrases used by one gender and not another. Severa includes the vocative phrase “*anima mea*” (lines 12 and 13, i.e., “my soul”). This phrase is an expression used by Roman women of the period and, in fact, is characterized as a formulaic feature of “female speech” (Clackson 510). There is no doubt that the body of extant textual

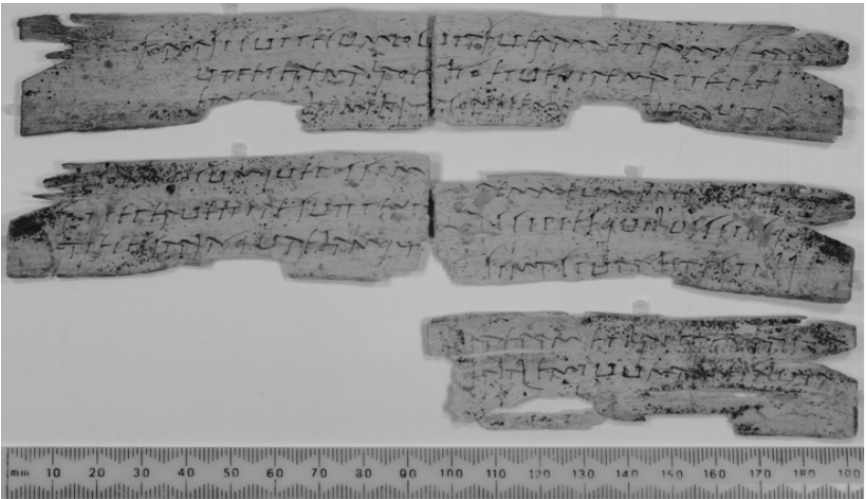


Figure 5: Tablet 292 (front). The closing portion of the tablet contains a personal post-script by Severa similar to the post-script on Tablet 291: *Vindolanda Tablets Online II* <http://vto2.csad.ox.ac.uk>. Used with permission.



Figure 6: Tablet 293 (front). A partial inscription from the right-side of a diptych, inscribed in the same handwriting post-scripts as Tablets 291 and 292, and therefore believed to be in Claudia Severa's own hand: *Vindolanda Tablets Online II* <http://vto2.csad.ox.ac.uk>. Used with permission.

evidence from female authors is limited but the expression "*anima mea*" is a formula normally associated not with male authors but rather with women. In American vernacular, for example, such terms as "fabulous" or "gorgeous" are adjectives that are used much more commonly with women than with male speakers or writers. In Tablet 292, this letter, also believed to be composed by a woman, uses the terms "*karissima*" ("dearest") and "*ma desideratissima*" ("my most desired one") provide another example of expressions normally used by female rather than male writers.

Yet another way to look at Severa's "voice" is through *ethopoia* or the capacity to insert personality and character traits into the discourse. *Ethopoia* is a concept that was consciously attended to by classical logographers such as Lysias (Enos, *Greek Rhetoric* 210 *et passim*; Kennedy 135-36). The intent of *ethopoia* is to indirectly provide an insight to the author's personality through the message. For an elder person, for example, a logographer might compose an oration that highlights the traits of maturity, wisdom, experience and reflection. For a younger person, however, a logographer might compose a piece of rhetoric that would convey enthusiasm, lofty ideals, innocence, and boundless energy. In her short message, Severa conveys many character traits through *ethopoia*. Here the warmth and familiarity of Severa's message comes through not only for Lepidina, but also for all the members of both families (Terras 7). Severa makes a point of telling Lepidina that her attendance would not only be enjoyable for Severa herself (l. 6, "*ivcndiorem mihi*") but also how wonderful it would be "for us," meaning her family (l. 6, "*ad nos*"). This sort of personal touch, and even intimacy, is not uncommon in ancient inscriptions. In fact, there are many extant inscriptions where the spouse reveals genuine love for the partner. One such Roman epitaph, now housed in the British Museum, records how Lucius Dasumius Callistus honors his wife for 35 years of marriage, how she will be remembered "without any complaint" ("*SINE VLLA QVERELLA*") and the difficulty of living without her (Hartnett 96, 97).

The tone of Severa's letter challenges the stereotype of Roman wives. A marriage (*affectio maritalis*) was ostensibly undertaken with the religious and legal intent of a life-long union of consenting partners. Arranged marriages, however, were commonplace in Roman society during the Imperial Period, often done for pragmatic, financial, and socially beneficial reasons. Under such conditions of contractual arrangement, one would be inclined to think of such ties as emotionless pairings with (perhaps) love found elsewhere. That said, we should not ignore the fact that Tablet 291—a correspondence from one wife to another—reveals that families were apparently not unusual at Vindolanda. In principle, Roman armies sought to avoid the complexities of having to deal with wives and families by banning marriage for soldiers (Birley 36). The long-time stability of garrisons such as Vindolanda, however, makes

it clear that marriages were tolerated and perhaps even commonplace. We, of course, have no idea of the personal conditions of marriage for Severa, but her letter indicates nothing dour or sardonic. Perhaps arranged marriages—if that was indeed the case with Severa—do not necessarily mean unhappy marriages, for the buoyancy of Severa's comments only indicate happiness. Albeit this artifact is only a single piece of evidence, but we nonetheless do see a personality that challenges the inferences we make about Roman marital relationships as impersonal contractual agreements.

Although Severa's salutation and closing are conventional for the form of a letter, we can see early in the invitation that Severa expresses her personal intimacy with Sulpicia Lepidina. Severa's familiarity with Lepidina and her own family reveal a warmth of expression (e.g., l. 14 "*karissima*" or "dearest") that captures her genuine desire to see Lepidina and her family. Anyone who has studied Greek and Roman inscriptions will not be surprised with the personal, intimate tone that such writings often exhibit. We are accustomed to studying monumental inscriptions that deal with civic policy, treaties, and legal proceedings. Such civic inscriptions mask the individuals behind the message. Gravestone monuments are especially revealing where the most poignant, heart-felt messages are inscribed for all the world to see for all time. While many of those funeral messages are heart-wrenching, here in Tablet 291, we have one that is jovial and literally inviting. All such messages, however, are important because they reveal a great deal about the individuals of an ancient society. That is, even this small message gives us a snapshot of a Roman woman, one who appears outgoing, congenial and inclusive, in what we think of as an everyday function—communicating with friends and inviting them to a party.

Studying the daily life of Roman women is as important as studying their role in monumental historical moments. When we read such inscriptions, the authors seem less like statues in a museum and more like the individuals whom we wish to know about in detail. Severa's message is bright, familiar, and outgoing not only to her reader, Lepidina, but also to Lepidina's husband and family. Far from being cloistered at home, Severa appears engaging and social. In this small fragment of a message we see anything but the stereotype of a taciturn, solitary, somber Roman matron tucked away and isolated in her domicile, removed from communication and society. Again, it is important to note that this is only one instance and that there are many other sources of primary evidence that shed new insights about the voices of women that await our study and review. In the spirit of the challenge made by Laura Cereta that was presented in the beginning of this essay, we can move from the extraordinary to the ordinary in recognizing the accomplishments of women by revealing their everyday practices. In doing so, as has been argued in this study,

we can find much to appreciate in the literary practices of women that is not exceptional but nonetheless worthy of recognition and even praise.

Conclusion

Since the opening passages of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, we have been inclined to think of rhetoric as a public, civic activity. Further, those public arenas have been dominated by males, which has led to the inclination that rhetoric is gendered in the masculine. As mentioned in the beginning of this essay, those presumptions have been challenged by the last two generations of scholars—including but not limited to Glenn, Poster, Ritchie and Ronald—who have demonstrated that rhetoric operates in many ways and those activities are not restricted by gender. In the East and in the West the voices of ancient women are waiting to be heard again. Tablet 291 is a dramatic piece of evidence supporting the challenges to the long-held assumptions about rhetoric and its manifestations. Tablet 291 is an example of epistolary rhetoric. To be sure, it is not a “public” letter in the sense of Laura Cereta’s letter to Bibulus Sempronius that was featured in the beginning of this essay. Moreover, by no stretch of the imagination is Tablet 291 akin to Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” which was written with the intent of altering the public knowledge of a nation torn apart by civil unrest. Yet, Severa’s simple letter does make a rhetorical statement, not only to her friend as a humble invitation, but also to us as historians of rhetoric. Tablet 291 illustrates a conscious, deliberate use of discourse to offer a message, a message of request that Severa wishes to convey to her friend Lepidina. Severa follows a formula and is facile enough to personalize the conventions of the genre of letter-writing. Moreover, her even more personalized post-script reveals a familiarity with a common use of literacy that gives us pause to challenge the presumption that most women of this period were non-literate.

While Tablet 291 from Vindolanda is illuminating, it is an illustration of not only the insights we may gain, but also the primary sources awaiting study. It is important to stress again that the body of primary evidence that reveals much about women and the history of rhetoric extends far beyond the excavated military garrisons at and around Vindolanda. For the purposes of this topic, we can underscore that a wide array of epigraphical sources about—and now we can say by—women await analysis. To do such analysis, however, requires historians of rhetoric to work as partner-colleagues with archaeologists, epigraphists, historians, philologists and palaeographers. Applying long-established research methodologies from those respected disciplines, developing new methodologies appropriate to better analyzing the rhetoric of such artifacts, and the willingness to seek out new non-traditional sources for evidence in the

field and in the archives is essential if historical studies of rhetoric is to continue growing and developing. Without such a perspective, tablets such as Tablet 291 may be unearthed but their benefits to expanding our knowledge of women in the history of rhetoric will, in effect, remain buried and locked away from our discipline and the rich history that awaits discovery and explanation.

Appreciation and Dedication

Appreciation is extended to Matthew Hartnett, Oxford University, the British Museum, and the Vindolanda Museum for specific and general permission to use images for the non-commercial purposes of education and research undertaken by this study. Classical sources follow universal citation style and require no specific edition.

Jane E. Helppie, the wife of Richard Leo Enos for over 40 years, passed away from colon cancer on December 2, 2015. This essay is dedicated to her memory: a brilliant lawyer, a devoted mother, and a tireless advocate of women's rights.

Works Cited and Suggested

- Birley, Robin. *Garrison Life on the Roman Frontier*. Carvoran, Greenhead, Northumberland UK: Roman Army Museum Publications, 1991. Print.
- Bowman, Alan K. *Life and Letters on the Roman Frontier: Vindolanda and Its People*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- British Museum: www.britishmuseum.org/explore/online_tours/britain/our_top_ten_british_treasures/the_vindolanda_tablets.aspx.
- Cereta, Laura, "Letter to Bibulus Sempronius, Defense of the Liberal Instruction of Women." Trans. Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil, Jr. In *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*. Eds. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg. 1st edition. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1990: 495-98. Print.
- Clackson, James. "The Social Dialects of Latin." *A Companion to the Latin Language*. Ed. James Clackson. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011: 505-26. Print.
- Daniels, Peter T., and William Bright (eds.). *The World's Writing Systems*. New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. Print.

- Enos, Richard Leo. "The Archaeology of Women in Rhetoric: Rhetorical Sequencing as a Research Method for Historical Scholarship." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32 (Winter 2002): 65-79. Print.
- . *Greek Rhetoric Before Aristotle*. Revised and expanded edition. Anderson SC: Parlor Press, 2012. Print.
- . "Recovering the Lost Art of Researching the History of Rhetoric." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 29.4 (Fall 1999): 7-20. Print.
- . "The Secret Composition Practices of the Ancient Spartans: A Study of 'Non-Civic' Classical Rhetoric." *Renewing Rhetoric's Relations to Composition: Essays in Honor of Theresa J. Enos*. Eds. Shane Borrowman, Stuart C. Brown, and Thomas P. Miller. New York: Routledge, 2009: 236-47. Print.
- and Terry Shannon Peterman. "Writing Instruction for the 'Young Ladies' of Teos: A Note on Women and Literacy in Antiquity." *Rhetoric Review* 33.1 (2014): 1-20. Print.
- Fantham, Elaine, Helene Peet Foley, Natalie Boymel Kampen, Sarah B. Pomeroy, and H. Alan Shapiro. *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text*. New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994. Print.
- Fischer, Henry G. "Women in the Old Kingdom and the Heracleopolitan Period." In *Women's Earliest Records: From Ancient Egypt and Western Asia*. Ed. Barbara S. Lesko. Brown Judaic Studies No. 166. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989: 5-24. Print.
- Glenn, Cheryl. "Reexamining *The Book of Margery Kempe*: A Rhetoric of Autobiography." *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*. Ed. Andrea A. Lunsford. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1995: 53-71. Print.
- . *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity Through the Renaissance*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1997. Print.
- Hartnett, Matthew. *By Roman Hands: Inscriptions and Graffiti for Students of Latin*. 2nd edition. Newburyport MA: Focus Publishing/R. Pullins Company, 2012. Print.
- Hershbell, Jackson P. "The Ancient Telegraph: War and Literacy." In *Communication Arts in the Ancient World*. Eds. Eric A. Havelock and Jackson P. Hershbell. Humanistic Studies in the Communicaiton Arts. New York: Hastings House, Publishers, Inc., 1978: 81-92. Print.
- Hogg, Charlotte. "Including Conservative Women's Rhetorics in an 'Ethics of Hope and Care.'" *Rhetoric Review*, 34.4 (2015): 391-408. Print.

- Hornblower, Simon and Antony Spawforth, eds. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 3rd edition. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. Print.
- Kennedy, George. *The Art of Persuasion in Greece*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963. Print.
- LaFleur, Richard A. *Scribblers, Sculptors, and Scribes*. New York: Collins Reference, 2010 (2nd printing 2014). Print.
- Lewis, Sian. *News and Society in the Greek Polis*. Chapel Hill: The U of North Carolina P. 1996, Print.
- Lipson, Carol S. and Roberta Binkley (eds.). *Ancient Non-Greek Rhetorics*. Lauer Series in Rhetoric and Composition. Anderson SC: Parlor Press, 2009. Print.
- . *Rhetoric Before and Beyond the Greeks*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2004. Print.
- Murphy, James J. *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*. Berkeley: The U of California P, 1974. Print.
- Poster, Carol. "The Rhetoric of 'Rhetoric' in Ancient Rhetorical Historiography." *Rhetoric in the Rest of the West*. Eds. Shane Borrowman, Robert L. Lively and Marcia Kmetz. Newcastle upon Tyre, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010: 1-19. Print.
- Ritchie, Joy and Kate Ronald (eds.). *Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetoric(s)*. Pittsburgh: The U of Pittsburgh P, 2001. Print.
- Ronald, Kate. "Feminist Perspectives on the History of Rhetoric." In *The SAGE Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*." Eds. Andrea A. Lunsford, Kirt H. Wilson, and Rosa A. Eberly. Los Angeles et al.: SAGE, 2009: 139-52. Print.
- Rowlandson, Jane, ed. *Women & Society in Greek and Roman Egypt: A Sourcebook*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP: 1998. Print.
- Suetonius. *Divus Vespasianus*.
- . *Domitianus*.
- Terras, Melissa M. *Image to Interpretation: An Intelligent System to Aid Historians in Reading the Vindolanda Texts*. Oxford Studies in Ancient Documents. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006. Print.
- Tyldesley, Joyce. *Daughters of Isis: Women of Ancient Egypt*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995. Print.
- Vindolanda Tablets Online II <http://vto2.csad.ox.ac.uk>
- "Vindolanda Tablets Online II." <http://vto2.classics.ox.ac.uk/index.php/tablets>

About the Authors

Richard Leo Enos is the Holder of the Lillian Radford Chair of Rhetoric and Composition at Texas Christian University. In 2008, he received “The Chancellor’s Award for Distinguished Achievement as a Creative Teacher and Scholar.” In 2009, he was named a Piper Professor for the State of Texas. He currently serves on the Managing Committee of The American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

Natasha Trace Robinson is a doctoral student in the Rhetoric and Composition Program of The Department of English at Texas Christian University. She currently serves as the Radford Research Assistant to Dr. Richard Leo Enos.

We're Creating Ourselves Now: Crafting as Feminist Rhetoric in a Social Sorority

Faith Kurtyka

Abstract: *Drawing from a nine-month ethnography of a sorority, this article shows how the discursive and material practices of crafting empower one group of sorority women to adopt a creative and critical approach to sorority life, explore alternative roles as sorority women, and theorize their sorority as an alternate formation of sorority culture. The sorority members pick up the three ideologies of crafting—having a vision, forming a community, and a feminist pedagogy for teaching group values—to navigate between the existing structures of a sorority and their present-day interests and needs.*

Keywords: *sororities, crafting, ethnography*

With over 300,000 members on over 600 campuses in the United States and Canada (National Panhellenic Conference), social sororities are one of the most powerful communities to which many female college students might belong in their college years, especially at large universities. The numbers of students joining sororities continues to climb an estimated 10% in each of the last two years (Heyboer). And yet, sororities tend to be overlooked by feminist scholars, in part because sororities seem like an unlikely site for any sort of feminist rhetoric or action. For example, studies of sorority life over the last thirty years demonstrate that sororities and fraternities tend to reinforce strict gender roles. Lisa Handler's study of sororities as "gender strategy" demonstrates that while sororities are a response to a male-dominated culture of romance, they remain "marked by the inequalities that characterize gender relations in the wider society" (252). Barbara J. Risman finds that sororities encourage behavior that contributes to socialization into traditional gender roles, such as marriage and staying at home with children. Risman writes that her findings are "not to suggest that none of these women will become surgeons, lawyers, or executives; only that the selves they have nurtured while in college will need considerable reorganization if and when they enter demanding occupational social worlds" (138). In *Inside Greek U: Fraternities, Sororities, and the Pursuit of Pleasure, Power, and Prestige* Alan D. DeSantis finds that

fraternities and sororities fiercely reproduce traditional gender roles because “the rigidity of the Greek institution produces a subculture where deviant performances—performances that are potentially liberating because of their ability to expand brothers’ and sisters’ gendered repertoire—are prohibited” (27). Although sororities seem like unlikely places to look for any kind of feminist practice because they propagate rigid, heterosexual gendered behaviors, they are possible sites for feminist inquiry because of their historical roots in creating opportunities for women in higher education.

This article examines the way that one group of sorority women adopt a creative and critical approach to sorority life, exploring alternative roles as sorority women, and theorizing their sorority as an alternate formation of sorority culture. Through a nine-month ethnography of a sorority that was new to my campus in 2012, I show how the reciprocal exchange of discursive and material practices of crafting empower the women to craft the sorority as their own meaningful community and craft identities for themselves as sorority members. Founding members of this sorority do not completely conform to sorority culture, but nor do they reject sororities as dated institutions. Instead, the founding members adopt three ideologies of crafting toward the construction of the sorority: having a vision, forming a community, and a feminist pedagogy for teaching group values. They use these ideologies to navigate tensions between the existing structures of a sorority and their present-day interests and needs as women in 2012. In context, this sorority-shaping crafting can be interpreted as feminist because these women’s understanding of both their roles as crafters and of the sorority as crafting project empowers them to break open the overly rigid social structures of campus sororities.

This essay first articulates a justification for re-considering sorority life as a site for feminist rhetoric by noting that sororities have historical roots in creating spaces for women to grow and succeed as college students and explores crafting practices in the context of rhetoric and composition’s interest in materialism, specifically, crafting as a discursive practice. Second, the methodology section of this essay explains my ethnographic approach and data analysis process. Finally, three subsequent sections explain the central ideologies of crafting in the sorority and how each ideology enabled the women to develop a vision for the sorority, form a community from the unique group of women who joined, and teach others about the sorority’s values in non-dominating ways. The conclusion states the importance of these mechanisms for seeking feminism in unlikely places.

Critical Imagination: Sororities as Sites of Feminism, Crafting as Feminist Practice

In 2012, Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch challenged feminist rhetorical scholars to broaden their investigations into women's rhetoric by engaging in a research paradigm called "critical imagination" (21). In the critical imagination model, scholars seek knowledge "in places at which we have not looked seriously or methodically before" to understand "what women's patterns of action seem to suggest about rhetoric, writing, leadership, activism, and rhetorical expertise" (72). Feminist scholars have taken up Royster and Kirsch's call by studying "topics that aren't explicitly feminist" (Rohan 8), in sites beyond just "the speaker's platform" (Conley 67), including literacies like women's clerical work (Solberg), knitting activism (Springgay), and quilting (Sohan) that do not fit pre-existing schema of political action and resistance.

Perhaps due to some of my own negative associations with sororities, I did not begin this project by looking for any sort of feminism; my original intention was to conduct research on the emotional engagement of extracurricular learning experiences. When I began a new job in the fall of 2012, I asked the student activities office if any organizations were seeking a faculty moderator. I was put in touch with "Beta Zeta,"¹ who had opened their chapter on the prior semester. While the specific chapter on our campus was new, Beta Zeta was affiliated with a strong national organization. This national organization included staff who oversee campus chapters, organize national events for undergraduate members and alumnae, travel to and assist chapters who are struggling (perhaps because of behavioral issues or declining participation), and help build and strengthen new chapters. Because I had never been in a sorority and did not know very much about sororities, I spent a lot of time observing and listening rather than participating, which enabled me to witness the dynamics unfold between the established, historically rooted national organization and the recently opened, slowly burgeoning local chapter. While some sororities would balk at having an adviser with no experience in fraternity/sorority life, the Beta Zetas were inexperienced themselves. Thus, my appearance as an outsider was less marked. I built relationships with them both based on my interest in sorority life (atypical for most professors) and because I was consistently present at meetings and events throughout the year, demonstrating my commitment to learning the practices of the sorority.

1 "Beta Zeta" and all names are pseudonyms. I have also removed other distinguishing features, like the names of events that would identify the sorority.

Reading about the history of sororities as a feminist scholar, I felt challenged to consider how sororities might echo their feminist past in ways that are overlooked due to stigmas about sorority life. Although contemporary sororities appear to enforce strict gender roles, sororities have a historical precedent of providing women with opportunities to embody the role of “college student” previously only available to men. Historian Diana Turk notes that the elitism of sororities means that they are often left out of narratives of women’s history, despite the fact that from 1870-1920, “nearly 80,000 women pledged themselves to a Greek-letter organization” (8). In these years, sororities supported women intellectually and socially amidst hostility from male students who felt that women in higher education disrupted the “natural order” of society (Turk 3). In sorority chapter meetings, women practiced speeches for each other and pressured each other to do well in school to represent campus women in a positive light. To counteract common arguments that attending college was “unwomanly,” the sororities worked to change the definition of proper “womanhood” to encompass intellectual capacities along with social skills (40). Turk observes, however, that in the 1920s it became more normal for women to attend college, and so sororities became more of the social clubs they are today, focusing on heteronormative dating activities and parties.

Rather than seeing contemporary sororities as merely social clubs, this historical precedent leads me to theorize that sororities are a mechanism for young women to work with a peer community to construct public selves and form social identifications by crafting together historical and contemporary practices. To understand how this process worked, I attended sorority events and functions for about six weeks before asking if I could research the group. Between September 2012 and May 2013, my graduate assistant, Anne M. Dimond, and I interviewed twenty-five founding members of the sorority: ten members of the chapter’s leadership team and fifteen women in peripheral involvement positions. We also interviewed five new members who joined the chapter after the recruitment process in January 2013 and who were recruited by the founding members. We asked all the women about why they joined and their process of learning new things in the sorority. If they had a leadership position, we asked them about what they were learning in those positions and how they were leading others (see appendix). Via connections on the chapter’s alumni advisory board, I was also able to interview twelve sorority alumnae and seven campus staff members involved in fraternity/sorority life to get a fuller picture of the campus fraternity/sorority life. I attended fifty-two total events, including weekly chapter meetings, leadership team meetings, and fundraising events. I collected written artifacts including newsletters, minutes, officer position applications, PowerPoints, forms, and handbooks.

I did not expect that the sorority would be a radical feminist space. I kept an open mind, however, because of Royster and Kirsch's call, because of the historical roots of the sorority in creating a space for women in the university, and because the Beta Zetas were (at the time) what DeSantis calls "strugglers" in his categorization of sororities and fraternities. DeSantis categorizes fraternity and sorority organizations into three "castes": "the elites, the aspirers, and the strugglers" (38). While the elites "dominate" fraternity/sorority life in terms of popularity, and the aspirers aim to be like them, the "strugglers" are the smallest and least attractive organizations. According to DeSantis, women in struggling and aspiring sororities tend to have "healthier relationship with food, expressed greater acceptance of deviation from gender norms, and adopted a more forceful and assertive interpersonal communication style" (39). Thus, I suspected that I might see some different attitudes about gender roles in Beta Zeta than what had been previously investigated in the literature.

In the initial round of open coding my data—particularly my interviews with the new members and my field notes from sorority events—I observed the constant pull of the sorority's institutionalization and history. The international oversight board of Beta Zeta provides new chapters with two trained full-time staff members who live near campus for a year to get the chapter going. These staff members also assist in upholding the practices, standards, guidelines, traditions, rituals, symbols, and philanthropic interests of the sorority "brand." The sorority is even further fastened to historical practices via alumnae members who serve as advisers. In addition to their historical rooting, sororities are also influenced by cultural stereotypes of sororities present in television and movies.² The new chapter of Beta Zeta also faced pressure to compete with the six existing sororities on campus. Members of Beta Zeta would often compare themselves to these existing sororities; for example, they would feel pressure to put on a fundraising event after another sorority had just held a successful fundraising event. At the same time they were feeling these pressures to be like other sororities, they also identified themselves as the "new" sorority on campus, which gave them license to think about how the sorority might be unique.

In the process of "axial coding" (Birks and Mills 12), looking for relationships between my codes, I noted that these tensions between the old and the new often co-occurred with crafting activities. Sometimes, the tension played out in concrete, hands-on crafting projects. For example, when making T-shirts for new sorority members, the existing membership had to decide if they were

2 Examples relevant to the women I interviewed include the films *Legally Blonde* and *The House Bunny* as well as the television show *Scream Queens*.

going to make T-shirts with small letters that looked like those of other sororities or if they wanted the shirts with big letters to set them apart. Sometimes, these tensions between the old and the new were reflected in the women's rhetoric about the sorority, which I noted also reflected the spirit of crafting. The women continually interrogated their own roles in the creation of the sorority, considering what they had to offer the sorority, and thinking about how they might serve as role models for new members entering the sorority. One of the founding members, Jill, told me that when she recruits new members to the sorority, she uses her own story as a way to respond to the discomfort some recruits may have about taking on a sorority identity:

[They say] "Oh, I never thought I would join a sorority, didn't think it was my thing." I always respond with Beta Zeta is filled with a lot of people who never thought they would be in a sorority so it's like all these people who didn't think they belonged in one are forming one, so that's made it really cool and really easy. Yeah, there are parts of it that are very *sorority* like the recruitment and the clapping and screaming but there are a lot of parts of it that are really cool with the philanthropy and the [major philanthropic event]. Those are really awesome things.

Jill dichotomizes "sorority" things and "really awesome things"—a mixture of the old and new coming together. Jill's position toward sorority participation reflects a crafting orientation: the sorority is a mix of people coming together to knit together existing sorority practices and new practices to make it their own. While Beta Zeta fulfills some of the standard cultural norms of a sorority—the "clapping and screaming" during recruitment events—Jill sees it as a place for change, creativity, and agency as well.

Since the time of Plato, crafting has been stigmatized as less prestigious than art, a mechanical skill requiring little to no intellect, and consigned to the role of "women's work." Recent scholarship on crafting, however, has sought to challenge some of these negative associations by demonstrating that crafting requires considerable intellectual and artistic skills, provides a mechanism for community formation and group affinity, and offers crafters a means to explore new discursive territory. Robert R. Johnson suggests a renewed attention to and value of craft because "In the ancient mind and culture . . . *techne* was seen as the source of creative tendencies, the formation of new ideas, the place of invention" (677). Because the maker knows the logic behind the process of creation, he or she can teach others this process and in so doing, can "create culture" (679). Johnson therefore re-defines crafting beyond just the making of products to also include "the making of selves and the making of cultures" (684). Like Johnson, Kristin Prins also sees the profound creation

of culture in the material practice of crafting because “craft also implies . . . relationships between a maker’s identity, her interactions with others, and the things she makes” (145). Cultures form through and with crafting projects: crafters collaborate on craft projects, share crafting supplies, and offer help and advice to each other while crafting. For the purposes of this essay, I define “crafting” as the process of using existing materials to create something aesthetically pleasing, personally and communally meaningful, and practically useful. I use this admittedly broad definition so I can recognize crafting that is literal and material (as I observed at sorority events) as well as crafting that is discursive and ideological (as I heard in my interviews with the sorority women).

In addition to creating culture, crafting can be a discursive practice that challenges dominant cultures. In studying historical practices of needlework specifically, Heather Pritash, Inez Schaechterle, and Sue Carter Wood find that needlework is “a vehicle through which women have constructed discourses of their own, ones offering a broader range of positions from which to engage dominant culture” (27). Much more than a mechanical skill, crafting can be understood as discursive, rhetorical, and even resistant. In this light, the purpose of studying crafting is not to create standards of excellence, but to appreciate the diversity of meanings enabled in craftwork. In studying the quilting of rural women in Alabama, Vanessa Kraemer Sohan sees the importance of keeping an open mind about the meaning that the crafters intend:

we should listen to the semiodiversity of texts, rather than codifying or judging the formal elements of texts with enumerative categories based on a static understanding of particular traditions or standards. We should look at instances that “don’t look right” as challenges for writers and readers to take agency over their work, negotiate meanings, explore the particular contexts they want to highlight, and understand the multiple options for making it “look right.” The Gee’s Bend quilts represent just one example of how women have (re)written the particular contexts of their lives through strategic, creative deployment of repetition and difference. (312)

I am interested in exploring the “semiodiversity” of material, discursive, and linguistic crafting practices in the sorority for how they explain the way that the women are re-writing the experiences of being a contemporary sorority woman. In the next section, I detail how and where crafting rhetoric emerged and how it enabled the women to think creatively and critically about some of the seemingly inelastic aspects of sorority culture. Each section names an ideology of craft and discusses one of the sorority’s specific crafting projects along with segments of interviews with the women about the formation of the

sorority. Although I describe the process of the crafting projects, my analysis here will focus more on the crafters and their language rather than the crafted objects. Maureen Daly Goggin notes that in studying crafting, feminist scholars should “focus on material strategies related to needlework and textiles rather than solely on the material objects themselves, thus showing how women produce and reproduce cultural objects as well as communicate and transform cultural values” (3). Thus, a large focus of this article will be on the women’s ideas about crafting rather than a direct analysis of the crafted objects.

Crafting Creates a Vision for the Community

Beginning a new sorority requires a kind of artistic vision for what the sorority might look like and how it might be perceived on campus; crafting helped to concretize this vision. Jack Z. Bratich and Heidi M. Brush write that the recent resurgence in crafting “complicates conventional notions of activism,” because the uptake and popularization of craft “spatially and analogically links experiments in making futures differently” (234). For Beta Zeta, abstract ideas about what parts of sorority life should be “re-purposed” into a new sorority and what should be scrapped often played out in materially in crafting projects that helped the women imagined different kinds of futures for themselves and discursively, in the language they used to discuss their sorority involvement.

For example, the international chapter of Beta Zeta sent two advisers to our campus to recruit the initial group of women who would become the founding members of the chapter. When I interviewed one of these advisers, Melanie, she told me that because sorority life is deeply tied to its history, new members must be given a sense of possibility. The advisers gave potential new members a chance to reflect on the group’s practices and explore possibilities for their own involvement through a calendar crafting activity during recruitment. The advisers set out giant paper calendars, markers, and stickers. The potential new members were put in small groups and asked, “If you could create an ideal month as a chapter member, what would you do?” The stickers matched up to events that regularly occurred on campus, like an annual carnival. Each small group created their own calendar and then presented it to the rest of the group. Melanie said that the crafting activity enabled members to imagine what the chapter would look like on their specific campus:

The main idea is to get them to understand that they will have the ability to do this as a new chapter on campus, that they’re not jumping into an existing chapter saying “Okay, your philanthropy activity that we always do is a taco feed, so that’s what we’re doing.” But

instead they get to kind of create. Like "Okay, we want to do like a 5K run." And so I think it's really allowing them to think outside of what's already on their campus and realize that that's what a new chapter has to offer.

This activity creates an imaginative infrastructure (stickers, paper, markers as well as the existing campus events) but also allows potential new members to craft possibilities of what their lives might be like as Beta Zetas. The calendar activity has a literal element of play, as it involves art-making, but also allows members to feel as though they are concretely setting the agenda of what the group will do. The women learn that they belong to a historical and institutional trajectory but have personal license to shape the future of that trajectory. Because the calendar activity happened before the women were invited to join Beta Zeta, the craft made an implicit promise that, should the women choose to join, the sorority was going to be a place whose agenda they could shape.

This material act of crafting worked in reciprocity with a discourse of crafting that shaped the sorority's formation. Mary, for example, uses language that reflects the material practices of crafting to describe how she was energized by the possibilities of involvement in a "new" sorority:

The other sororities, it felt like they all had like very set personalities and I was like, well I could mold myself to that but I didn't necessarily feel like I wanted to be that way. And Beta Zeta was more of a blank canvas so it was more something I could create for myself and with a bunch of people who also wanted to create something.

More than just being excited about the content of learning (as a student might typically be excited about taking a course she interested in), Mary is excited about both what she could learn and how she could shape a new and different kind of organization. Beta Zeta offers her the chance to shape, individually and collectively, an alternate model of a social group often characterized by inertia and exclusivity. Mary seeks meaning in a space that activates her imagination for a different kind of social formation that can arise from the unique configuration of the women themselves. Mary's quote also shows the hints of artistic discourses: she doesn't want to fit into the "mold" of another sorority, preferring a "blank canvas" that allows for the act of creation with others.

The discourse of another woman, Helen, also reflects excitement about how she viewed this challenge of developing an image for Beta Zeta:

The opportunity you get from joining Beta Zeta, you get to create the image that you want and we don't have any. If you join the other

ones you automatically have that stereotype placed on you, that they already have, whereas we're creating ourselves now, we're going through the process so we don't really have a stereotype yet and we can form what we want. . . . But I think what really drew me in were the opportunities to have leadership but also to like be a part of something new and actually get to create it and like make it what you want it to be, rather than being immersed into something that's already there. I guess that was the biggest difference for me.

Helen says that sorority reputations get "placed on you," like a heavy weight, and so members become "immersed" in these sororities, feeling as though they might drown. Her contrasting experience with Beta Zeta is a feeling of freedom, and her emotional stake in crafting stems from the freedom she feels from these stereotypes. Helen sees existing sororities as external to her, whereas she draws energy from the exciting challenge of crafting a sorority into what she wants it to be, using crafting discourses like "form" and "create."

Mary's notion of a "blank canvas" and Helen's idea of "something new" do not entirely fit my earlier definition of crafting as manufacturing something new *from existing materials* because Mary and Helen do not express any particular enthusiasm for the existing practices of the sorority. I would argue that their vision of the sorority still represents crafting, however, because for them, the women who joined the sorority were the existing materials: Mary views the sorority as "something I could create for myself and with a bunch of people who also wanted to create something" and Helen says that she and her sorority sisters are "creating ourselves now" using the collective noun to stress the collaborative process of the co-crafters. In this sense, the sorority is not just formed from existing sorority practices but also from the personalities of the women who are engaged in making it their own.

While it would be a stretch to say that the ideologies of crafting allow for radical or disruptive gender roles, the creation and implementation of a vision for an artistic project—a practice of crafting—frees the women from some of the stigmas and expectations attached to sororities. This crafting practice also challenges them to collectively generate and implement an alternative vision for what a sorority might be like and who sorority members might be. Through the material and discursive practice of crafting, the women are able to imagine other modes of existence for themselves and the sorority.

Crafting Produces and Solidifies the New Community

Beta Zeta was made up of women who consciously chose not to join any other sorority. Although they did not fit the mold of any other sorority, this did not mean they were all the same. Crafting then became an important tool for the new group of Beta Zetas to create a sense of unity and mark themselves as a community. As Pritash, Schaechterle, and Wood note, "The product of craft can also visually combine a multiplicity of voices to create a statement of solidarity and friendship" (19). As family quilts knit together past generations, crafting projects create continuity between the crafters.

As a case in point, many crafting projects occurred when new members joined the sorority. Bratich and Brush write that one of the longstanding functions of craft has been to "produce a community through production and distribution of the object (within the family, as gift, as public sign)" (234). Each new member was assigned a "big sister," a junior or senior who was responsible for mentoring the new member. Over the course of a week, called "Big/Little Week," the big sister would craft decorations for the new member's dorm room door and send her gift baskets with handmade items like T-shirts, coffee mugs, pillowcases, tote bags, and notebooks with the sorority letters emblazoned on them. While items with the sorority's letters were readily available for purchase, the women took great pride in crafting these items themselves. Because crafting materials could be expensive, the women would often meet together in residence halls and in their apartments to share their crafting supplies. One member, Yolanda, said that "community" was what was most important to her about Greek life, which she closely associated with the work of crafting:

Interviewer: So, generally, what is it that you like about being in this sorority?

Yolanda: It's just fun to have a community where I can go and be goofy and "Oh, let's get together and craft" and have, I don't know, have like something to do, have like ideas for crafting or whatever, to have a reason to be doing those things.

For Yolanda, crafting animates the community, giving the women a reason to get together, share ideas, and generally "be goofy." Yolanda says that the sorority gives her "a reason to be doing those things," in the sense that her sorority participation validates or authorizes her crafting work. Yolanda's example demonstrates how crafting becomes a bond between the women, giving them something to talk about and do together. Crafting for the Beta Zetas

brings the “big sisters” and “little sisters” together in the act of creating something and giving it to someone else, at the same time that it brings together the sisters that share craft supplies. These items, crafted with the sorority’s letters, also mark the new member as a member of the sorority community to the campus. These crafting projects are particularly important because the founding members of Beta Zeta were a more diverse group than that which might typically join an existing sorority.

In describing her reasons for joining the sorority, Kristine notes the necessity of finding not just a community, but specifically a community of crafters who are willing to form the sorority alongside her. Like several other members I interviewed, Kristine told me that she chose to join Beta Zeta because she “just clicked with” the group. For Kristine, this meant finding someone with the right emotional energy to craft alongside her:

Interviewer: Why did you think that Beta Zeta might be a good fit for you?

Kristine: Because it was new and everyone that was getting it started or involved in it had to take kind of like that risk and like take a shot in the dark, and in order for someone to like do that, I feel like they have to have some interest, or some passion, to like that put that money forth and not really know where this organization is going to go . . . I definitely think that with taking that risk, like people saw that, and for me that appealed to me, like I could make it my own, like, you know, like if I was super passionate about something there’s a really good chance that my idea’s going to be put forth and at least it’s going to be tried.

In the typical sorority recruitment process, new members find an existing community into which they could fit. But when the option is presented for a new sorority, new members like Kristine seek co-crafters with whom they can stitch together a new community. Kristine seeks crafting companions who can mirror and build on her own “passion” and “enthusiasm” for crafting the new sorority. She keeps making contact with sorority members until she finds what she’s looking for: brave and passionate co-crafters willing to take “a shot in the dark,” which Kristine believes will enable her to “make it my own.”

Crafting offers the possibility of creating a new community from the unique configuration of crafters who choose to join. As Bratich and Brush write, “Crafting, as media and as resurgent technology, stitches across common distinctions between old/new, material/immaterial, economic/semiotic, bio/info, and digital/tactile and opens to a new fabric of relations” (246). This “new fabric of relations” was particularly important to Frieda, the director of recruitment, who told me that she objected when the Beta Zetas’ alumni

advisors encouraged the women to have members from other chapters participate in recruitment. Frieda told me that even though these women would ease the recruitment process, she was concerned that they would not represent the unique texture of her chapter:

I'm very scared of becoming the fake sorority. I don't want that. [The alumnae advisers have discussed having Beta Zetas from other schools] in the room for formal recruitment, walking around, but like no, because they're not us. They're Beta Zetas but they're not [this university's] Beta Zetas. And we're very different [from them]. They're nice girls [and] I enjoyed getting to know them, but I want to come off as real, who we are . . . I really want us to feel, I want us to have that close bond so I think that's the other thing with not being fake. Having that genuine closeness—that we want to be together. If we're not the best sorority, so what? At least we get along and we're there to make friends. I don't want it to be "rent-a-friend"! I paid my dues so you have to be my friend now! I want [it to be] my way of meeting people, having something in common, let's build up friendships.

We can see the crafting process happening in Frieda's quote above: to create the new sorority, Frieda considers the available configurations of women in the context of the emotional experience she wants to offer in the recruitment experience. Paralleling crafting to the process of composition, Prins writes, "By engaging in social and digital production of texts . . . writers are transformed by the experience of looking closely at available designs, considering them in the contexts in which they are writing, engaging with fellow writers and potential readers, and finding themselves reflected in what they make" (153). Like any crafter, Frieda wants herself (and her sorority sisters) "reflected" in the finished product, so naturally, she is concerned that adding in outside sorority members will come across as "fake." From her experience with the Beta Zetas from other chapters, Frieda realizes that if outside sorority members are present during the recruitment process, the bond between the women will be "fake," as the women won't actually know each other very well. Because she is going for a "genuine closeness," Frieda chooses crafting. Frieda perceives her Beta Zeta chapter in the process of formation—it is her way of "meeting people" and "build[ing] up friendships," imagining that her chapter is in a simultaneous invention and revision process.

The women I interviewed were resistant to passively accepting existing sorority cultures, and joined Beta Zeta with the mentality that they could craft together a new sorority identity. Crafting offers the women a mechanism for thinking about forming a sorority community that does not look like existing sorority communities. I cannot argue that their new sorority is characterized

by a radical departure from gender roles or that they seek to create some kind of radical feminist space; however, I believe their imagination, optimism, and excitement about their ability to craft a new sorority culture can be characterized as a feminist orientation to an existing institution. As anthropologist of youth culture Anita Harris writes, so much of feminism has been appropriated by mainstream culture that young women have developed “complex relationships with popular culture that require them to negotiate, infiltrate, play with, and undermine feminine cultural forms rather than simply reject them” (7). In this case, the women choose to play with the cultural form of a sorority rather than reject it entirely with the belief that they can create a sorority community out of the constellation of their individual personalities.

Crafting Offers a Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching Group Values

Sororities have a reputation for indoctrinating new members, telling members what to think, and valuing conformity. Feminist pedagogy, however, defines itself in resistance to “hegemonic educational practices that tacitly accept or more forcefully reproduce an oppressively gendered, classed, radicalized, and androcentric social order” (Crabtree, Sapp, and Licona 1). For Beta Zeta, crafting offered a means of teaching new members about the group in a way that resisted “hegemonic educational practices,” allowing new members to take up the group in a way that made sense for them. Because crafting “serves the culturally important purpose of inculcating commonly held values, helping intensify adherence to those values” (Pritash, Schaechterle, and Wood 15), teaching the group’s values through crafting projects—rather than through speeches or lectures—amounted to a kind of feminist pedagogy.

For example, each sorority has a designated philanthropic organization (or a “philanthropy”). Members volunteer for this organization and often hold fundraisers to support it. On one day of the five-day recruitment process, designated “Philanthropy Day,” potential new members watch a short video about the sorority’s chosen philanthropic organization, which for Beta Zeta, was a foundation that supported research on heart disease. The video contains testimonials of sorority members from around the country about how they have been personally affected by heart disease. To complement the video, the new members engage in dialogue with existing members about heart disease. Following the video, the women do a simple crafting project alongside current members. The goal of this crafting project is to teach the new members about the philanthropy in a way that they can take up and make their own. For example, one sorority decorated barrettes for grade-school girls they worked with in a mentoring organization; another sorority attached flowers to

pens to give as gifts to children in a local hospital. For Beta Zeta, the crafting project involved decorating paper hearts that would be hung around campus for heart disease awareness week. One new member, Veronica, said that the craft worked alongside the testimonial video and dialogue with the member she met on that day to teach her about the philanthropy:

I liked it just because handwriting is personal and everyone did it and everyone had their own style. I really liked that part. I knew someone who had heart disease so it really spoke to me and I got to talk to the person with me for a while about it.

The artistic component of the craft allows new members to inflect what Veronica calls “their own style” into the group’s existing values. Rather than passing down the group’s beliefs as a set in stone, the dialogic and artistic components of learning about these beliefs make them feel open to new members’ personal meanings and interpretations. As Robin Crabtree, David Alan Sapp, and Adela C. Licona write, “feminist pedagogy acknowledges personal, communal, and subjective ways of knowing as valid forms of inquiry and knowledge production” (4). The video of testimonials combined with conversation and crafting with current members teach new members about the sorority using “personal, communal, and subjective” ways of learning and knowing.

Certainly, decorating paper hearts to hang up around campus may seem like a trivial activity to combat heart disease; however, I would argue that the central function of the crafting activity is more to make the sorority feel like a place where creativity and imagination are welcome, and where the new members have something unique to offer. These characteristics of a feminist classroom are enabled by the crafting activity. In confronting the problem of students’ pre-conceived ideas classrooms, Ira Shor writes, “To help move student students away from passivity and cynicism, a powerful signal has to be sent from the very start, a signal that learning is participatory, involving hope, humor, and curiosity” (26). The crafting activity, while teaching about the group’s values, gives new members a sense of the sorority as participatory, energizing them for the future construction of the group.

In addition to raising money for research on heart disease, the national chapter sets forth values like scholarship, service, and character development. In the discourse surrounding the sorority, the women recognize that while the national organization of the sorority upholds certain values, they can shape the sorority in such a way that reflects their own interpretation of those values. Renee, one of the founding members who participated in the crafting activity mentioned above, connected to the values of the national chapter of the sorority:

I was hesitant at first [to join] because it was a whole new sorority and I didn't know anybody else who was going through it and I'm jumping in blindly to be with these people who are going to be my sisters, which to me is a big bond. When I saw the official values and goals and that sort of thing, I really connected with them and said, well, that's something that I feel passionately about and I feel like I would really like to help form a sorority that really stands for that.

I suspect that Renee would likely be hesitant to "jump in blindly" to either a sorority with no scaffolding or to a sorority that is already constructed. Instead, Renee appreciates the values as a kind of backbone for the formation of the group. While Renee feels as though she is starting something "new," she works with an awareness that what she is building comes from existing materials. Renee's quote here represents a central value of feminist pedagogy: "the acknowledgement of personal experience as a primary means of constructing knowledge" (Ropers-Huilman and Palmer 17). Renee matches up her own experience to the existing group values ("I really connected with them") and in turn, gets excited about the possibilities for engagement in Beta Zeta. In generating this excitement, Beta Zeta created an emotional energy that contradicted the women's previous experiences with sororities. As bell hooks writes, in traditional classrooms, excitement is viewed "as potentially disruptive of the atmosphere of seriousness assumed to be essential to the learning process" (7). In a feminist classroom, however, this excitement, or eros, can "co-exist with and even stimulate serious intellectual and/or academic engagement" (hooks 7). For the women of Beta Zeta, this excitement was a catalyst to help them imagine the ways sorority life could be different.

While the women's desire and agency for changing an intractable social structure is a hallmark of feminist pedagogy, feminist work typically takes a more radical approach. Crabtree, Sapp, and Licona note that the explicit goals of feminist pedagogy are "consciousness raising, social action, and social transformation" as well as "empowering individuals within a larger context of social change" (4). Although the pedagogy of the sorority does not radically alter social structures, the dialogic, narrative, affective, and crafting elements of learning about the sorority do question dominant educational models as well as the ways that one might assume knowledge would be passed along in a sorority. Crabtree, Sapp, and Licona write, "feminist teaching is a reexamination of what happens in any classroom, indeed of the relationships between teachers, students, education and society" (4). Beta Zeta's modes of learning give new members the sense that they bring valuable attributes to the formation of the group.

Conclusion: Finding Feminism in Unlikely Places

Because sororities are and have long been and continue to be an important site of identity formation for many college women, I believe it is time to re-consider the kinds of experiences college women have as a part of sororities. Writing in 2002, Carol Mattingly notes that the initial efforts at the recovery of women's rhetoric favored "those historical figures who most resemble academic feminists—those who seemed to share our investment in confrontational and assertive approaches—at the expense of others worthy of our attention" (100-01). I have shown here how the rhetoric of crafting—albeit not a "confrontational" or especially "assertive" rhetoric—allows the women of Beta Zeta to approach an existing and seemingly monolithic extracurricular organization with the idea that it can be changed. Sorority life offered one group of ambitious and creative women the challenge of developing a historical rooted organization on campus with vision and creativity.

Royster and Kirsch stress the importance of listening deeply to women's rhetoric to disrupt assumptions or snap judgments about its value. To challenge expectations of rhetorical excellence, which are predominantly created by "Western patriarchal values" anyway (30), Royster and Kirsch challenge feminist rhetorical scholars to create "schemata for engaging critical attention" (21) that allow scholars to "make qualities of excellence . . . more visible" (43). As an ethnographer, my first step was to *give up* some of my existing schemata for rhetorical excellence. In observing crafting activities, I had to give up some of my negative associations with crafting as frivolous or silly activity to see how it was a mechanism of community formation (and as a person with limited artistic skills, I had to give up my own distaste for crafting). I also had to reconsider many of my ideas about feminist rhetoric—I wanted the Beta Zetas to be more radical and more edgy—so I could clearly see the kind of feminism that made sense for them.

In addition to letting go of preconceived notions about excellence in feminist rhetoric, this research has shown two schemata that might prove especially useful in identifying potential feminist rhetoric in youth cultures. As Stephanie Springgay writes, it's important not to be too rigid in our definitions of what constitutes social change for contemporary youth cultures because "youth have new ways of taking on politics and culture that may not be recognizable under more traditional frameworks" (112). First, sites of youth-driven, face-to-face communities—a increasing rarity in our individualistic and on-line culture—present potential sites of feminist rhetoric because they require people have to talk about the importance of community and use rhetoric in ways that form human connections. For the Beta Zetas, crafting served these

rhetorical functions by knitting together the disparate personalities of the community around common projects that shared their values. Second, sites where the old bumps up against the new present interesting opportunities for feminist rhetoric because community members are constantly challenged to articulate their vision for the community; this vision may not be presented in a speech but instead may manifest in the social practices of the community. In a sorority, the past is constantly bumping up against present: older members recruit new members, contemporary members carry on historic traditions, alumnae and current undergraduates collaborate. For the Beta Zetas, crafting was one mechanism to articulate how the past and the present would work together to form the future of the sorority.

Appendix

Interview Questions:

Tell me your year and your major.

What do you want to do with that major?

Tell me about how you first got involved with Beta Zeta.

Why did you decide to join Beta Zeta?

How do you like being in a sorority so far?

Do you have a position in the sorority? Why did you choose that position?

How do you feel about your position so far?

How did you feel about the starting of the chapter last year?

How do you feel about the upcoming formal recruitment process?

What do you see for your future in Beta Zeta?

What are some things you'd like to see Beta Zeta do in the future?

Works Cited

- Birks, Melanie, and Jane Mills. *Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2011. Print.
- Jack Z. Bratich, and Heidi M. Brush. "Fabricating Activism: Craft-Work, Popular Culture, Gender." *Utopian Studies* 22.2 (2011): 233-60. Web. 10 Feb. 2015.
- Conley, Paige. "This Speaking Leaf: Vera Connolly's Good Housekeeping Crusade for the Indian Cause." *Peitho: A Journal of the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric & Composition* 15.1 (Fall/Winter 2012): 66-98. Web. 22 April 2014.

- Crabtree, Robbin D., David Alan Sapp, and Adela C. Licona. "Introduction: The Passion and Praxis of Feminist Pedagogy." In *Feminist Pedagogy: Looking Back to Move Forward*. Ed. Robbin D. Crabtree, David Alan Sapp, and Adela C. Licona. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009. 1-19. Print.
- DeSantis, Alan. *Inside Greek U.: Fraternities, Sororities, and the Pursuit of Pleasure, Power, and Prestige*. Lexington: The U of Kentucky Press, 2007. Print.
- Goggin, Maureen Daly. "Introduction: Threading Women." Goggin and Tobin 1-10.
- Goggin, Maureen Daly, and Beth Fowkes Tobin, eds. *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles, 1750-1950*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2009. Print.
- Handler, Lisa. "In the Fraternal Sisterhood: Sororities as Gender Strategy." *Gender & Society* 9.2 (1995): 236-55. Print.
- Harris, Anita. "Introduction: Youth Cultures and Feminist Politics." In *Next Wave Cultures: Feminism, Subcultures, Activism*. Ed. Anita Harris. New York: Routledge, 2008. 1-13. Print.
- Heyboer, Kelly. "Fraternity and Sorority Numbers Climbing Amid Concerns About Bad Publicity." *Nj.com*. 29 Mar. 2015. *Nj.com*. Web. 21 Apr. 2015.
- hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- Johnson, Robert R. "Craft Knowledge: Of Disciplinarity in Writing Studies." *College Composition and Communication* 61.4 (2010) 673-90. Print.
- Mattingly, Carol. "Telling Evidence: Rethinking What Counts in Rhetoric." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32.1 (2002): 99-108. Print.
- National Panhellenic Conference. "2011-2012 Annual Report." National Panhellenic Conference. N.d. Web. 20 Jun 2013.
- Prins, Kristin. "Crafting New Approaches to Composition." In *Composing Media Composing Embodiment*. Ed. Kristin L. Arola and Anne Wysocki. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2012. 145-161. Web. 6 Oct. 2014.
- Pritash, Heather, Inez Schaechterle, and Sue Carter Wood. "The Needle as the Pen: Intentionality, Needlework, and the Production of Alternate Discourses of Power." Goggin and Tobin 13-30.
- Risman, Barbara J. "College Women and Sororities: The Social Construction and Reaffirmation of Gender Roles." *Urban Life*. 11 (1982): 231-252. *Rpt.*

in *Women and Symbolic Interaction*. Ed. Mary Jo Deegan and Michael Hill. London: Unwin Hyman, 1987. 125-140. Print.

Rohan, Liz. "Writing About Boys: Using the Feminist Method of Strategic Contemplation When Researching Male Subjects." *Peitho: A Journal of the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric & Composition*. 16.1 (Fall/Winter 2013): 8-33. Web. 22 April 2014.

Ropers-Huilman, Becky, and Betsy Palmer. "Feminist and Civic Education: Bridging Parallel Approaches to Teaching and Learning." In *Most College Students are Women: Implications for Teaching, Learning, and Policy*. Ed. Jeanie K. Allen, Susan J. Bracken, Diane R. Dean, and David Sadker. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2008. 11-28. Print.

Royster, Jacqueline Jones and Gesa Kirsch. *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012. Print.

Shor, Ira. *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. Print.

Sohan, Vanessa Kraemer. "But a Quilt is More: Recontextualizing the Discourse(s) of the Gee's Bend Quilts." *College English* 77.4 (2015): 294-316. Print.

Springgay, Stephanie. "Knitting as an Aesthetic of Civic Engagement: Reconceptualizing Feminist Pedagogy through Touch." *Feminist Teacher* 20.2 (2010): 111-123. Print.

Turk, Diana B. *Bound By a Mighty Vow: Sisterhood and Women's Fraternities, 1870-1920*. New York: NYU Press, 2004. Print.

About the Author

Faith Kurtyka is an Assistant Professor of English at Creighton University. She is interested in feminist pedagogy, quantitative and qualitative methods, emotional engagement in learning, and co-curricular discourse communities. Her work has appeared in *Composition Forum* and *Literacy in Composition Studies* and is forthcoming in *Composition Studies*.

Recognizing the Rhetorics of Feminist Action: Activist Literacy and Dr. Jill Stein's 2012 Green Party Campaign

Virginia Crisco

Abstract: *Scholars such as Nancy Welch and Susan Jarratt argue that Neoliberalism shapes how everyday citizens are able to take action. Using what Jacquelyn Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch call "social circulation," I analyze how Dr. Jill Stein, the presidential candidate for the Green Party in 2012, used "whatever spaces are left" to challenge the dominant two party system, particularly in relation to the presidential debates. I argue that Stein demonstrates an activist literacy disposition that positions her to use the spaces, the literate and rhetorical means, and opportunities for storytelling to foster social action in our neoliberal climate.*

Keywords: *neoliberalism, social circulation, activist literacy, third party politics*

In *Living Room: Teaching Public Writing in a Privatized World*, Nancy Welch argues that neoliberalism has changed not only the topics available for public discussion in the pursuit of making socio-political change, but the venues for having those discussions, as they have also become increasingly privatized. As an example, Welch reflects on her experiences advocating for her husband's health care to their insurance company. She describes the multiple letters she had gotten from her insurance company saying their appeal for his care had been denied, using the same phrases again and again, as if her carefully researched and rhetorical letters were not even being read. This leads Welch to question the amount of power we as teachers and scholars of writing give to language and rhetoric:

These are rhetorical strategies that, mostly in the abstract, have given me comfort – comfort in the belief that I really can wield power in language, that I can empower my students, particularly those subordinate by gender, race, sexuality, and class, to do the same. Today, however, I'm more keenly aware of how much the effectiveness of these rhetorical strategies are contingent upon extralinguistic factors, including social position and credentials. (26)

Welch's storytelling about the limits and possibilities of language and rhetoric within a larger socio-political context introduces the work of this essay because it points to the constraints of our rhetorical actions and the institutional structures that shape how those actions are received and acted upon; even the most committed activist has to have multiple strategies, committed collaborators, and institutional literacy in order to have a chance at making change; even the most engaged community members might have to present their ideas in different places, to different audiences, with different purposes and kinds of evidence, over time. Additionally, Welch's discussion of the constraints of language and rhetoric within a social context takes emphasis away from individual acts and puts activism within a context that includes individuals, groups, institutions, histories, traditions, philosophies, strategies, tactics. As feminist rhetoricians and teachers we need to see the possibilities for action in our neoliberal democracy, which includes not only an attention to language, rhetoric, and socio-political contexts, but also includes an attention to literate and rhetorical tactics needed to recognize the possibilities for feminist action.

Green Party 2012 Presidential candidate Dr. Jill Stein provides a concrete example of these literate and rhetorical tactics, which I call "activist literacy." I define activist literacy as a literate and rhetorical action that deliberately uses and interprets language to analyze and challenge socio-political power structures to make change through the use of collaboration or coalition building. Activist literacy links dialogue to disposition and points to other important forms of action—recognizing the repertoire available to feminists for activism. Activist literacy relates to Wendy B. Sharer's notion of "effective literacy," a



Figure 1. Dr. Jill Stein, 2012 Green Party Presidential Candidate.

concept Sharer borrows from Catherine Hobbs and discusses in *Vote and Voice: Women's Organizations and Political Literacy, 1915-1930*. "Effective literacy," according to Sharer, is "a level of literacy that enables the user to act to effect change, in her own life and in society ([Hobbs] 1)." Sharer goes on to argue that literacy in this context also refers to "the rhetorical savvy to participate actively in larger, more complex processes of information access and use" (9). Activist literacy goes beyond Sharer's "effective literacy" to advocate for an activist literacy *disposition*, an approach to using literacy and rhetoric, a way of being, a commitment to social action.

Dr. Jill Stein and her campaign use activist literacy to try to get heard on the issues important in the presidential race, but to also find strategies to make

her presence know in a neoliberal democracy that privileges two parties. Stein and her campaign challenged neoliberal spaces and found other means—other spaces, other ways to tell their story, other ways of using language—for getting her voice heard. This essay retells the story of Jill Stein's fight to get into the presidential debates, points to the tactics she used to get her voice heard in spite of being left out of the debates as an example of "activist literacy," and practices what Jacquelyn Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch call "social circulation" by historicizing the role of women candidates and politicians as a framework to retell, analyze, and situate Stein's story of activist literacy. I do this work to consider how neoliberalism affects our opportunities for action but to also demonstrate that a disposition of activist literacy can provide tactics for challenging those neoliberal spaces.

Highlighting the Spaces Left through Social Circulation

Jill Stein is situated within a historical context as a presidential candidate. Describing this historical context points to the implications of what Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch call "social circulation," one of four terms of critical engagement in their book *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons in Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies*. In particular, my essay focuses on ". . .rhetorical processes, in effect, [that] have the capacity to envelop broadly defined uses of language as a symbolic system, with rhetoric being constituted in this schema as culturally informed social actions that participate recursively in the circuit of culture" (1392). Social circulation is about how—and where—meaning is made—and where it isn't made. It is about highlighting those rhetorical and literate spaces that are not normally part of the Western tradition of rhetoric, literacy, or composition studies. And it is about looking beyond the surface for how rhetorical action is received, responded to, or silenced, and then thinking about what those responses or lack of responses mean not only for the rhetor but also for those who use that story for purposes beyond the original experience.

Jill Stein's campaign is an example of social circulation because she engages activist literacy at many different levels as a tactic in our current neoliberal climate; she works at the local level addressing and riling a base of supporters, she works at the legal level using legal discourse and processes to exercise her rights, she works at the media level, inviting journalists to tell her story to others, and she works with the general public, using what Royster and Kirsch, drawing on Jessica Enoch's work, describe as "whatever spaces are left" to critique those in power with the purpose of persuading the general public to see her point of view (1404). But Jill Stein is not the first woman rhetorician

to take up these tactics—though some of her tactics are specific to neoliberalism. Situating her within a historical context of other women politicians and candidates demonstrates the breadth and depth of how social circulation applies and changes over time.

Social circulation is a method of analysis that highlights how spaces, culture, and use of language has changed the way feminist scholars have understood the role of women rhetoricians over time. Dr. Jill Stein comes from a long tradition of women presidential candidates sponsored by third parties. For example, according to the film “The Rhetoric of Women in Politics,” Victoria Woodhull was the first woman nominated to run for president by the Equal Rights Party in 1872¹—50 years before women gained the right to vote. Jo Freeman in “The Woman Who Ran for President” asserts that while Woodhull was nominated, it is not clear if she ever really campaigned. Belva Ann Bennett Lockwood, Freeman argues, was the first woman to actually campaign for president in 1884, also nominated by the Equal Rights Party (86). The significance of Woodhull and Lockwood being nominated for the highest public office in a space where women could not vote points to the ways that women broke socio-cultural rules—and took up the spaces available to them to make change—in the process of taking action.

It’s significant that third parties nominated these women, as third parties often provide the space for alternative ideas to be voiced. Evan Spencer Jones in his dissertation entitled “The Politics that Make Presidents” argues, “The [theory of] conventional wisdom states that third parties do not win elections, but third party candidates may exert issue influence on one or both of the major parties. By contesting elections, third parties act as ‘issue educators’ and ‘issue and reform innovators’ (Hazlett 20)” (20). Third parties create a space for nonmainstream issues to be heard and for mainstream issues to be challenged. They also create a space for unlikely candidates to be nominated and support campaigns for the highest political office.



Figure 2. Victoria Woodhull, first woman Presidential Candidate, Equal Rights Party, 1872.

1 Frederick Douglass was her running mate.

Moving from the spatial and cultural elements of social circulation, Royster and Kirsch focus additionally on the language using potential by arguing that “. . . we propose social circulation as a critical term of engagement to suggest that this sense of the fluidity of language use—as well as the fluidity of the power those uses generate—can help us see how traditions are carried on, changed, reinvented, and reused when they pass from one generation to the next” (1369-1377). Woodhull and other women candidates and elected officials—in third and major parties—pushed the boundaries of our cultural ways of doing and knowing by using their position to argue for equal rights and issues that apply to groups beyond just women. While Woodhull challenged women’s lack of a right to vote through becoming



Figure 3. Shirley Chisholm, first Black US Congresswoman, 1965.

a presidential candidate, she also used her newspaper *Woodhull and Claflin’s Weekly* to share her position on national issues. According to “The Rhetoric of Women in Politics,” “She became a committed activist and reformer concerned with human rights issues as well as women’s issues, national public education, institutionalized welfare for the poor, opposition to all laws that encroached upon individual freedom, support of labor reform.” Patsy Mink, the first woman of color to be elected to US Congress in 1965, used her position to introduced bills such as, “. . . the Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Act, the Women’s Educational Equality Act, including Title IX. . .” and Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman to be elected to US Congress (also in 1965), opposed the draft and Vietnam War, cosponsored a bill to guarantee a minimum income to all families, opposed federal cuts in public education, and fought for labor and women’s rights.”² Throughout the history of women running for and being elected to political positions, women have shared their perspectives and experiences on what it means to be a woman in the civic public. But they have also demonstrated how their perspectives and issues were not just about women, but about the poor and working class, about children, and about equality for people of color and gays and lesbians. And yet, according to “The

2 These two women were also the first two women who were considered in a major (Democratic) convention for presidential candidacy in 1972.

Rhetoric of Women in Politics,” the media—as recently as 2008—still trivializes women candidates, by focusing overwhelmingly on a presidential candidate’s hair, for example, rather than the important issues she brings to the national conversation. This emerges from the neoliberal idea that a person must be authorized to speak in particular spaces. Below I demonstrate how Jill Stein seeks out ways to be heard—and taken seriously—on the issues in the media.

Social circulation is about social circles across time—over generations, as well as space—locally and globally. It is not about understanding individual social relationships but instead, social networks. It is not about looking for public and private opportunities for women’s rhetoric; it is about seeking women’s rhetoric that has been previously invisible. Royster and Kirsch write about current trends in women’s rhetorical analysis: “...we shift attention more dramatically toward circulations that may have escaped our attention, that we may not have valued (and therefore neglected to study)...” (1369). Much of the scholarship on women’s rhetoric has focused on women candidates and elected officials in dominant parties. Additionally, women’s rhetoric has focused on women’s organizations and clubs or it has focused on women’s rhetoric during key times of struggle, such as suffrage or the women’s rights movement of the 1960s. I focus on a third party candidate for president because running for office is another opportunity for women to use rhetoric and literacy—activist literacy—to make change, and third parties have been one of the social networks that have created a space for women’s ideas and issues to be heard presently and historically.

Jill Stein is situated within a theory of social circulation that points to a history of women who have run for national offices, who have used the spaces, language, and culture that they emerge from to find ways to make change in “whatever spaces are left” (1404). To this, I add the affects of and challenges to neoliberalism as a way of peeling apart the layers of Stein’s literate and rhetorical actions in order to understand her exigences for taking action, as well as analyzing how the extralinguistic contexts shaped both her action and how her action was received and acted upon. In other words, Dr. Stein, as a third party candidate, represents positions on the issues that are very different from the mainstream political parties. Additionally, while she tries to work within the system by attempting to get into the presidential debates and using legal means to stop the debates, these attempts go silent in the larger scheme of things. While her activist literacy uses good arguments and tactics, argument and reasoning are not enough to get her into the debates—even as she plays by the rules of the Commission on Presidential Debates! She misses the authority and the purchasing power to force the Commission to play by the rules. But her action, on the other hand, helps to rile a base of supporters

because she shows she is willing to fight for the rights of the people to hear from all of the presidential candidates that meet the key criteria for debate.

Royster and Kirsch describe the particular kind of paying attention I am attempting to highlight through Jessica Enoch's work in "Survival Stories: Feminist Historiographic Approaches to Chicana Rhetorics of Sterilization Abuse" where Enoch uses three feminist historiographic approaches and creates one of her own, the latter of which, as Royster and Kirsch describe, applies to this analysis:

Between the task of contextualizing the rhetorical performance within its immediate context and the task of theorizing in order to open new spaces for analysis, [Enoch] disrupts the flow of analysis and identifies as a particular challenge the way in which normalizing processes function to silence the voices of nontraditional participants . . . rendering them not-hearable and invisible within the norm of possibility and expectation . . . By this reckoning, rhetors who do not conform to normalizing processes are ultimately forced to occupy and function in whatever spaces are left. (1404)

Royster and Kirsch's description points to the power dynamics between "normalizing processes" as in dominant structures for creating justice, such as court rooms or legal documents that challenge the rules for Presidential Debates, and the ways those spaces can create injustice, such as denying a request for an injunction for third party candidates to get into the debates. In this regard, the rhetorical performances still exist and are still meaningful, particularly when these stories of injustice are used for different purposes, such as the retelling of this story to others, to highlight those nonnormalized spaces, and to point to the value and potential for new understandings through observing and listening to those alternate spaces and stories of injustice. The story of Jill Stein not getting into the presidential debates—and the retelling of that story through the lens of activist literacy—is a way of broadening—and limiting—our notion of the reading and writing practices available to activists within socio-political neoliberal contexts while also helping to define what dispositions activists take up in these contexts. And this storytelling is a form of social circulation that demonstrates connections to the stories, tactics, and issues raised by women political candidates both historically and presently.

Challenging the Commission on Presidential Debates

The Green Party has been a presence in American politics since the 2000 election when Ralph Nader and Winona LaDuke ran a national campaign for President (Nader's first campaign with the Green Party was in 1996). Since



Figure 4. [Click here](#) to watch video. Democracy Now's report on Dr. Jill Stein and Cheri Honkala being arrested at the second Presidential Debate, October 2012.

then, the Green Party has run a candidate for election in every presidential race. The United States Green Party was founded in 1984 (GreenPartyUS), but Green parties have existed internationally in Australia and New Zealand since the 1970s (Zelko 1). Dr. Jill Stein has been a key player in Green Party Politics for over 14 years. She ran for the Massachusetts gubernatorial election (against Mitt Romney) in 2002. During that election, her most prominent campaign message was that she would address the needs of the people. In a campaign speech given after the second televised debate, Stein argued: "Suffice it to say that the other campaigns are not people powered campaigns and I felt like it was our special mission to speak to the needs that people urgently feel are not being addressed in this campaign, not being addressed in the closed debates, and not being addressed up on Beacon Hill." Stein also ran for governor again in 2010. 2012 was her first run for President (again, against competitor Mitt Romney). She was the second woman to run a national campaign for president for the Green Party and in that election, according to the GreenPartyUS, Jill Stein "received the most votes for a woman in a presidential election in US history." She is currently running for president again in 2016.

In the 2012 campaign, Dr. Jill Stein, and her Vice Presidential candidate, Cheri Honkala, challenged the debate process and structure in regard to democratic elections and got the word out about these unfair practices by getting

their story into the media. The video to the left, featuring *Democracy Now's* Amy Goodman, shows Stein and Honkala protesting and being arrested at the second Presidential debate at Hofstra University in Long Island on October 16, 2012.

Stein speaks to three audiences in this moment: to the media (so they have a story to tell), to voters, and to those in power, including the police and the representatives of Hofstra University who were at the scene. She argues:

Our Green campaign is on the ballot for 85 percent of voters. Eighty-five percent of voters deserve to know who their choices are in this election and what the real solutions are that can solve the desperate problems that we're facing. The Commission on Presidential Debates makes a mockery of democracy by conducting this fake and contrived debate.

Stein speaks to the average voter, showing how their rights are being taken because they do not have all of the information. She ends her statement by more strongly critiquing the institutions that have the power to make these decisions, to show they do not have the best interest of the voters in mind. She clearly has an argument to make, but also speaks in response to a key question in her campaign—the right of voters to be informed. Stein goes on to speak for the average voter, to point to the ways they are being disenfranchised, and to draw on a well known voting rights organization to build her authority with the American people (and, again, to make a story for the media who are covering this moment):

We're here to stand ground for the American people, who have been systematically locked out of these debates for decades by the Commission on Presidential Debates. We think that this commission is entirely illegitimate; that if democracy truly prevailed, there would be no such commission, that the debates would still be run by the League of Women Voters, that the debates would be open with the criteria that the League of Women Voters had always used, which was that if you have done the work to get on the ballot, if you are on the ballot and could actually win the Electoral College by being on the ballot in enough states, that you deserve to be in the election and you deserve to be heard; and that the American people actually deserve to hear choices which are not bought and paid for by multinational corporations and Wall Street.

Stein continues to speak to the average voter, to show that there are other options to what is currently in place. She appeals to the voters by suggesting an alternative organization, one who has proven to be nonpartisan, and

in making this suggestion, shows the partisanship of the Commission on Presidential Debates. In this video clip, she speaks through the media, and the media outlets decide what to clip and what to keep. Stein's message must be strong enough to appeal to the media who are covering her story, to be sure that her story is heard. In this case, she is successful. And *Democracy Now* does an 8-minute segment on her arrest, her containment, and the unfairness of the debates. She has appealed to this media outlet and to their audience, as *Democracy Now* continued to give her and other third party candidates airtime for debates throughout the time leading up to the presidential election.

While Stein and her campaign were successful in getting the story about being kept out of the debates onto *Democracy Now*, they wanted to do more, so they challenged the Commission through legal means as well. The Green and Libertarian Parties filed an injunction against the Commission on Presidential Debates and the Federal Election Commission to stop or postpone the third Presidential debate on November 5th, 2012 at Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida (Jill Stein for President, Our Legal Fight for Free and Equal Debates; Johnson). The rhetorical function of the injunction was twofold: first, it used the strategies of the dominant culture to try to critique that culture through legal processes and discourse; and secondly, it demonstrated to Dr. Stein's base and to the general public what kind of action she and her campaign would be willing to take to fight for third party voices in a neoliberal democratic context that only values two parties.

Some key critiques of the process to be a part of the debates are listed in the injunction. The lawyer who wrote these critiques, Kathleen Kirwin is clearly doing two things: 1) she is trying to show how the Commission is not following its own rules, and 2) she demonstrates how those rules are not applied fairly based on the judgment of an historically nonpartisan voting rights organization. These critiques are part of the genre of the injunction and can address a legal audience, but more likely, these critiques are most effective for Stein's Green Party base as well as for general voters. The injunction states:

- The Commission for Presidential Debates is actually a collaboration between the Republican National Committee and the Democratic National committee. It is a nonprofit, "nonpartisan" organization "established to ensure that debates, as a permanent part of every general election, provide the best possible information to viewers and listeners" (14). Yet, the injunction goes on to state, the League of Women Voters, who had sponsored the debates since the early 1960s when televised debates began, withdrew their support in the 1988 election because, ". . . the demands of the two campaign organizations would perpetrate a fraud on the American voter. . . The League has

no intention of becoming an accessory to the hoodwinking of the American people” (Jill Stein for President, Our Legal Fight For Free and Equal Debates, 9).

- Even though the Commission for the Presidential Debates, made up of the Republican and Democratic National Committee, made the requirements for being invited to the debates, they did not invite candidates who met their criteria, which included constitutional eligibility, ballot access, and electoral support. Jill Stein met all of their criteria except for electoral support as it was defined as having more than 15% in 5 different polls – even though her campaign received matching federal funds and even though there was a statistical possibility that she could win the presidency (Jill Stein for President, Stein Files Lawsuit Against the CPD). Gary Johnson, the Libertarian Party candidate DID meet all of the criteria and he was also not allowed to participate in any of the debates (Johnson 5).

The injunction is a mixture of both facts and critique, building an argument based on how the Federal Election Commission and the Commission for the Presidential Debates are infringing on the rights of both Jill Stein as a presidential candidate, but also on the rights of the American voters. This injunction and her work with the media demonstrate how Dr. Stein and her campaign attempted to engage in politics on par with the Democrats and Republicans. Rather than stand outside of the political arena and level critiques, Dr. Stein uses the tools of the most powerful to attempt to beat them at their own game.

Dr. Jill Stein was not only silenced during the second debate by being handcuffed and taken to a warehouse for 8 hours, but she was also silenced through the legal process of taking her case through the court system—in other words, her injunction was denied. Her only voice—the only space left available to her—was to go to the people and to the press.

Her campaign created “Occupy the Debates” movements; one of the images they used for this movement appears to the above: it directly links neoliberalism to politics by pointing to the challenges that neoliberalism creates for democracy. The campaign used YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and email to advertise to voters about the unfair debates and to broadcast debates



Figure 5. 2012 Presidential Race media linking politics with neoliberalism



Figure 6. 2012 Presidential Race Advertisement to advocate popular media outlets broadcast debates between third party candidates.

between other candidates who were running for president. The mainstream press was not interested in her story, except the one debate between her and Gary Johnson, the Libertarian candidate, sponsored by National Public Radio (NPR Staff). Her stance on issues and the challenges she faced getting into the debates are shared on her website, with her supporters, and on non-mainstream news programs such as *Democracy Now*, *Russian News* and the Al Jazeera Network, as well as articles written in *The Nation* and *The New York Times* (Nichols; Lowrey). The image above demonstrates another avenue that third party candidates took to get their voices heard. If they couldn't get into the "main" debates, maybe they could get the debates between third party candidates broadcast on national networks. Jill Stein's campaign used every available media and social networking avenue to challenge how the debates were working and to get the word out to mainstream America about where she stands on the issues.

While readers might question Jill Stein's success, as she didn't get into the debates, she did get more votes than the two sets of Green Party candidates who came before her. According to the Green Party Press Release entitled "Green Party Advances in State and Local Races on Election Day 2012,"

Dr. Stein's and Ms. Honkala's numbers are more than twice the total of votes [396,684] that Green nominees Cynthia McKinney and Rosa Clemente drew in 2008 (161,195) and three times the total of votes that the Green Party's David Cobb and Pat LaMarche drew in 2004 (119,859). The 2008 numbers were a 59% increase in the popular vote

over 2004, and the 2012 numbers show a 146% increase in the popular vote over 2008.

It is very difficult for third parties to win national elections because of the debate structure, which consists of winner-take-all voting, and laws that affect ballot access. But while third party candidates find it hard to win elections, they can certainly affect elections. Additionally, third party candidates can function to get policy agendas that are invisible into public conversations. Evan Spencer Jones, in his dissertation *The Politics that Make Presidents*, argues "Since systemic hurdles largely prevent third parties from winning elections, the best way to measure third party 'success' in [sic] not on electoral terms, but in terms of issue influence brought to bear on the larger political process" (1). While it is difficult to track any kind of success beyond ballot access, vote totals, and Greens elected to lower offices, Stein's campaign shows that even in a climate where neoliberalism reigns, there are other opportunities for activism, other ways of defining and determining "success" in politics.

The Rhetoric of Activist Literacy

Practicing activist literacy in neoliberal spaces creates its own set of rhetorical challenges for third party political candidates, but it also points to the key disposition of activist literacy that provides the tactics candidates can use to find and use "whatever spaces are left." In her conclusion to the book *The Public Work of Rhetoric* entitled "The Prospects for the Public Work of Rhetoric," Susan Jarratt compares our current sense of political space and activism to postclassical Greek culture in order to demonstrate a disposition for activist literacy. She describes the "culturally Greek intelligentsia from the eastern provinces of the Roman empire," a group that was previously considered in the scholarship as "declin[ing] into literariness" (286). She argues that in fact, because of the violence and oppression of that time, these Greeks were actually using rhetorical tactics, but they were "coded within an array of unfamiliar genres" (286). Comparing this time in Greek history with our current politics and making a case for the limits of current leaders to hear the voices of the people, Jarratt advocates for a postmodern paideia as a way to continue activist work. A postmodern paideia, ". . . demands the ability not only to take up stances on the part of public rhetoric but to read the postures of those in power and, most important, to engage them, or to play their games or to play some other game that is recognizable across lines of power" (288). For Jarratt, the point is not to isolate oneself in an ivory tower or distance oneself as outside of or above the debate, but to engage the issues in a way that is recognizable.

Part of that recognition is about using the language and spaces that are available for critique and action.

For third party and women candidates, activist literacy includes evaluating the socio-cultural structure and then finding the most effective ways to address that structure. In this case, Stein used her activist literacy to attack one of the most fundamental problems with third parties winning elections: the debate structure. So while historically women have run for president when they were not able to vote, or have created policy and legal documents in their political positions, Stein had to do more than address the issues in her campaign: she also had to fight the socio-political neoliberal structures that kept her voice from being heard. And she did that by using the legal structures in place to make that happen as well as the media and social networking. As a presidential candidate for a third party, Stein had an opportunity to take up a different position than candidates for major parties; on the other hand, as a candidate for president, Stein has a responsibility to use that position to speak and critique national politics in the most effective ways possible.

Resonating with Welch's concept of neoliberalism, Jarrett goes on to argue that one factor of a postmodern paideia are the risks involved in being a free speaker or "parrhsiastes" (287) because of the socio-cultural power dynamics involved in this kind of speech. Drawing on Foucault, Jarratt argues, ". . . this 'free-speaker' takes a risk, puts himself or herself in danger, by addressing someone in a position of power. The relationship to the interlocutor is a game, but with risk only to one party: it is a game but also a duty" (286-287). In other words, in contexts of varying levels of power, "free-speakers" have a duty to level critiques against the most powerful—and they take a risk by doing so. Jarratt goes on to discuss these parrhesiastics as men who are also powerful members of a society, either via education or military accomplishment or powerful family. Women who have run for political offices throughout history are located differently than these privileged men. But there is still that element of significant risk in the name of progress that women have had to face as well.

In Stein's case, she brings authority to the presidential election as white and as a medical doctor. In some ways, as a medical doctor and a white woman, she holds some privilege and responsibility for speaking out about issues faced by the less privileged. But her campaign certainly does attempt a kind of risk by sending Stein and her running mate, Cheri Honkala, into the debate at Hofstra University; certainly they knew or expected that they would be arrested. Thus, while Stein and Honkala take a serious risk by using their physical bodies and positions as certain kinds of authorities in society to challenge who speaks at the presidential debates; they also create a rhetorical situation that challenges the debate structure in the space of the debate, and in the media.

Then through that risk taking and media coverage—they tell their story again to different audiences.

Thus, risk-taking leads to rhetorical strategizing, as Jarratt goes on to argue and explicate, and she ends her essay by advocating for two important positions as far as the public citizen's rhetorical responsibilities and practices: "First, the situation of the Greek rhetor might suggest the importance of spending more time and attention on ways of addressing those in power and mixed publics in mutually recognizable terms." And "Second, we find in the conjunction of postclassical and postmodern rhetoric a confirmation of 'free speech' as a stance or posture rather than a revelation of the truth itself" (292). Jarratt points to the ideological and social nature of free speech—a literacy practice—pointing to the fact of it being a *disposition* rather than a rhetorical technique.

An example of this rhetorical technique as a disposition is a comparison between an elected president's disposition toward the issues and a third party woman candidate's disposition toward the issues. Jeffrey Cohen's essay "Presidential Rhetoric and the Public Agenda" demonstrates a relationship between issues that are raised in State of the Union (SOU) Addresses and issues that the public feels are important. He researched SOUs from 1953 to 1989, which included several different presidents, and compared the policy agendas set in those SOUs with the Gallup's Most-Important-Problem series, a series focusing on issues the public thinks are most important. Focusing on the areas of foreign policy, economics, and civil rights policy, Cohen finds that "Presidents can influence the public's policy agenda" (101). Additionally, Cohen finds that "Presidential leadership of public opinion is analogous to the process of expanding an issue from the formal agenda to the public agenda."³ The key to this research and approach is that the president has the power to tell voters what to think. And in fact, it is a requirement of office that a "leader" should set the agenda. Cohen, in fact, takes for granted that that is a president's role: presidents shape the national political dialogue rather than listening to it.

Jill Stein's disposition, on the other hand, demonstrates a version of what Krista Ratcliffe calls "rhetorical listening." Rhetorical listening is ". . . a trope for interpretive invention . . . a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture; its purpose is to cultivate conscious identifications in ways that promote productive communication, especially but not solely cross-culturally" (25). Stein focuses on listening to

3 While Cohen found that presidents can set the public's agendas -- meaning that the public agrees that the president's agenda is a problem that needs to be addressed (not necessarily the way to address the problem) through a speech such as the SOU, Cohen also found that the effects of that agenda setting do not last long, except in the case of foreign policy.

what the American people want, joining their movements, and demonstrating how her platform addresses their needs. Stein listens to voters by engaging in community events and requesting community engagement. For example, she attended Occupy Boston (Stein) and Occupy Madison (Stein); she stood in protest with 300 other people for free assembly in Madison, Wisconsin (Stein); she conducted the “Green Surge” in Chicago, where she and her supporters made a weekend of Green Party activity where they marched with National Nurses United on Saturday; she protested the NATO G8 Summit; she collected signatures to get the Green Party on the ballot in Illinois, and her campaign had a concert on Sunday (Jill Stein for President). She created many opportunities to listen to the issues of real and diverse people. For example, her campaign hosted a public conversation with her and Matt Rothschild, editor of *Progressive Magazine* (Stein), she invited listeners to call in when she was on Portland’s Progressive Talk Radio (AM KPOJ) (Stein), and she uses Facebook social media to ask her friends and supporters what the important issues are (Stein; Stein).

In her speeches to the public, she focuses on the issues that affect the people (not corporations). For example, in “Jill Stein’s Message of Change, On Which Real Hope Depends,” she focuses on three policy changes that President Obama made that were against the best interests of the people in order to offer her hope for change. In the video below, she points to peoples’



Figure 7. [Click here](#) to play the video. Dr. Jill Stein demonstrates her commitment to people of the US.

protests as a way to connect the issues she will fight for as president with the issues they fight for.

Stein shows a commitment to the issues of the people by pointing to the ways people are taking action in their communities, by showing that she can see things from the common person's point of view. She challenges those in power, such as President Obama, corporations, and banking and finance institutions, to show that she is connected to and is aware of the issues that everyday people care about—issues that don't seem to be reflected in the ways our government handled policy. She advocates for the responsible use of power but points to the ways that those in power are not demonstrating their responsibility for the average American over the will of corporations and business. More recently, as Jill Stein has agreed to a 2016 run, she continued her work to listen to the people by conducting a "Listening Tour" in Texas (Jill2016 Team).

This disposition of listening to the people—and in some cases the most underrepresented people—is a common approach in Green Party politics. For example, in 1996 and 2000 when Ralph Nader ran with the Green Party for President, he chose an American Indian running mate, Winona LaDuke, who brought her knowledge about American Indian (and women's) rights, culture, living conditions, environmental attitudes to the campaign. Pat LaMarche, who was the running mate for David Cobb in 2004, conducted a tour where she stayed in homeless shelters and encampments across the United States and documented her experiences in *Left Out in America: The State of Homelessness in the United States*. While we can point to the issues that Stein, LaMarche, and LaDuke address in their campaigns for public office as women's issues, in reality, the Green Party values feminism and would expect their presidential and vice presidential candidates to address the issues of women, the poor, people of color, and the environment. Stein, and the Green Party in general, pride themselves on being a different kind of political candidate—candidates whose activist literacy dispositions are connected to the real people in their communities (people powered campaigns, as they call them), candidates that have built their platform on the experiences of the common person and the most disenfranchised, candidates that don't take donations from corporations.

Through listening to the people and going to work on aligned movements that have already started, Stein enacts activist literacy: the literate and rhetorical action that deliberately uses and interprets language to analyze and challenge socio-political power structures to make change through the use of collaboration or coalition building. The disposition of activist literacy recognizes the power dynamics in mixed publics, seeks ways of addressing those power dynamics through speech and writing, and acts as if in a social context with multiple and changing power dynamics. While Jarratt's focus is on the more

powerful class and men of ancient Greece, her points about the dispositions of these free speakers is key to my argument: activist literacy is more than just a set of practices, techniques, or genres. It is those things, but it is more: it is an attitude, a space to do a particular kind of work, it is a making of meaning and use of language that is effective and rhetorical—social circulation—it is a way of being, a culture. And this disposition is what leads a rhetor to evaluate a rhetorical context, draw on their literacy practices to address that context, and make decisions about what genres to use and what audiences to address to best make their case. And, even if that case is not immediately successful, the rhetor's activist literacy disposition will lead her to find other ways to get her story out, to retell the story for another audience and purpose, as that will keep the story alive and keep the story working in and on the culture at large.

The Disposition of Activist Literacy

Much scholarship on the rhetorical use of literacy for social progress and change, such as Jacqueline Jones Royster's *Traces of a Stream*, Wendy B. Sharer's *Vote and Voice*, or Ellen Cushman's *The Struggle and the Tools*, focuses on how women fought to get their voices heard. These texts talk about the rhetorical and literacy moves that women made, how they taught these moves to other women, and how they struggled, in the former two, to make their issues part of a mainstream conversation. Recognizing the rhetorics of feminist action means that we need to describe the different ways that feminists can take action in complicated socio-political contexts where the boundaries between powerful and powerless depend on socio-rhetorical contexts. While we might look at Jill Stein's campaign and say that nothing has changed since her run for office, since she didn't get elected, and third parties still can't get into debates, and the media still won't cover third party candidates in any meaningful way, we can also recognize the challenges to making systemic change. Then we can recognize that even when we don't get the big "win," we are still making some kinds of small changes, whether it be educating people about the unfair debate structure, whether it's having the story of your detainment for challenging the debates being told, or if it's getting almost 400,000 people to support you for president across the nation.

Considering Dr. Jill Stein's activist literacy in the context of neoliberalism demonstrates how she is building from the foundations that women in politics have already carved out but is also finding new ways to get her message out and to be taken seriously. While some scholars such as Susan Jarratt and Linda Flower have argued that our scholarship has much to say about critique and not much to say about collaboration and coalition building, I argue that we need to think about how to prompt *dispositions* of activism, which can

then lead to choosing *how* to use literacy to respond to particular contexts and audiences, as well as thinking about *who* are our allies and *how* can we engage them. Activism is not just about dissent, but it is about a commitment to making change and drawing on the literate resources and rhetorical contexts for making that change. While there are certainly extralinguistic factors that limited the kinds of power Dr. Stein's actions had, the disposition of her and her campaign means that they anticipate those factors and find other opportunities, venues, genres, and practices to get their ideas out in spite of those factors.

Works Cited

- Cohen, Jeffery E. "Presidential Rehtoric and the Public Agenda." *American Journal of Political Science*. 39.1 (February 1995), p 87-107. Print.
- Cushman, Ellen. *The Struggle and the Tools: Oral and Literate Strategies in an Inner City Community*. Albany, NY: New York State UP, 1998. Print.
- "Demand Real Debates." Jillstein.org. 25 September 2012. Web. 13 November 2013.
- Flower, Linda. *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Public Engagement*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2008. Print.
- Freeman, Jo. "The Women Who Ran for President." *We Will Be Heard: Women's Struggles for Political Power in the United States*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008. Print.
- Goodman, Amy. "Green Party Candidates Arrested, Shackled to Chairs for 8 Hours After Trying to Enter Hofstra Debate." DemocracyNow.org. 17 October 2012. Web. 13 November 2013.
- Green Party of the United States. "Green Party Advances in State and Local Races on Election Day 2012." 8 November 2012. Gp.org. Web. 23 December 2014
- GreenPartyUS. "History." Gp.org. 21 January 2016.
- Jarratt, Susan C. "The Prospects for the Public Work of Rhetoric: A Coda and Codes." *The Public Work of Rhetoric: Citizen Scholars and Civic Engagement*. Eds. John M. Ackerman and David J. Coogan. Columbia, SC: South Carolina UP. 2010. Print.

- Jill2016 Team. "Listening Tour: I Just Got Back from Texas." *Jill 2016*. Jill 2016 Exploratory Committee. 26 February 2015. Web. 13 March 2015.
- Jill Stein for President. "Jill Stein's Message of Change, On Which Real Hope Depends." *YouTube*. YouTube. 27 December 2011. Web. 13 March 2015.
- . "Jill Stein in Chicago to Occupy NATO/G8 Summit." *Green Party Watch*. Green Party Watch. 18 May 2012. Web. 13 March 2015.
- . "Our Legal Fight for Free and Equal Debates." *Jillstein.org*. 23 October 2012. Web. 7 August 2015.
- . "Stein Files Lawsuit Against the CPD." *Jillstein.org*. 22 October 2012. Web. 10 August 2015.
- Johnson, Gary. "Complaint Against Commission on Presidential Debates." *Scribd.com*. 2012. PDF file.
- Jones, Evan Spencer. *The Politics that Make Presidents: Third Party Issue Influence and Presidential Political Change*. Diss. U of Wisconsin-Madison, 2008. PDF File.
- LaMarche, Pat. *Left Out in America: The State of Homelessness in the United States*. Upala Press. 2006.
- Lowrey, Annie. "Another Presidential Debate, but This Time the Candidates Are Much Less Familiar." *New York Times*. *nytimes.com*. 5 November 2012. Web. 13 November 2013.
- Lutz, Alma. "Victoria C. Woodhull." *Susa B. Anthony: Rebel, Crusader, Humanitarian*. The Project Gutenberg Ebook. 25 Jan 2007. Web. 4 Feb 2016.
- "Meet the Four Presidential Candidates Who Won't Be President." *Newswire*. *Jillstein.org*. 23 Oct 2012. Web. 4 Feb 2016.
- Nichols, John. "These Debates Could Use Some Jill Stein and Gary Johnson." *The Nation*. *thenation.com*. 2 October 2012. Web. 13 November 2013.
- NPR Staff. "The NPR Third-Party Candidate Debate." *Npr.org*. 6 October 2012. Web. 13 November 2013.
- Ratcliffe, Krista. *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness*. Carbondale, IL: SIUP, 2005. Print.
- Royster, Jacqueline Jones and Gesa Kirsch. *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2012. Web.

- Royster, Jacqueline Jones. *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change among African-American Women*. Pittsburgh, PA: Pittsburgh UP, 2000. Print.
- Sharer, Wendy B. *Vote and Voice: Women's Organizations and Political Literacy, 1915-1930*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2007. Print.
- "Shirley Chisholm." Wikipedia.org. 30 July 2015. Web. 5 August 2015.
- Stein, Jill. "A Public Conversation with Jill Stein and Matt Rothschild – Jill Stein for President." Facebook. Facebook. 12 December 2011. Web. 13 March 2015.
- . "Complaint for Injunctive Relief." Jillstein.org. 23 October 2012. PDF file.
- . "Free & Equal Presidential Debate." Jillstein.org. 09 October 2012. Web. 13 November 2013.
- . "I am at #OccupyBoston right now, w/well over 1000; some reports say 1000s. Police raid expected. #OWS #Union #Occupy." Facebook. Facebook. 8 December 2011. Web. 13 March 2015.
- . "Look out Portland, Oregon – I'll be on Portland's progressive talk radio, AM KPOJ, 620 AM, with Carl Wolfson at 8:30am Pacific this Monday. Guest hotline is 503-796-2324." Facebook. Facebook. 16 December 2011. 13 March 2015.
- . "Media Downloads." Jillstein.org. Web. 13 November 2013.
- . "Occupy the CPD: Social Media Storm." Jillstein.org. 25 September 2013. Web. 13 November 2013.
- . "Speech at Cape Cod Community College." 31 October 2002. <http://wasearch.loc.gov:80/e22k/20021105081453/http://www.livejournal.com/talkpost.bml?journal=neurophyre&itemid=11739>. 5 December 2002. Web.
- . "Three hundred people turned out to defy the new anti-free assembly rules in Madison, Wisconsin, today. We sang without a permit. On Wisconsin!" Facebook. Facebook. 16 December 2011. Web. 13 March 2015.
- . "We've been talking a lot about economic issues lately, but we're curious – what are your priority environmental concerns?" Facebook. Facebook. 5 August 2012. Web. 13 March 2015.
- . "What one policy issue is at the top of your personal political agenda right now?" Facebook. Facebook. 4 August 2012. Web. 13 March 2015.
- "The Rhetoric of Women in Politics." Films on Demand. Films Media Group, 2005. Web 3 August 2015. Film.

"We Have More Than Two Choices." Occupythecpd.org. Web. 13 November 2013.

Welch, Nancy. *Living Room: Teaching Public Writing in a Privatized World*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton /Cook Publishers. 2008. Print.

Zelko, Frank. "Introduction." *Green Parties: Reflections on the First Three Decades*. Eds. Frank Zelko and Carolin Brinkmann. Washington, DC: Heinrich Böll Foundation North America, 2006: 1-7. Print.

About the Author

Dr. Virginia Crisco is an Associate Professor at California State University-Fresno where she teaches writing and teaches teachers how to teach writing, and where she co-directs the first-year writing program. Her research interests focus on the intersections of literacy and rhetoric as they manifests in the practice and pedagogy of public writing and civic participation to inform the spaces of the classroom and the community.

Forget the Master's Tools, We Will Build Our Own House: The Woman's Era as a Rhetorical Forum for the Invention of African American Womanhood

Katherine Fredlund

Abstract: *While many scholars (Logan; Gere; McHenry; Royster) have discussed the Woman's Era (1894-1897), this article adds to this research by revisiting the periodical as a single text (composed of years of articles and arguments) and as an example of rhetorical invention. By rethinking invention, this article argues that this aspect of the rhetorical canon can be understood not only as an act that helps create a text but also as something a text can do. In order to illustrate how the first publication by and for African American women invented their own vision of African American womanhood, this article looks specifically at the editors and contributors use of rhetorical methods of response and epideictic rhetoric as well as their creation of a formal communication network that connected thousands of women from across the country.*

Keywords: *Woman's Era; periodicals; invention; 19th century; epideictic rhetoric; African American women; lynch law; intersectionality*

I know of no publication having for its existence and possibilities such inspirations and rare opportuneness as your bright journal. The Woman's Era is the face of our colored women turned upward to the star of hope. It is the timely message of love and sympathy from colored women to women everywhere. It happily suggests that we can do so much for each other in all the most important interests of our lives, that we will have more time and reason for courage than for despair. To thousands of our women your paper will come as the first intimation of the wideness of the world about them and the stretch of human interest and sympathy. Thousands of them will discover their own strength and a certain sense of importance in this gradual coming together of our women all over the land in clubs and leagues organized for high purposes.

-Fannie Barrier Williams, Woman's Era (June 1, 1894)

On March 24, 1894, the *Woman's Era*, the first periodical published both by and for African American women, ran its first issue.¹ While African American journalists had been fighting for racial uplift since before the Civil War, this publication was the first edited and funded solely by African American women. Shirley Wilson Logan, Anne Ruggles Gere, and Elizabeth McHenry have all recognized the periodical as an important site for racial uplift, literary work, rhetorical education, and collaboration; yet even these praises do not fully investigate the import of this rhetorical space in the lives of African American women at the end of the nineteenth century. The *Women's Era* not only allowed women to publish their writing but also sparked the first National Conference of Colored Women and played a direct role in the formation of the National Association of Colored Women.

The *Woman's Era* is generally discussed as a publication in which African American women presented evidence of rhetorical and literary practices. The pages of the *Women's Era* are filled with fiction, political arguments, poems, advice for the home, and celebrations of African American women. Both Logan and Gere use articles published in the *Woman's Era* in order to support their arguments concerning African American rhetorical practices. Logan explains that the reports on African Americans' accomplishments "appear in the pages of the *Woman's Era* as evidence of enacted rhetorical activity" (*Liberating* 117). Gere and Logan agree that the publication also served as a place for African American women to make their accomplishments public for white and

1 The date of origin of the *Woman's Era* has been questioned by some who claim the publication originated in 1890 rather than in 1894. Rodger Streitmatter explains that two letters written from Ruffin to Cheney (possibly Edna Cheney) and dated 1890 reference the *Era* and are written on stationary with the heading "The Woman's Era." However, upon requesting the letters from Boston Public Library and examining them, it is clear that Ruffin wrote these letters in 1896. Her 6, however, looks very similar to a 0, and when someone else (evidenced by different penmanship) wrote the date of the letters on the back, they took Ruffin's 6 for a 0 and dated them 1890 rather than 1896. Further, the issue from March of 1894 includes a section entitled, "Greeting," which explains, "Of the makers of papers there be not a few, and an additional one may seem a superfluity unless a vacant spot is found in an apparently already overgrown field. Such a void, we think, exists, and it is to help fill it that we presume to make our first bow as editors of THE WOMAN'S ERA" (8). This first issue also includes an editorial written by Ellen Battelle Deitrick that notes, "It is pleasant to record a number of subscriptions on the strength of the prospectus alone. May the subscribers never have reason to regret their actions. The WOMAN'S ERA hopes to succeed on its merits" (7). If the paper had been in print since 1890, then the subscribers would not have needed to rely on "the prospectus alone" in 1894 nor would the editors have needed to explain why they were filling a void in journalism.

black audiences. McHenry elaborates on the publication and argues that the *Woman's Era* "is representative of the ways that black women created through their literary work a collaborative space in which to represent themselves and expand their identities" (190). She further argues that, "by claiming the right to represent themselves and exercise authority over the terms in which they described themselves and their activities, black women used the *Woman's Era* and *National Association Notes* to refute the negative and thoughtless representations of black womanhood that surrounded them" (223). The *Woman's Era*, then, has been primarily understood as a forum in which African American women presented their own vision of the African American woman for others (though Logan notes that they also praised the accomplishments of African Americans in an epideictic manner and McHenry recognizes that the publication allowed them to represent themselves). Perhaps the greatest impact of this publication was not what it did publicly, but rather what it did privately for the African American woman published in and reading its pages. African American women were not just presenting themselves in these pages; they were inventing African American womanhood. In doing so, they were not simply mimicking other publications or continuing the practices of the black press that was dominated by the African American male. Instead, they were creating something new—something so new, in fact, that it has been referred to as a newspaper by some, a periodical by others, and a magazine by still others. The reason scholars cannot agree on a name for this publication is because we have no name for what these women created. It was something entirely their own.

The sources on print culture I reference below—many of which include lists of publications from the late nineteenth century—contain no mention of the *Woman's Era*. The lack of scholarly attention paid to the *Woman's Era* could be partially attributed to the fact that the only known copy of the *Women's Era* was on microfilm at the Boston Public Library until Emory's *Women's Writers Research Project* digitized and transcribed the three volumes of the publication.² No known print copies remain. The limited accessibility of *Woman's Era*, combined with the lack of scholarly research on this publication in the fifteen plus years since it first gained scholarly attention, indicates a continued need for a reassessment of knowledge-production. In Royster and William's words,

2 Most of the primary research found in this article was done within the digital archives made possible through Emory's *Women Writers Resource Project*. The pages of the *Woman's Era* are not scanned and digitized but have instead been transcribed. I compared some of the transcriptions with the microfilm version from Boston Public Library, and they were accurate, but due to constraints in time and access, most of my research was done online rather than through the microfilm version.

we need to “se[e] the gaps in our knowledge” and “generat[e] the research that can help us fill those gaps” (581). While this publication has been discussed, the hundreds of pages, articles, and contributions of this periodical have not been done justice. Jessica Enoch found that by “changing our methods we change our histories” (62), and with that in mind, I present a new history of the *Woman’s Era* by revisiting this publication as a single text (composed of years of articles and arguments) and as an example of rhetorical invention—rather than evidence of rhetorical education or women’s club practices. By rethinking invention, this aspect of the rhetorical canon can be understood as an act that helps create a text and as something a text can do. This approach alters the way we understand what the *Women’s Era* accomplished. This history does not counter those presented by Gere, Logan, McHenry, and others but builds upon those histories, complicating and multiplying the contributions of the *Women’s Era*.

To fully investigate the role *Woman’s Era* played in the lives of nineteenth-century African American women, this article presents a variety of texts from the publication that evidence how contributors collaborated in order to invent a new vision of African American womanhood. After overviewing the publications that were intended for women prior to and during the 1890s, I explain how the *Woman’s Era* combined aspects of each of these genres in their periodical—making something new, unique, and revolutionary. The following section discusses how the publication used rhetorical methods of response in order to invent a new vision of the African American woman. Another part of this revolutionary publication was the communication network that allowed women’s clubs from across the country to celebrate their achievements via epideictic rhetoric. It concurrently encouraged growth and activism in clubs that had not yet reached the size or activity of a club like the Woman’s Era Club. Thus, the article continues with a discussion of this communication network before arguing that the publication served two primary purposes. These two purposes, enacted simultaneously, present counter-narratives to the public and, more importantly, invent the African American woman for themselves. The article concludes by discussing what the *Woman’s Era* teaches us, as feminist researchers, regarding methods of recovery and research on activist periodicals.

The Emergence of Print Culture

The 1860s saw the emergence of mass-circulation of newspapers due to the public’s desire for news of the Civil War and improvements in print technologies. After the war, technological advances allowed for massive changes in print: “Between 1870 and 1900, the number of daily newspapers quadrupled

and the number of weekly publications tripled. The plummeting price of newsprint—publishers who paid \$440 a ton for paper during the Civil War were paying only \$42 a ton by 1899—allowed the average newspaper to expand dramatically in size” (Lutes 99). With the ability to reach a larger portion of the population (as opposed to earlier nineteenth-century publications that only the wealthy could afford), newspapers like Joseph Pulitzer’s the *New York World* began to “[cultivate] a female audience by printing household hints and fashion and society news; [Pulitzer] also made a point of hiring at least a few women reporters to write for the city desk, not just for the women’s pages” (Lutes 100). Thus technological advances, that gave publishers more space and consequently more freedom in content, opened the door for women journalists—however small the door may have been.

The years between 1880 and 1920 are also considered the “Golden Age” of magazines. While magazine giants, such as *Scribner’s* and *Harper’s*, presented their readers with literary journalism, smaller magazines began the muckraking trend that eventually became a popular form of political news. Most popular magazines addressed the public sphere, while other magazines, primarily women’s magazines, began to address the private sphere. These magazines generally “instructed white middle-class women on how to live and how to keep the home a sanctuary away from work and the public. Women’s magazines provided practical instruction, delivered from a trusted friend. They were first to spearhead the profit formula of news-stand prices below cost, large circulations, and selling those circulations to advertisers” (Hinnant and Hudson 123). Often referred to as women’s journals, these magazines were remarkably—and at the time shockingly—profitable which led to the domination of this market by the “Big Six.”³ Women’s magazines were largely “practical” and aimed to help women in their home while profiting off of the advertisers who used the magazines to target a new consumer (the homemaker). Mary Ellen Zuckerman explains the content of women’s magazines such as the *Ladies’ Home Journal* (LHJ): “Often billing themselves as trade papers, these journals carried numerous service departments designed to help middle class women in their jobs as housewives, a change from the ante-bellum publications targeted primarily at the elite. Now columns appeared advising readers about

3 The “Big Six” refers to the most popular women’s magazines at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries: *Ladies’ Home Journal*, *Woman’s Home Companion*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Delineator*, *McCall’s*, and *Pictorial Review*.

cleaning, cooking, making clothes, buying goods, supervising servants, child care, and the home needs of husbands" (xiii).

Despite the popularity of newspapers like the *New York World* and women's magazines like the *Ladies' Home Journal*, these publications were not without their failings. Women's magazines and the women's pages from newspapers reinforced the status quo and failed to recognize the life challenges of minority or non-middle-class women. Zuckerman concludes that "Despite publishing articles on political and social issues, women's journals generally reflected mainstream thinking. They did not typically try to radically reconfigure women's lives or society although they did at times work to reform and improve both" (xii). While women's magazines often failed to recognize differences between their readership (in race, class, and ideology), newspapers also failed to successfully address such political issues as the rise in racial violence. Lynchings and instances of mob violence were rarely reported, and when they were, the new objective reporting style of journalism was used. Jean Lutes observes that objective journalism was useful in reporting racial violence and other controversial matters by citing a report of the mob murder of an African American postmaster and his three-year-old daughter from the *New York Herald*. She recognizes that "the appearance of neutrality served the commercial interests of the *Herald*, allowing it to avoid antagonizing readers who may well have disagreed with each other about how to respond to such violence" (104). Unsurprisingly, the emergence of mass media coincided with this emergence of objective reporting as well as the media's tendency to reinforce rather than challenge the status quo, leaving individuals and groups who sought social change little choice but to go out on their own.

Consequently, this same time period saw a rapid increase in small, non-commercial, special interest publications, such as the *Evening Star*, *Freedom's Journal*, *The Revolution*, *Woman's Journal*, *The Woman's Cycle*, and *The Club Woman*. The *Woman's Era* followed these and other publications' lead with their creation of a publication that sought to counter dominant narratives and create a space for the presentation of non-mainstream, non-commercial ideas. Lutes explains,

Many suffragists, socialists, labour organizers, and racial and ethnic minorities established their own newspapers. Few of these alternative presses existed to make money... Many of these journals were short-lived and had limited readership, but they served as critical venues for expressing resistance to oppression; they also acted as platforms for reformers who used them to attract attention from mainstream presses. (105)

Long before the first publication of the *Woman's Era*, the black press advocated for change and racial uplift in the United States (*Liberating* 97). African American journalism provided an important site for rhetorical education as well as for racial uplift in the nineteenth century. These important rhetorical spaces included four newspapers edited by Frederick Douglass between 1847 and 1874 and the *Evening Star*, which elected Ida B. Wells as editor in the 1880s.⁴ Beginning more than a century later than the white press (137 years according to Roland E. Wolseley), the black press began in protest. The weekly *Freedom's Journal* (the first African American publication in the United States) "originally was issued in New York City as a means of answering attacks on blacks by another newspaper of that city, the white New York *Enquirer*" (Wolseley 25). Before and during the Civil War, the black press fought to end slavery. When changes in print technologies provided more opportunities for publication, the black press, too, began to change. Wolseley explains, "After 1865...[the black press] began to resemble the white press in its division: some publications continuing to crusade for more freedom, others supporting reaction, and still others interesting themselves more in profits than in social progress" (24).

While publications began to vary based on purpose and interest, the number of black papers began to increase drastically, totaling 575 by 1890 (Wolseley 38). The reasons for this upsurge are many and include an increase in education and literacy rates as well as an increase in violent crimes committed by whites against blacks. The black press also combined different aspects of print genres which complicated the general notion that these publications were newspapers:

Although little news appeared in these early papers and much of the material that did appear was of the kind usually bound into magazines of opinion, they are classified generally as newspapers rather than periodicals because of their appearance, frequency of issue, and their habit of calling themselves news organs. Charles S. Johnson... has observed that the first black publications were like magazines. (Wolseley 36)

4 Disliking her work as a teacher, Wells had been looking for a new avenue for her race work when the editor of the *Evening Star* resumed his job in Washington, D.C., and Wells was elected to fill his place (*Liberating* 102). For more information on Ida B. Wells and her work in journalism, see Shirley Wilson Logan's *Liberating Language* (particularly the chapter "Organs of Propaganda").

ily digested and good food, as are wheat, rice, potatoes, turnips, beets, carrots, parsnips and fruit. Chocolate or cocoa powdered and mixed with water or milk heated to the boiling point is refreshing and highly nutritious. All these foods are more or less valuable as blood and strength producers as they are properly or improperly prepared and eaten. The time of eating must be regular and the amount of food at each meal must be neither too much nor too little. As a general rule for an active person two and a half pounds of solid food and three pints of liquid food and three pints of water make a day's allowance.

The tone, the health and life of the human body are dependent upon the blood. And the health, the strength and life-giving quality of the blood depend upon the food we eat and the air we breathe. Air is mainly composed of nitrogen and oxygen, four parts of the former and one part of the latter. And when air is deprived of its oxygen it will not support human life. And each time that the same air passes through the lungs it loses a part of its oxygen. The blood starts from the heart fresh and pure and strong. It goes through the arteries to various parts of the body, deposits its nutrition or flesh making qualities, and then goes back through the veins to the heart again. On its return before reaching the heart, it passes through the lungs and exchanges the carbonic acid gas which it has gathered in going about the body, and which will not support animal life, for oxygen, which is necessary to the support of animal life.

If the blood does not exchange its carbonic acid gas for oxygen when it goes through the lungs on its way back to the heart, it becomes sluggish, loses its tone and health and instead of carrying nutrition and health and life to all parts of the body, it carries poison and we quickly see the result in pale faces, physical weakness, nervousness, depressed spirits, sallow complexions, weak minds and stunted growth.

How different is the result of vigorous blood, full of oxygen and life. The person who breathes fresh air, not air already breathed by himself or other persons once

THE WOMAN'S ERA.

15



ATLANTA UNIVERSITY, ATLANTA, GA.

REV. HORACE BUNSTEAD, D. D., President.

This Institute trains and sends out a superior class of teachers and leaders for work among the Freedmen of the South. It solicits the attendance of intelligent and earnest young men and women, and contributions from those who are willing to help toward their education. Write to the President.

WHY YOU SHOULD SUBSCRIBE FOR THE
WOMAN'S ERA.

Because it represents the best thought and work of the most advanced women of your race, and should therefore interest you.
Because it will keep you informed of matters you cannot afford to be ignorant of.

Because being a woman's movement, it is bound to succeed.
Because it is readable it contains sixteen pages of solid matter, no plate matter, reprints, no filling up with headings and leads.*
Because its subscription price is only one dollar a year.

or many times, will grow up strong, ruddy, active, with healthy body, skin and brain; and in condition for the very best physical and mental work.

Too much emphasis cannot be put upon the necessity for an abundance of pure, fresh air in the sleeping room, the sitting room, the school rooms, concert hall, lecture room, sick room, and wherever time is spent. Wearing apparel, bedding, rugs, carpets, and indeed every thing that can hold disease germs ought to be thoroughly aired each day.

Dressing is a matter of taste as well as health. One of the most satisfactory evidences of the progress of women is seen in the change from a style of tight lacing and tight dressing which cause the body to grow out of natural symmetry and grace, for a style of easy, comfortable and sensible dressing which allows the limbs to have free play and gives the blood a chance to circulate and flow to all parts of the body. Lacing and tight waists compress the liver and stomach and interfere with the movements of the diaphragm; this often causes headache, dyspepsia, shortness of breath, womb disease, weak back and many, many aches and pains. Women are beginning to learn that it is better to dress for health than for style, and that the best

dressing is that which aids and does not hinder healthy growth.

When taking physical exercise the dress should be light and loose and so made that the limb can have free and easy play in all directions.

Any rule regulating bathing must be elastic. Too much bathing is as dangerous as too little is bad. Frequent cold water sponge baths properly taken are among the best aids to good health because they strengthen the skin and keep it free from the impurities which the body is constantly trying to throw off through the pores. The best time for the bath is immediately after rising because the body is then rested and the circulation is at the best. Flushing immediately before or after a meal should be avoided because the rubbing removes the blood from the stomach to the surface. Care must be taken to avoid the shock to a delicate organization given by cold water. Begin with the tepid bath and gradually work up to cold water. All vigorous physical exercise should be followed by a bath to remove the impurities brought to the surface, avoiding a bath while the body is too heated. Take it after the heart has begun to beat normally and follow it with brisk rubbing with a coarse towel

Fig. 1: Example of the Woman's Era.

The *Woman's Era* was also referred to as an organ and looked like a newspaper despite combining a variety of genres more typical of magazines (see fig. 1). Avoiding the "objective journalism" that had become commonplace (and convenient for commercial publications), black publications were generally

opinionated and honest about their desire to prompt social change—a tradition the *Woman's Era* would follow.

Suffrage newspapers also emerged during this era. Of particular note are Lucy Stone and husband Henry Browne Blackwell's *Woman's Journal* (1870-1917) and Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Revolution* (1868-1872). *The Revolution* openly opposed the Fifteenth Amendment in favor of an Amendment that would allow both African American men and women the right to vote (Beasley and Gibbons 81). Published in reaction to the "radical politics" of *The Revolution*, the *Woman's Journal*, published in Boston, felt the two issues should remain separate and prioritized the vote for African American men over women despite being a Suffrage publication (Beasley and Gibbons 83). Though not focused on race issues, these alternative publications supported the idea that African Americans should have more rights, but with all white editors, the most prominent Suffrage publications continued to generally exclude African American women from discussions regarding voting rights.

The Woman's Era Club was not the only group of clubwomen to publish their own periodical. Despite the publishing industry's newfound desire to sell their publications (and the advertisements within them) to women, Gere explains that the industry generally remained hostile to women:

Newspapers, magazines, and book publishing remained male-governed throughout the nineteenth century, and women who tried to succeed in the world of print encountered enormous difficulties. By underwriting their own publications and regulating their contents, clubwomen created an alternative to the male controlled mass market in which women could only rarely present themselves in their own terms. (29)

Six months after the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) was founded in 1889, journalist Jane Cunningham Crowley began as editor of *The Woman's Cycle*, which functioned as the GFWC's club magazine. The publication only lasted a year, but Crowley would attempt another club magazine, this time named *The New Cycle*, that would be the organ of the GFWC from 1892 to 1896. Articles in this publication discussed "parenting, municipal affairs, public education, public health, and woman workers" (Endres and Lueck 133). When Crowley was asked to write the history of the GFWC, Helen M. Winslow's *The Club Woman* took over the publication of the "Club News" section that had previously been found in Crowley's publications. As Endres and Lueck explain, "[Winslow] said her publication would provide guidance to young clubs that were seeking ways to expand their interests into their communities" (133). While these publications were directed at the growing number of clubwomen

across the United States, they failed to embrace the African American clubwomen. Although not stated explicitly, an incident from 1900 illustrates that inclusion of African American clubwomen was not a top priority for the GFWC. In 1900, the Woman's Era Club was admitted to membership without the GFWC realizing the club was composed of African American women. When Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, editor of the *Woman's Era*, traveled to Milwaukee for the GFWC convention, she was refused admittance unless she agreed to represent another club that was not composed solely of African American women. She refused to enter as anything other than a representative of the *Woman's Era* and the GFWC did not back down for fear of offending their many Southern members. Thus, when the *Woman's Era* began their publication and welcomed African American clubs from across the country to share Club News, the GFWC did not allow African American clubs to be members (thus their ideas were not presented in the publications of the GFWC).

Consequently, the editors of the *Woman's Era* were responding to and blending different aspects of the variety of publications suddenly available to women at the end of the century. When the *Woman's Era* published its first issue, the editors and columnists joined a burgeoning industry that was changing as quickly as it was growing. This publication, however, was unique because it was the first periodical published both by and for African American women and also because it combined aspects of a variety of print genres to create an amalgamation unlike any other. While other publications meshed genres as well, the *Woman's Era's* combination of genre is notable for its creation of a rhetorical forum where African American women could discuss all of the challenges they faced. Like woman's magazines, the publication provided advice for the home while simultaneously countering the narratives of perfection found in such publications. Like newspapers, the publication provided information about events and people, though the *Woman's Era's* writers focused on individuals that the major presses were sure to ignore and did not use the new objective reporting style, favoring columns that presented a position on a social or political issue. Like the other publications in the black press, the *Woman's Era* combined and challenged a variety of genres and fought for the improvement of life for their race. Like the Suffrage publications of the time, the *Woman's Era* had female editors that were not scared to argue for real political change in their Editorials. Like the publications that provided "Club News" for the GFWC, the *Woman's Era* also published club news and reports that would eventually become the primary purpose of the publication. Thus the readers of the *Woman's Era* found a publication where the challenges they faced intersected, and in doing so, they created a publication that was interested in an inclusive vision of female African American life. The combination of these many disparate parts created a rhetorical forum where African

American women shaped, for the first time in print, their own vision of the African American woman.

The Woman's Era's Kairotic Moment

In February of 1893, just over a year before the first issue of the *Woman's Era* was published, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, her daughter Florida Ruffin Ridley, and Maria Louise Baldwin founded the Woman's Era Club—a woman's club composed of African American women of all ages. In the first issue of the periodical, the club's section in "Club News" explains the reason for the formation of the club: "at the time Miss Wells was creating so much interest in her crusade against lynch-law, it was a good time to carry out the club's idea, call the women together and organize, not for race work alone, but for work along all the lines that make for women's progress. The result was that a club was formed with a membership of twenty which has more than doubled since that time" ("Boston" 4). In the prior year, more than 250 lynchings occurred in the United States—more than any other year in U.S. history. In response to this startling increase in violence, the club's first foray into print took the form of a leaflet that condemned the Denmark Lynching of Barnwell County, South Carolina. The club later reported that this leaflet, "sent in every direction... brought back numerous and encouraging" responses ("Boston" 4). Indeed, the club received requests for additional hundreds of leaflets to be sent cross-country.

The responses to this leaflet indicated that the women of the WEC had altered opinions and even convinced readers to act with the purpose of "awaken[ing] public sentiment" ("Boston" 4). Consequently, the Woman's Era Club saw an opportunity and used the first issue of the *Woman's Era* to explain the impetus for their work:

This reception of the leaflets has revealed to the club a line of work which has been little used and which the club can incorporate with its other work with advantage. This is the publication and circulation of matter that refers especially to the race, not alone, but also such matter as shall be for the advancement and encouragement of the race and to quote from our constitution "to collect all facts obtainable, showing the moral, intellectual, industrial and social growth and attainment of our people." ("Boston" 4)

The combination of the periodical's name and the published mission of the club make their dual-purpose quite clear. In naming the publication, the women emphasize their devotion to their gender, and in the above statement of the paper's purpose, they make their devotion to the improvement of the race

explicit. Thus in the *Woman's Era*, gender and race were to work in tandem rather than in opposition.

When editors Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin and Florida Ruffin Ridley published the *Woman's Era* as the official organ of the Woman's Era Club, they became the first African American women to fund and edit a publication intended for an African American female audience. While the periodical began as one club's periodical, with time it became a publication for all African American women's clubs. Within this publication, African American women found an opportunity to voice their own perspectives on eclectic subjects. Other publications of this time period either neglected the topics the editors found important or covered these topics from a white or male perspective, leaving few opportunities for the women published in the pages of the *Woman's Era* to publish their own writing and ideas from an African American and a female perspective.

In her discussion on how intersectionality and identity politics impact rape and domestic violence legislation, Kimberlé Crenshaw observes that African American women are "within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas" (1252) and "fail women of color by not acknowledging the 'additional' issue of race or patriarchy" (1282). Logan further explains that the sociohistorical context surrounding African American women rhetors in the last two decades of the nineteenth century was molded by the "overlapping issues [of] the abolition of slavery, women's rights, mob violence, and racial uplift" (*We Are Coming* 3). When the *Woman's Era* first went to print, the editors and contributors were responding to a complex set of circumstances prompting their desire for a rhetorical space that allowed for reactions to publications directed toward women while also celebrating their own accomplishments. Indeed, the pages of the publication respond to all of the issues Logan identifies. Consequently, the *Woman's Era* created a rhetorical space where it was not race or gender that was valued first and foremost but rather the person that intersected at these two identity categories and her experiences and opinions. While the space for such a person to speak had been created, this does not mean that suddenly she knew who she was outside of white and male rhetoric. These women created the African American woman for themselves, and they did so through a combination of response to other publications and epideictic rhetoric. Within the pages of the publication, many African American women (some prominent, some new to writing) condemned unflattering, public depictions of African American womanhood while others used rhetorics of praise in order to present a new vision.

In the first issue, the Women's Era Club's "Club News" section presents a succinct description of the club's goals:

It is not our desire to narrow ourselves to race work, however necessary it is that such work should be done and particularly by colored women. It cannot but be admitted that we, as a race, have too frequently limited ourselves to this field with the result of contracting our vision, enfeebling our impulses and weakening our powers. We the women of the Women's Era Club enter the field to work hand in hand with women, generally for the humanity's interests, not the Negro alone but the Chinese, the Hawaiian, the Russian Jew, the oppressed everywhere as subjects for our consideration, not the needs of the colored women, but women everywhere are our interest. ("Boston" 4)

As the "official organ of the Women's Era Club," these goals would have been extended to not just the members of the club but also to their publication. Their claim that individuals often focus so much on their own oppression that they limit themselves challenged the readers of the periodical to attempt to consider the oppressions of those with whom they were not as familiar while also welcoming readers of different races, genders, and classes. This presentation of their intent (as a club) evidences a desire for African American women to do work for the improvement of all members of society, and with their publication of the *Woman's Era*, they provided a space for women across the country to do just that.

Inventing through Response

Of course, there were other forums through which African American women could speak and publish in the last decade of the twentieth century, but these opportunities were not abundant (and were often only available to the very privileged and educated). One of the *Woman's Era's* most important contributions was that it provided a place for numerous women to publish their own writing. Simultaneously, it provided evidence to women who may not have imagined that they could write fiction or political commentary—let alone publish that writing—that African American women could produce a variety of forms of journalistic and literary work. The publication's varied content allowed many women publishing opportunities that were not otherwise available. One of the primary ways women contributed to this publication was through response to other publications. This took many forms, from mocking home and domestic science columns to responding to rhetoric published (or spoken) elsewhere. At a time when few popular publications allowed or encouraged African American contributors, these responses gave African American women a voice, providing them with a public forum in which they could finally react to and counter unflattering and offensive depictions of African American

life while also presenting evidence of their literacy and rhetorical prowess. Logan discusses the black press's commentary on political speeches as a way to both provide rhetorical education and to "[showcase] their rhetorical performances for the benefit of black and white readers skeptical about their abilities" (*Liberating* 128). The *Woman's Era* often praised speeches given by African American men and women, and they also often responded to what they saw as hypocritical rhetoric from a variety of sources, especially Christian publications and white Suffragists. Their praise drew attention to many successes of the race, reinforcing their presentation of a literate, talented African American public. Their critiques allowed them to enter conversations that concerned them but to which they had not been invited. The *Woman's Era* served as the first public space where African American women could continue the response work of other African American publications with particular attention to women's issues, ranging from domestic science to suffrage.

While smaller publications and African American publications accepted work written by African American women, larger, more commercial publications (and those that discussed the home and child rearing) were not as friendly. In the second volume of the *Woman's Era*, an anonymous author notes the silencing of black women in "The Open Court," a section composed of contributions from readers reflecting on or simply calling attention to texts and speeches published or given elsewhere. Responding to her article (published elsewhere) that had been cut to such a degree that she feared her intent was misunderstood, the anonymous author explains:

The policy of Mr. Edward Bok, editor of the Home Journal, is to accept such articles as have been deemed worthy, yet emanating from the pen of our women, but in two cases at least they have drawn out protests from the subscribers of the dominant race. Now the matter is of great interest to us as a race for the reason that we have long wondered why we could not secure space for good work in white journals, not yet able replies to attacks on our own race published in great monthlies of the country...The point for us to take heart is to inquire in other quarters whether protests are being made against the admission of our writers into the higher grade journals, and find out the remedy, if there be any, to offset this system of oppression, and if none, let us at least see the necessity of keeping our dollars at home and continue to build up our journals until they can compete with these from which we are being excluded. ("The Open Court" 21)⁵

5 No author is assigned to this column, but that may have been a mistake as Ruffin had previously referred to this incident as being presented to her by Mrs. Moswell who was the editor of "The Open Court" columns where this excerpt was published.

African American women subscribed to such publications; however, unless their experiences reflected those of the middle-class white women, those experiences were not important to these commercial publications. The *Woman's Era* presented the opposite message by challenging the limited views produced by major magazines like the *Ladies' Home Journal* and by providing a rhetorical forum where African American women could react to these other publications. These reactions provided the readers of the *Woman's Era* with an alternate womanhood, one that did not have to live up to the impossible standards of publications like the *Ladies' Home Journal*. Within the pages of the periodical, African American women could read: literary fiction with African American women as main characters; domestic science columns that recognized the limits of class; Club News from African American women's clubs all over the country; editorials on political issues that faced African American women, such as "The Problems of the Unemployed" and "Woman's Place"; articles that condemned "Apologists for Lynching"; recurring columns like "Health and Beauty from Exercise" and "Literature Department"; reports on various meetings and public events; and "Chats with Girls," a column they could share with their daughters. The *Woman's Era's* combined a variety of content found in women's magazines, newspapers, and the Black Press, creating a publication that not only intended to help produce well-rounded African American women but that also served as a space for the invention of African American womanhood in the public, the private, and all the spaces in between.

The *Woman's Era* was published monthly in Boston, and while primarily funded by Ruffin, it charged a small subscription fee. A single issue cost ten cents, a year's subscription cost a dollar, and clubs could purchase 100 copies for seven dollars. The *LHJ* subscription rates were the same in 1894, though they did not offer clubs discounted rates. This is unsurprising, as editor Edward W. Bok felt that "the self-culture of women's clubs, which he described as 'unintelligent,' had done 'incalculable harm' by fostering 'what is jocularly known as woman's club knowledge but what is actually undigested, superficial knowledge that is worse than no knowledge at all'" (Gere 180). Since the *LHJ* relied on advertisements to make money, it is clear that Ruffin's intent was not financial gain; she could not possibly acquire the kind or amount of advertisement investments that the larger magazines could secure. The *Woman's Era* contained advertisements, though many of them offered premiums for readers who were able to secure the most subscriptions to the publication. The largest advertisement was from Atlanta University (see fig. 1), and most others were from small businesses in Boston (dressmakers, business advisors, condensed milk, etc.). It was also likely not a coincidence that Ruffin and Ridley chose to match their subscription rates to the rates of the more popular publication. In an editorial from 1895, Ruffin argues:

Thousands of colored women subscribe for the Ladies' Home Journal; hundreds of colored women are active in getting subscribers; and yet its editor tells Mrs. Moswell that he can not accept contributions to the columns of his paper from women known to be colored for fear of antagonizing his southern white subscribers. Think of this, you colored women whose dollars and efforts are going that this man may live in princely style; think of your money going to support in luxury [sic] the writers of that paper, while you hesitate to give ten cents toward the encouragement of writers of your own race! O, the pity of it! ("Editorial" 8)

This passage as well as the existence of columns like "Domestic Science" within the pages of the *Woman's Era* indicate that Ruffin, if not the entire editorial staff, saw the *LHJ* as their competition and perhaps even their rival. At that time, the *LHJ* had the largest distribution rate of any periodical in the country, and the editors' references to the publication indicate that many of these subscribers were African American women. Multiple editorials explicitly state their intention to take readers away from this publication and others like it. Ruffin and others involved in the publication of the *Woman's Era* clearly recognized the importance of creating a rhetorical space where African American women could find their own voice without the fear of rejection or of being so heavily edited that their original intent was lost. Their periodical provided this space for African American women, and in doing so they hoped to steal readers from the larger publications that presented womanhood as white and white alone. Their responses (particularly the domestic science column) recognized that race, class, and location impacted the kind of woman the reader could be. With that recognition came a resistance to the popular depictions of the ideal wife and mother, thus allowing for the creation of an African American womanhood that did not attempt to live up to an impossible ideal.

The "Domestic Science" column indicates that the editors and contributors were aware that their readers were diverse, and it further indicates that they were also interested in using the publication to help their readers improve their personal lives. The article begins with a description of the duties expected of a good wife and mother. After this detailed description, no doubt imitating domestic science columns from other publications, Ellen Dietrick recognizes the impossibility of this vision for most (if not all) women. Without explicitly mentioning race and class differences among women, Dietrick alludes to these identity markers saying, "without considering all the cost of imitation at once the woman with no fixed income, with many children and with no servants, strives to rival the other's expenditure" (Dietrick 6). The column then continues with a call for women to rely on one another to help with housework, telling the readers to develop community with one another in order to

make the domestic labor more bearable and possible. For example, the author encourages women's clubs to rotate laundry duties or even to co-purchase a laundry machine to help with the labor. These columns speak about African American women's lives in African American women's voices, providing readers with a realistic discussion of the home—one that focused on practical ways women could make housework more manageable.

The differences between the "Domestic Science" articles of the *Woman's Era* and those of the magazines and periodicals more frequently directed toward women during this time period would not have been lost on the readers. While not a "Domestic Science" article, "At Home With the Editor," by male *LHJ* editor Edward Bok, serves as a useful comparison because the *Woman's Era* explicitly opposed and critiqued this publication. In the February 1894 issue, his column reads:

when a woman loves a man she lives for him. From the moment she awakens in the morning until she closes her eyes at night a loving wife's thoughts are of her husband. All day she performs her duties with the thought of his pleasure uppermost in her mind, and his image in her heart. Nearly everything she does is with the thought of him. If she puts a dainty touch to a room she instinctively wonders what he will think of it when he comes home...When she plans the dinner his tastes are regarded first. What would he like best is her constant thought. She dresses her children, having in mind a little suggestion or thought which he may have dropped days, yes, even months ago...What honey is to a bee, a man's love is to his wife. It is her very existence—upon its knowledge she lives better, she does her chosen tasks more easily, she loves her children more; it makes her smile brighter and her laugh heartier, and it keeps her heart young. And considering what we men owe to women, it is, indeed, a very modest return that we offer them. (Bok 16)

It is this sort of column that the first published "Domestic Science" column in the *Woman's Era* was imitating—even mocking. The sharp contrast between the above passage and the following entry from the *Woman's Era*, however, is even more noteworthy:

The first result of a true training in domestic science is the gaining of courage to be one's own self, to live one's own life, to model one's own home in blissful independence of the rule of that social tyrant, Mrs. Grundy, the courage to have one's floors bare and serviceably painted, if one cannot afford a carpet in the first place, or the still greater expense of having a carpet properly and frequently renovated

thereafter. The courage to have sleeping-rooms and kitchen well and comfortably furnished and equipped, even if the parlor has to wait long for any furniture whatever. Here the domestic scientist is strong. Honest comfort and health she will have first, luxury, if it come at all must wait her perfect convenience. (Deitrick 6)⁶

The first difference between the two columns is the emphasis on self. The column from the *LHJ* emphasizes a woman's lack of agency—her devotion to and reliance on her husband and his needs to dictate her every decision and her happiness. The column from the *Woman's Era*, on the other hand, barely mentions the husband and instead encourages the housewife to be herself in spite of societal expectations for her to be an ideal wife, mother, and homemaker. The second difference between the two articles is the attention to how class differences will affect a woman's ability to live up to society's expectations. The patriarchal woman described in *LHJ* is one of privilege; Deitrick, however, is not willing to assume all of her readers have the same experiences. Consequently, while the content of the two articles is quite different, this comparison illustrates the significance of the *Woman's Era's* recognition of the differences among class, location, race, and ability, as well as the impact of these differences on everyday life. This recognition of difference and the rejection of the impossible standards perpetuated by the media (as seen in the example from Bok) present a counter-narrative for all women to embrace—a narrative that does not expect perfection but instead celebrates pragmatism.

The "Domestic Science" column indicates that the editors and contributors were not only aware that their readers were diverse and also indicates that they were interested in using the publication to help these women improve their personal lives. At a time when women were bombarded with media about how to be better wives and mothers in their own individual spheres, the *Woman's Era* took a different approach. This column illustrates the *Woman's Era's* desire to discuss all aspects of a woman's life. The publication's authors do not limit themselves to the political but instead include a recurring column devoted to the private lives of women. The "Domestic Science" column counters the dominant narratives about woman and the home while it encourages sisterhood among clubwomen. Deitrick further recommends that clubs work together to make housework less time-consuming. She provided tips that would not improve appearances or a husband's life but rather that would make a woman's work easier, more bearable, and less lonely. Dietrick's "Domestic Science" columns provide advice on how to make housework more efficient and affordable while also encouraging readers to think of themselves

6 Mrs. Grundy is a literary reference that began with Thomas Morton's *Speed the Plough* (1798) and became a well-known figure of domestic tyranny.

not as an individual woman working in the house alone but rather as community members that could improve their lives together.

In addition to providing a response to unrealistic and chauvinistic domestic pressures, the *Women's Era* was also interested in the fight against the racial violence in the South. A letter written by secretary Florida Ruffin Ridley, published in the Woman's Era Club's club notes, addresses Laura Ormiston Chant's (a white woman who spoke at a meeting of the Woman's Era Club) involvement in the defeat of an anti-lynching resolution at the National Council of the Unitarian Church:

We, the members of the Women's Era Club, believe we speak for the colored women of America. We have organized, as have our women everywhere, to help in the world's work, not only by endeavoring to uplift ourselves and our race, but by giving a helping hand and an encouraging word wherever they may be called for. As colored women, we have suffered and do suffer too much to be blind to the sufferings [sic] of others, but naturally, we are more keenly alive to our own sufferings than to others', and we feel that we would be false to ourselves, to our opportunities and to our race, should we keep silence [sic] in a case like this.... (Ridley 6)

This letter's claim that the WEC speaks both for themselves and for the women of their race illustrates their awareness that the black female perspective was different—even contrary to—the white woman's as a consequence of their own experiences and sufferings. Yet at the same time, this letter also does not claim to speak for the race as a whole but instead only for women of that race. This distinction illustrates an awareness of the intersectionality that Crenshaw discusses:

....the narratives of gender are based on the experience of white, middle-class women, and the narratives of race are based on the experience of Black men. The solution does not merely entail arguing for the multiplicity of identities or challenging essentialism generally. Instead, in [Anita] Hill's case, for example, it would have been necessary to answer those crucial aspects of her location that were erased, even by many of her advocates—that is, to state what difference her difference made. (1299)

In arguing that Chant's fight for lynch law in the defense of her gender's safety in the South ignores the actual problems of violence in the South, the Woman's Era Club posits that narratives of gender exclude narratives of race, particularly with the presentation of the following claim: "We feel assured and do truly believe that you opposed the resolution from a high moral standpoint,

but we also feel assured that your position on this subject is the result of influences entirely one-sided, and that you will it [sic] least be interested to hear the other side" (Ridley 6). Once again, the founders of the publication present their own awareness of how difference (in race in particular) influences people's understanding of gender and racial issues and the ways in which violence can be both social and systemic. Thus they argue for the recognition of their intersectionality that Chant's lack of recognition of such a multiplicity results in her inability to understand the reality of racial violence in the South. This lack of recognition results in her argument against the denouncement of the lynchings. Because she considers the lynching problem from only a gendered perspective, Chant failed to fully understand the situation, and, in doing so, she negatively impacted her previously good relationship with the members of the Woman's Era Club.

The import of the difference between Chant and the members and readers of the *Woman's Era* becomes more evident as the letter continues:

We know positively of case after case where innocent men have died horrible deaths; we know positively of cases that have been "made up"; we know positively of cases where black men have been lynched for white men's crimes. We know positively of black men murdered for insignificant offences. All that we ask for is justice, not mercy or palliation, simple justice, surely that is not too much for loyal citizens of a free country to demand. We do not pretend to say there are no black villains [sic]; baseness is not confined to race; we read with horror of two different colored girls who have recently been horribly assaulted by white men in the South. We should regret any lynchings of the offenders by black men, but we shall not have occasion; should these offenders receive any punishment, it will be a marvel. We do not brand the white race because of these many atrocities committed by white men, but because lynch law is not visited upon this class of offenders, we repudiate the claim that lynching is the natural and commendable outburst of a high-spirited people. We do not expect white women shall feel as deeply as we. We know of good and high-minded women made widows, of sweet and innocent children, fatherless, by a mob of unbridled men and boys "looking for fun." In their name we utter our solemn protest. For their sakes we call upon workers of humanity everywhere, if they can do nothing for us, in mercy's name not to raise their voices against us. (Ridley 6)

With this, the Woman's Era Club continued to argue that their dual position should be recognized, particularly by a white woman who had previously spent time with them only to later openly fight against racial justice. In not

arguing for the innocence of their race as a whole, but rather arguing for a legal system that condemned lynch law and required proof before violence, the women show that they are both defending the men of their race from narratives of rape and violence and, more importantly, asking for a legal system that deals with white and black violence in the same way. They reference two assaults of African American girls in the South in order to argue that violence against women does not automatically beget violence against men. Contrary to Chant's claims, lynch law is not a natural result of such violence. While gaining sympathy from their readers, the inclusion of this example also points out the hypocritical logic used to defend racial violence in the South. They end with the recognition that white women will never fully understand the plight of the African American woman, further illustrating their awareness that difference influences perceptions of the world. This example presents compelling evidence for what the *Woman's Era* provided: a rhetorical space where black women could finally argue for both their race and their gender rather than one or the other, where they could speak not as black or as women but as black women, and where they could respond to and disagree with prominent white women whom they respected.

The editors were also vocal about their opinions concerning women's rights and Suffrage. In an editorial entitled "Woman's Place," the editors respond to two articles from the *Virginia Baptist* that "claim[ed] to prove through Bible authority that the only place for woman in the church is that of a singer and prayer, and that in teaching and preaching she (woman) is acting contrary to divine authority and that the exercise of the right of suffrage would be it [sic] deplorable climax to these transgressions" ("Woman's Place" 8).⁷ In this Editorial, the editors make their support for Suffrage clear: "It does seem sometimes that the best weapon to use against those who are so alarmed at the thought of woman losing her womanliness and sphere in the near future,

7 While no author is listed, the column is referred to as an Editorial, and it and the many other editorials mentioned throughout this article were written by editors Ruffin or Ridley. It is also possible, though never stated explicitly, that they wrote these editorials together. The other departments also sometimes lack clearly referenced authors, but the "Publisher's Announcement" notes the names of the departmental editors, and references throughout the publication indicate that these departmental editors wrote the columns in their department. Sometimes their names are listed twice within the column, once directly below the title and another after the word Editor. This indicates that they both edited the department and wrote the columns within the department. The *Woman's Era* Club's notes, published in the paper, also often provide the names of authors, as is the case for the first issue. This, of course, excludes the departments that welcomed submissions from around the country like the "Club News" section and "The Open Court."

is absolute silence; so few of the arguments of these people are worth answering and in so many cases does it seem beneath one's dignity to answer" ("Woman's Place" 8). After noting that those who posit Biblical arguments are all too willing to hold strictly to some scripture while ignoring other aspects that do not fit their needs, the editors continue:

It is according to law, gospel, history and common sense that woman's place is where she is needed and where she fits in and to say that the place will affect her womanliness is bosh; womanliness is an attribute not a condition, it is not supplied or withdrawn by surroundings, it may be lacking in the most feeble and protected woman, and strong in her who is the sole support of her little ones and has to fight the flesh, the devil and the world too, in their behalf. It is spurious womanliness that only manifests itself in certain surroundings...The weak effusive arguments against suffrage can have but one effect on the indifferent, and that is to turn them into suffragists so that by no mistake they may be counted among these remonstrants. The thing that strikes the readers more than anything else is the constantly repeated argument and fear that through suffrage woman will lose her womanliness, this is the strength of the opposition and it means only one of two things, either the opposition is weak or it is blind, in either case it merits little attention. ("Woman's Place" 8)

With this response, the *Woman's Era* indicates that they support women's suffrage, but also that they feel the argument for it is so strong (and that against it so weak) that it needs little attention. The inclusion of suffrage in the *Woman's Era* is important because it continues to value multiple aspects of the readers' identities, welcoming readers from a variety of places, classes, and races. This inclusion was essential to the publication's attempts to invent an African American womanhood. As opposed to the womanhood found in commercial publications, the *Woman's Era* presented womanhood as malleable and multifaceted, recognizing that womanhood could and would change with circumstance.

While the above reference to Suffrage did not mention racial differences, the next reference to the issue focused on race. In an editorial entitled "A Word to the A.A.W.," the editors ask the Association for the Advancement of Women and association president Julia Ward Howe to finally face the race question. They begin by recognizing how very different white women's lives were than their own:

The association stands now in an enviable position; it sees its labors crowned with much success, and very little standing in the way of

future efforts; it sees--as we all see--the almost boundless possibilities of the American white woman; it sees the especial consideration which she enjoys in this country, anything being possible to her except the act of voting, and her growing influence now almost unlimited. ("A Word" 8)

Following this recognition, they call for both white and black women to address the racial problems in the United States, recognizing that they must approach the problem differently:

In spite of this, it has been one of woman's strong points that she has put right before expediency, and we would suggest to the A.A.W. that they cast aside policy and expediency, and boldly face this race question. It is it [sic] question which they can not longer evade. We thoroughly believe that it is the women of America--black and white--who are to solve this race problem, and we do not ignore the duty of the black women in the matter. They must arouse, educate and advance themselves; they are to exert that influence through the homes, the schools and the churches that will build up an intelligent, industrious and moral people. Their duty is plain and must be done. But the white woman has a duty in the matter also; she must see to it that no obstructions are placed in the way of a weak, struggling people; She must no longer consent to be passive. We call upon her to take her stand. ("A Word" 8)

Here the editors call on white women to "take a stand," and they also identify themselves as a party interested in both Suffrage and racial uplift. With these words, they further define their own role in solving the race problem as different than that of the white woman or the black man. With this column, the *Woman's Era* continued to define the role of the African American woman by focusing on African American female strength (in both morals and intelligence) while presenting beautifully written and compelling rhetoric.

Within the pages of the *Woman's Era*, African American women created a rhetorical forum through which they could speak from their specific subject position while recognizing their race, gender, and other identity factors that contributed to their own unique perspective (be they of location, class, etc.). The combination of the "Domestic Science" column, the "Woman's Place" Editorial, the letter to Chant, and the call to the A.A.W. illustrates how African American women used this publication as a forum through which they could respond to both dominant ideologies and individuals' speeches and actions. Indeed, the Open Court's purpose was to allow people to respond to speeches and published writings from different perspectives. The editors and other contributors made their desire for such a space clear in their own recognition that

their perspectives had been limited by their own sufferings. Thus one of the primary functions and contributions of this publication was to allow for this creation of counter-narratives and responses that were not always welcome in other publications.

By combining specific aspects of a variety of genres, the *Woman's Era* addressed every aspect of female African American life. While it initially may appear that they were simply emulating other publications, further investigation shows that they carefully chose which aspects of other publications they needed to combine in order to invent the African American woman for themselves. In doing so, the publication countered narratives of suffragists that erased the black woman, narratives of woman's magazines that erased anyone who was not middle class, and narratives of Christians that ignored race. With this combination, they provided counter-narratives that, when read together, invented a new African American woman in print. This African American woman, created out of counter-narratives, served as a representation of who the readers and contributors were and who they should strive to be. In using rhetorical methods of response, the editors, writers, and readers of the *Woman's Era* invented their own African American woman unlike any other representation of her in print. Their African American woman was an activist who fought for her race, a teacher who actively sought education and knowledge, a suffragist who understood that oppression was not a problem unique to her kind, and a mother who did her best not only to raise her own children but to help her sisters with their families as well. Thus through their responses to other publications, the women who published in and edited the *Woman's Era* created a new intersectional identity for themselves and for African American women across the country.

A Collaborative Vision of the African American Woman

While these counter-narratives followed in the tradition of the black press, the *Woman's Era's* creation of a communication network did not. Beginning with the first issue, the *Woman's Era* welcomed "Club News" from across the country. However, the second issue asked for women to respond to three prompts, asking if there should be a national convention of African American women's clubs. This prompt brought forth many responses (including the epigraph above by Fannie Barrier Williams) and eventually led to a July 1895 conference held at Berkeley Hall in Boston. During this convention, the National Federation of Afro-American women was founded, and the *Woman's Era* became the official organ of the organization. In 1896, this federation would combine with the National League of Colored Women to form the National

Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACWC). The communication network that began with the *Woman's Era* continued to impact African American women for many, many years to come. The NACWC, who would adopt the publication as their national notes in 1896, eventually changed their name to the NACW. Mary Church Terrell, the first president of the NACWC, later proposed the formation of a council, and Mary Mcleod Bethune answered her call in 1935 with the formation of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW). The NCNW continues to "lead, develop, and advocate for women of African descent as they support their families and communities" today ("Mission").

Beginning with the eighth issue of Volume I (published in November of 1894), the *Woman's Era* opened new departments with editors from New York, Washington D.C., Chicago, Kansas City, Denver, and New Orleans. These new sections gave clubs from cities other than Boston a greater role in the production of the periodical, though other cities had been contributing letters, Club News, and even articles for many issues. The New York department was edited by Victoria Earle Matthews, the Washington section by Mary Church Terrell, and the Chicago department by Fannie Barrier Williams. While prominent and elite women edited the new departments (possibly decreasing the likelihood of less prominent women to publish their writing in the publication), their inclusion meant that women across the country were now formally collaborating to publish work on race and gender and to continue (and perhaps diversify) a public invention of African American womanhood. With this new organizational structure, women from other locations could now add to the vision of African American womanhood that had previously been presented primarily from Boston and cities nearby. These new sections focused on events and women from their city, and this broadened the vision of African American womanhood to include Southern women and women from as far west as Kansas City.

With the inclusion of these new departments, the *Woman's Era* began their most important endeavor yet: they created a public communication network among African American women. Endres and Lueck explain:

From temperance to abolitionism, from woman's rights to suffrage, from feminism to pacifism, women have worked within reform groups to change American society. Among these reform-minded women, an informal communication network developed. Sometimes these were as informal as conversations among like-minded women at the various reform meetings held in the nineteenth century. The temperance, abolitionist, and woman's rights movements were especially marked by this type of activity. Between meetings, women were forced to rely on the mails to retain these informal communication

networks alive.... In general, these communication networks have been informal and have served women on a personal level, providing information, inspiration, and motivation. (Endres and Lueck xvi-ii).

Unlike the informal communication networks Endres and Lueck refer to, this communication network was quite formal. So while the *Woman's Era* utilized a common women's rhetorical practice by creating this network, they made it their own by publishing these communications for women all over the country to read. The published network then served as inspiration for African American women who had not yet been able to join such networks. The content of the *Woman's Era*, now edited by a variety of women in all different regions of the country, was intended to inform, inspire, and motivate the many rather than the few.

Further, the addition of departments from across the country created a collective similar to those associated with second wave feminism, creating a collaborative publication that unified thousands of women from cities across the country. Unaware of the *Woman's Era*, Endres and Lueck claim that "the preference for the collective is a recent development. The largest number of periodicals profiled in this book—and all the periodicals prior to 1960—had editorial staffs organized along traditional, hierarchical lines. An editor, working alone, made the editorial decisions on what would appear in the periodical" (xviii). While the *Woman's Era* began with a traditional editor and associate editor, the inclusion of editors from across the country can hardly be considered a traditional, hierarchical arrangement for the late nineteenth century. While the local departments were organized hierarchically, the national-level organization gave the editors of each department the power to decide what would appear in their sections—making this a collaborative publication too complex for the hierarchical classification. This collaboration allowed for a more inclusive vision of what it meant to be an African American woman, and it also fostered an understanding of womanhood as not a fixed quality one could have but rather as something a woman could mold and define for herself, depending upon her circumstances.

With the addition of these departments, the epideictic rhetoric that the *Woman's Era* frequently used in the first seven editions of the paper, especially in columns like "Women Worth Knowing," became more diverse. These columns and others celebrated the accomplishments of African American women, from the literary to the musical. With the addition of departments edited by women all over the country, this epideictic/ceremonial tradition became even more evident. In Victoria Earle's (someone who had herself been praised in the second issue of the *Woman's Era*) entry in the ninth issue, she praises a variety of women from New York who would begin contributing to the New York department in the following issue. Mary Church Terrell's entry in the

same issue continues this tradition, celebrating an individual's appointment as the charge of nurses in the surgical department of Freedman's hospital as well as the efforts of some thirty women enrolled in a nursing course at the same hospital. Indeed, the New Orleans column, edited by Alice Ruth Moore, celebrated women who had recently performed in New Orleans. Earle celebrated literary women, Terrell celebrated medically trained women, and Moore celebrated musical women. This variety illustrates how their differences in location affected their epideictic rhetoric and how their inclusion as editors made the *Woman's Era's* praises more diverse.

These examples of rhetorics of praise are just a few of the many found within the pages of the *Woman's Era*. Through epideictic rhetoric, the editors of each department continued to invent the African American woman for themselves and for the women of their race. In celebrating these women, they presented their readers (primarily African American women) with role models. They provided evidence that despite all of the factors working against them, African American women were successful in a variety of endeavors. By expanding to include editors from other cities, the *Woman's Era* presented its readers with six new examples of African American womanhood. Yet these women continued to provide more representations within their columns, celebrating the women from their cities and continuing to present a positive vision of the African American woman for its African American female readership.

This collaboration itself is remarkable. While other women (particularly suffragists) had been utilizing collaborative methods for production, they were often small collaborations conducted in person. The collaborators of the *Woman's Era*, on the other hand, were large in number and distributed across the country. The result of this collaboration was a prolific publication that spoke not to one issue but to many of the issues confronting African American women at the end of the century while also presenting a sustained argument about African American womanhood.

Building Their Own (Rhetorical) House

With the combination of a variety of genres and the later addition of a collaborative editorial body, the *Woman's Era* was not simply taking what had been done before and repurposing it for their own needs. They created something new. As Audre Lorde famously claimed in 1984:

Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference -- those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older -- know that survival is not an academic skill. It

is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. (113)

Nearly a century earlier, the members of the Woman's Era Club, *Woman's Era* editors Ruffin and Ridley, and later editors and contributors from across the country brought about genuine change with their publication. This change, however, cannot be quantified in new laws or other political (and patriarchal) understandings of change. The real change the *Woman's Era* created was in opportunity and vision. The publication created an opportunity for African American women to finally decide who they were for themselves. Through epideictic rhetoric and responses to a variety of work published elsewhere, the contributors and readers of the *Woman's Era* altered their own realities through the power of the written word. With the *Woman's Era*, African American women changed who they were and who they could be.

The columns, editorials, and social notes presented new narratives of African American womanhood that countered the negative, the impossible, and the incorrect. Moreover, the *Woman's Era* encouraged all women, black or white, poor or rich, married or single, to live the life that best suited them as long as, in doing so, they were actively attempting to "make the world better."⁸ As members of two oppressed groups, African American women found a new rhetorical forum through which they had a variety of opportunities that they did not have anywhere else. Their differences were emphasized rather than ignored and celebrated rather than scorned. Indeed, they were the very makings of a new rhetorical house for African American women: one they had created, one they had designed, and one with which they could continue their attempts to dismantle the master's house for years to come.

Learning from the Recovery of the Woman's Era

In 1896, the National Federation of Afro-American Women and the National League of Colored Women met and "consolidated their forces" as the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs. This organization celebrated their 118th anniversary in 2014 as the "oldest African-American secular organization in existence" (Records vii). In 1896 (with the third issue of Volume III), the *Woman's Era* became the "organ of the National Association of Colored

8 "Make the world better" was the motto of the Woman's Era Club, and this quote was taken from a speech given by Lucy Stone who had given one of her last speeches to the Woman's Era Club and was praised with a long article in their very first issue which ran shortly after Stone's death.

Women." In 1897, the *Woman's Era* changed its name to the *National Notes* because the original publication placed an incredible financial burden on Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin. The publication continued to "unite women and educate them in the science and techniques of reform" (Records x). Publication of the *National Notes* continued until July of 1935, when it ceased because of the Great Depression (Records xvi).

Although the *Woman's Era* relinquished the name of their publication to the NACWC in 1897, and thus was an official publication for only three years, the importance of this publication to African American women at the end of the nineteenth century is immeasurable. Ultimately, within the pages of the *Woman's Era* we find a collaborative rhetoric created not by a group of women writing a single text but through the combination of the arguments in many articles and by many authors throughout the entirety of a publication. All of the texts presented here do different things when read as individual arguments, but, when read together, they present a unified argument about African American womanhood: they argue that the African American woman is ethical, literate, active, and caring, and that beyond these foundations, circumstance alone dictate what she might achieve. The many women whose words we find in the *Woman's Era* further argue that together African American women across the country were the only ones with the ability and the right to define African American womanhood—a womanhood that, like womanhood more generally, was inherently diverse.

Enoch argues that "unarticulated assumptions...stand at the center of much historiographic work...[and] also have the potential to stand in the way of historiographic exploration and revision" (49). In "Changing Research Methods, Changing History: A Reflection on Language, Location, and Archive," she explains that alternate texts not written in English force us to revise our understanding of rhetorical education in the United States. With Enoch's discoveries in mind, this revision of the *Woman's Era's* history implicates another assumption that hinders our ability to revise histories. Despite research concerning collaboration by Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, Lindal Buchanan, Anne Ruggles Gere, and others, our individualistic biases continue to force us to look at texts and sites as unconnected, and these assumptions ignore a bigger picture. The *Woman's Era* shows us that texts can also be read together as different parts of a unified whole. Periodicals, especially those with political affiliations and activist goals, can be revisited not only as publications that contain arguments but also as rhetorical sites that present their own sustained, collective argument. In our continued efforts to revise women's (and other marginalized groups') rhetorical histories, our most challenging obstacle is to question our assumptions about what an argument is and how it is delivered. The *Woman's Era*, however, shows us that overcoming these obstacles and

finding alternative methods to understand and identify rhetorical practices can provide new ways to appreciate and uncover the rhetorical histories of the marginalized and the oppressed. These histories challenge us to reconsider who is part of the history of rhetoric and also erase false histories of voicelessness and replace those false histories with dynamic collaborative rhetorics that were once forgotten.

Works Cited

- "A Word to the A.A.W." Editorial. *The Woman's Era* [Boston, MA]. November 1894: 8. *Emory Women Writer Resource Project*. Beck Center, Woodruff Library, Emory University. Web. 11 Sep. 2015.
- Beasley, Maurine H. and Sheila J. Gibbons. *Taking Their Place: A Documentary History of Women and Journalism*. Washington D.C.: The American UP, 1993. Print.
- "Boston. The Woman's Era Club." *The Woman's Era* [Boston, MA]. 24 March 1894: 4. *Emory Women Writer Resource Project*. Beck Center, Woodruff Library, Emory University. Web. 11 Sep. 2015.
- Bok, Edward W. "At Home with the Editor." *The Ladies' Home Journal*. February 1894: 16. Print.
- Brock, Edward Elmore. "Women Worth Knowing." *The Woman's Era* [Boston, MA]. 24 September 1894: 1. *Emory Women Writer Resource Project*. Beck Center, Woodruff Library, Emory University. Web. 11 Sep. 2015.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991): 1241-1299. Print.
- Deitrick, Ellen. "Domestic Science." *The Woman's Era* [Boston, MA]. 24 March 1894: 6. *Emory Women Writer Resource Project*. Beck Center, Woodruff Library, Emory University. Web. 11 Sep. 2015.
- Earle, Victoria. "New York." *The Woman's Era* [Boston, MA]. December 1894: 4. *Emory Women Writer Resource Project*. Beck Center, Woodruff Library, Emory University. Web. 11 Sep. 2015.
- "Editorial." *The Woman's Era* [Boston, MA]. April 1895: 8-9. *Emory Women Writer Resource Project*. Beck Center, Woodruff Library, Emory University. Web. 11 Sep. 2015.

- Endres, Kathleen L., and Therese L. Lueck eds. *Women's Periodicals in the United States: Social and Political Issues*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996. Print.
- Enoch, Jessica. "Changing Research Methods, Changing History: A Reflection on Language, Location, and Archive." *Composition Studies* 38.2 (2010): 47-73. Print.
- Gere, Anne Ruggles. *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in U.S. Women's Clubs, 1880-1920*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1997. Print.
- "Greeting." Editorial. *The Woman's Era* [Boston, MA]. 24 March 1894: 8. *Emory Women Writer Resource Project*. Beck Center, Woodruff Library, Emory University. Web. 11 Sep. 2015.
- Hinnant, Amanda, and Berkley Hudson. "The Magazine Revolution, 1880-1920." *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture: Volume 6 US Popular Print Culture 1860-1920*. Ed. Christine Bold. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012. 113-132. Print.
- Logan, Shirley Wilson. *Liberating Language: Sites of Rhetorical Education in Nineteenth-Century Black America*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2008. Print.
- . *We are Coming: The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth Century Black Women*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1999. Print.
- Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde*. Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007. 110-114. Print.
- Lutes, Jean M. "Newspapers." *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture: Volume 6 US Popular Print Culture 1860-1920*. Ed. Christine Bold. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012. 97-112. Print.
- McHenry, Elizabeth. *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies*. Durham: Duke UP, 2002. Print.
- Moore, Alice Ruth. "Louisiana." *The Woman's Era* [Boston, MA]. December 1894: 14. *Emory Women Writer Resource Project*. Beck Center, Woodruff Library, Emory University. Web. 11 Sep. 2015.
- "Mission." *National Council of Negro Women, Inc.* National Council of Negro Women, Inc. Web. 11 Sep. 2015.
- "The Open Court." *The Woman's Era* [Boston, MA]. May 1895: 20. *Emory Women Writer Resource Project*. Beck Center, Woodruff Library, Emory University. Web. 11 Sep. 2015.

- Ridley, Florida Ruffin. "An Open Letter to Mrs. Laura Ormiston Chant." *The Woman's Era* [Boston, MA]. 1 June 1894: 5-6. *Emory Women Writer Resource Project*. Beck Center, Woodruff Library, Emory University. Web. 11 Sep. 2015.
- Royster, Jacqueline Jones, and Jean C. Williams. "History and the Spaces Left: African American Presence and Narratives of Composition Studies." *CCC* 50.4 (1999): 563-584. Print.
- Ruffin, Josephine St. Pierre. "Letter to Mrs. Cheney." 19 May 1896. MS. Anti-slavery collection. Boston Public Library Rare Books and Manuscripts Department, Boston. Print.
- . "Letter to Mrs. Cheney." 22 May 1896. MS. Anti-slavery Collection. Boston Public Library Rare Books and Manuscripts Department, Boston. Print.
- "Shall We Have a Convention of the Colored Women's Clubs, Leagues and Societies: What Prominent Women Have to Say." *The Woman's Era* [Boston, MA]. 1 June 1894: 4. *Emory Women Writer Resource Project*. Beck Center, Woodruff Library, Emory University. Web. 11 Sep. 2015.
- Streitmatter, Rodger. *Raising Her Voice: African-American Women Journalists Who Changed History*. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1994. Print.
- Terrell, Mary Church. "Washington." *The Woman's Era* [Boston, MA]. December 1894: 5. *Emory Women Writer Resource Project*. Beck Center, Woodruff Library, Emory University. Web. 11 Sep. 2015.
- Williams, Fannie Barrier. "Shall We Have a Convention of the Colored Women's Clubs, Leagues and Societies." *The Woman's Era* [Boston, MA]. 1 June 1894: 5. *Emory Women Writer Resource Project*. Beck Center, Woodruff Library, Emory University. Web. 11 Sep. 2015.

About the Author

Katherine Fredlund will begin a new position as Director of First-Year Writing and Assistant Professor of English at the University of Memphis in Fall 2016. Her work is forthcoming in College English and has appeared in Rhetoric Review, Feminist Teacher, and elsewhere. Her research combines her interests in historiography, women's rhetorical practices, and rhetorical and composition theory.

Finding the Grimké's in Charleston: Using Feminist Historiographic and Archival Research Methods to Build Public Memory

Amy Gerald

Abstract: *Developments in feminist historiographic and archival research methods have led to a stronger sense of Sarah and Angelina Grimké's rhetorical history in Charleston, essential to understanding their later ethos as public rhetors. Enoch and Jack (CE 2011) and Kirsch and Royster (CCC 2010) offer complementary meta-rhetorical stances that encourage an awareness of both how historical narratives are built and work upon the public and how the researcher's lived experience might enhance the process itself. Paired with a research narrative that culminates in a collaboration with the Charleston Museum to build a sense of public memory about the Grimké sisters, this article presents an expanded and more complex understanding of the Grimké's and the seeds of their rhetorical agency. Recovered through feminist rhetorical historiography, the Grimké sisters emerge from the skewed lens of historical tourism into clear focus as nascent social reformers.*

Keywords: *Grimké, Sarah Grimké, Angelina Grimké, public memory, Charleston, South Carolina, historiography, archive, archival research, rhetorical history, research narrative, rhetorical agency, feminist rhetorical historiography, historical tourism, social reformers, Kenneth Burke*

Sarah and Angelina Grimké, nineteenth century abolitionist agents and early women's rights activists, delivered nearly 100 speeches on their tour of New England, wrote public letters arguing for the right to speak out against the injustice of slavery, and lent their voices to the influential *American Slavery As It Is* (1839). While teaching women's rhetoric in South Carolina, I used Sarah's *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman* to show an early feminist statement on the social construction of gender and Angelina's "Speech in Pennsylvania Hall" to display rhetorical skill amidst the threat of mob violence. The more I taught with them, the more I wanted to know about what formed their character during childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood in Charleston, South Carolina. I became interested in uncovering what familial, social, religious, and educational influences contributed to the sisters' rhetorical agency as activists and reformers in the North. What was it about their early lives that influenced their thinking enough to leave all they knew and strike out alone? Diaries, letters, speeches, and essays provide

documentation of Sarah and Angelina's public lives in the North, after they had joined the Society of Friends in Philadelphia and later, when they worked with the American Anti-Slavery Society. Scholarly studies and biographies (Lerner, Lumpkin, Perry, Bushkovitch, Wilbanks, and Browne) contribute historical or rhetorical analyses of their time and work in the North, but there are few records of their early lives in the South.¹

In addition to reckoning with the paucity of primary material about the Grimké sisters' early lives, I was particularly disappointed to find that there had been almost no public acknowledgment of the Grimkés in their home town, a city famous for historical tourism. At the time I began my research, all I had found was their picture included in the Fort Sumter tour boat facility exhibit. Despite their role in history, or perhaps because of it, today, in this city of monuments, there is no monument to these women whose work helped to change the lives of all its citizens. Their widely circulated and influential anti-slavery appeals and their success as the first female anti-slavery agents gave them such notoriety that their pamphlets were burned, and they were warned never to return to Charleston.² The public opposition they faced during their lifetimes was followed over time by an erasure from Charleston public memory, remarkable in its completeness. Trying to locate young Sarah and Angelina in a time and place where women were mostly absent from public record, I read all I could find, researching archives and special collections and exploring historic sites. What I found was a silence so tenacious that it fueled my desire and subsequent efforts to insert the sisters into the public memory of Charleston, shifting my original goal of analyzing the sisters' early rhetorical influences to actually doing the rhetorical work of creating public memory.

1 Sarah's diary entries are dated from 1819-1836, when she was an adult, and detail her adult spiritual journey, rather than daily events or memories of childhood. A few remembrances of her childhood were written in 1827 (when she was 35), when she had been living in Philadelphia. Angelina burned some of her diaries, but in 2003 the University of South Carolina Press published her 1828-1835 diary entries (written when she was 23-30), which has proven helpful in understanding her intensely spiritual struggle as she made her decision to leave the south at the age of thirty. The limited knowledge of their youth that exists stems primarily from Catherine Birney's 1885 book, which does not document sources.

2 In *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers for Women's Rights and Abolition* (1967), Gerda Lerner claims that Appeal to the Christian Women of the Southern States (1836) "was publicly burned by the postmaster" and that the "Charleston police warned Mrs. Grimké that they had been instructed to prevent her daughter from ever visiting the city again. If she should attempt to come and elude the police, she would be arrested and imprisoned until she could be placed on a boat and sent North" (100).

This article tells the story of my work to find evidence of the Grimké sisters in eighteenth and nineteenth century Charleston in order to then build a sense of public memory about them and eventually collaborate with the Charleston Museum to create a display about the Grimké sisters in one of their family homes.

Recent developments in feminist historiographic and archival research methods offered valuable approaches that helped me negotiate the obstacles inherent in such recovery work. In "Remembering Sappho: New Perspectives on Teaching (and Writing) Women's Rhetorical History" (2011), Jessica Enoch and Jordynn Jack build upon the work of Cheryl Glenn, Krista Ratcliffe, and others to describe and model a new methodological direction in women's rhetorical history which asks researchers to look to the absences and the silences, the places where there are questions, rather than the places with ready answers. They say that the question "is not so much whether these women are remembered or forgotten, but how they are remembered and forgotten" (534). Given the public opposition to the Grimké sisters in nineteenth century Charleston as well as their absence from public memory today, these women seem to have been "forgotten" on purpose and possibly remembered only hesitantly and awkwardly today. For instance, an early twentieth century request for information about the sisters from Louisa Poppenheim, publisher of the *Keystone*, a magazine for women's groups across South Carolina, was met with this response from A.S. Salley, the secretary of the Historical Commission of South Carolina: "Those women were unbalanced mentally, morally, and socially, and the capable historical or literary critic of to-day would anywhere regard it as a case of hysteria [sic] to see them put down as exponents of the best in the South." Poppenheim was urged to "[k]ill the myth if you can and stick a steel pen charged with your brightest sarcasm into its carcass if you cannot kill it." This vehement reaction from a public official charged with protecting and promoting South Carolina's history suggests that the suppression of connections between the Grimké sisters and the South was at one time purposeful on an institutional level, not merely an accident of history. If public memory is the way a society views its history – a set of beliefs that are constructed by that society to help it understand itself, it can be inferred that, collectively, Charleston and South Carolina do not see and/or do not present the full picture of their important history. Part of what I still seek to do, then, is present details that provide a fuller, richer picture of early nineteenth century Charleston, South Carolina and this particular family. A more accurate historical narrative can influence the public memory, celebrating the fact that this town produced women of principle, intelligence, eloquence, and bravery and acknowledging and remedying the suppression of those same qualities in memory and into the future.

This article presents these historical details within the structure of a research narrative informed by and infused with a rhetorical (Burkean, feminist) analysis of selected documents, historic sites, tours, museums, and memorials that inform the public memory or lack thereof. One general result is a more complex understanding of the Grimké and Charleston, which extends to a better understanding of this time in U.S. history and the abolition and women's rights movements as well as of the twentieth and twenty-first century commemorative culture of the city. More specifically, though, the journey itself – the research and the public memory work -- shows in Charleston a deeply entrenched historical and cultural narrative created and communicated with a sort of linguistic “blinder” that prevents the acknowledgement of the assignment of value to the women who step outside of it. Reformers and activists on behalf of slaves and women, educated, logical, spiritual, and outspoken in their devotion to justice, Sarah and Angelina ended up on the unpopular or unromantic side of popular southern history – something I seek to change. In the process, I hope this article joins the conversation about feminist historiographic and archival research methodology, offering evidence to support the meta-rhetorical stance of Enoch and Jack. And, as always with rhetoric, this work points to the power, responsibility, and potential that come with word-work.

Maintaining a reflexive stance during the research process adds a layer to the investigation that can prove insightful as well. Addressing the articulation of methodology in feminist rhetorical practice, Gesa Kirsch and Jacqueline Jones Royster promote the concept of inquiry-based exploration of women's texts. In “Feminist Rhetorical Practices: In Search of Excellence” (2010) they describe the act of writing about the process of investigating archives. The reflexive quality of this type of feminist research focuses attention to the act of researching and examining archives and insists “that we pay attention to how lived experience shapes our perspectives as researchers and those of our subjects. . . . It entails an open stance, strategic contemplation, and creating a space where we can see and hold contradictions without rushing to immediate closure” (664). Like many colonial era historic sites, Charleston is full of such contradictions. To fully explore the material and rhetorical context found in its archives, historic homes, churches, public buildings, forts, gardens, memorials, and museums requires holding an open stance, without rushing to a twenty-first century judgment that limits our view. This hyper-aware, metacognitive approach to work in feminist historiography opened pathways for me that have led to a nuanced understanding of the Grimké of South Carolina, that not only provided insight into their eventual roles as rhetors and activists, but also has the potential to change the narrative about women in the South.

The Grimké's in the Public Memory

I am not the first to seek to focus the general public's attention on the Grimké sisters. After Angelina's death in 1879, her husband and fellow activist Theodore Weld published a memorial book containing funeral addresses by notable attendees, such as abolitionist and suffragist Lucy Stone. "Printed only for private circulation," the hardbound book also contains remembrances of Sarah's life and work as well as funeral remarks after her death in 1873 by William Lloyd Garrison. In 1885 their friend Catherine Birney published a biography, *The Grimké Sisters, Sarah and Angelina Grimké; The First American Women Advocates of Abolition and Woman's Rights*, seeking to "pay what tribute I might to the memory of two of the noblest women of the country" (preface). They were forgotten for almost a century, when another biography, *The Emancipation of Angelina Grimké*, was published by Katharine Du Pre Lumpkin in 1974. But it was Gerda Lerner's 1967 *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers for Women's Rights and Abolition* that became the touchstone for academic research on the Grimké's. Over the next few decades, as feminists worked to recover silenced female voices in history and literature, the Grimké's slowly found their way into college-level anthologies and articles that establish their contribution to feminist thought and to the rhetorical tradition of women's writing, speaking, and activism. Recovering these women has created a stronger sense of our national history with respect not only to the abolition and women's rights reform movements, but also to the study of the writing and rhetorical practices of nineteenth century American women, the role of the Society of Friends in social and political movements, and a glimpse into aspects of both southern and northern culture, social, and family life. We see a broader picture of the time period, the intensity of its political, economic, and social issues, the genre conventions used by the Grimké's and their contemporaries, and we start to see connections to our own lives and thoughts and, for me at least, a sense of wonder at the temerity and the sisterhood that bolstered their decisions and efforts.

Still, on the book jacket of educator Mary Bushkovitch's 1992 *The Grimké's of Charleston*, she writes that she was shocked to have never heard of them and "resolved to write a book about them so that no student, black or white, could even again say, 'I grew up in South Carolina without ever having heard of Sarah and Angelina Grimké.'" Yet here in 2016 I am reporting that my own South Carolinian students, black and white, say that they had never heard of them before my class. Despite a direct treatment of slavery and native populations, the current South Carolina Academic Social Studies Standards (2011) do not include the Grimké's, when they do include other abolitionists and other

South Carolina historical figures, primarily male.³ The Grimké sisters are recovered to an extent in post-secondary education, but k-12 students only encounter the sisters when individual teachers choose to integrate them, keeping the general public largely ignorant of their considerable contribution to history. Though Sue Monk Kidd's recent fictional treatment of young Sarah in *The Invention of Wings* (2014) has raised awareness, the question remains, why has there not been a more enduring, consistent, and wide-spread understanding of these important figures? Why academic interest has not filtered into public schools and public memory in South Carolina and elsewhere deserves attention if it is to be remedied.

Like other southern cities after the Civil War, Charleston experienced a long period of economic decline. Part of Charleston's effort to reverse this trend was to build a tourism industry, capitalizing on the city's history and architecture. In their study of the city's commemorative landscape and its indication of and implications for race relations, Ethan Kytle and Blain Roberts say that even more strongly than the design and placement of statues, designation of large portions of the city as an historic preservation district during the first half of the twentieth century allowed white, elite Charleston to control the way the city communicated its history and character (671-3). Preservation societies sought and received tax exemptions and federal funding for restoration of historically significant homes, and architectural review boards controlled specifications for improvements. "The private spaces of the white elite, in other words, became the sites of official public memory" (672). Kytle and Roberts describe this "historical erasure":

Keeping with the Colonial Revival fashion of their day, Charleston preservationists also emphasized the colonial and Revolutionary significance of the homes they guarded. . . . Not surprisingly, slavery was left out of the past these homes presented to visitors, despite the fact that slaves had built, lived in, and labored on the properties. . . . The promotional literature that accompanied this tourist boom featured a historical narrative that became—and essentially still is—the official history of Charleston. Guidebooks emphasized the opulence and social harmony of days gone by, while largely ignoring slavery. . . . By locating their historical memory in the built landscape of the city, and

3 When specific figures to be covered are included, abolitionists listed are: Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Frederick Douglas, William Lloyd Garrison and John Brown (fourth grade). South Carolina figures that are listed: John C. Calhoun, Francis Marion, Robert Smalls, Ben Tillman, Mary McLeod Bethune, and SC civil rights leaders Septima Poinsette Clark, Modjeska Monteith Simkins, and Matthew J. Perry (8th grade).

by teaching both locals and tourists how to navigate it, whites had removed the most troubling aspects of Charleston's past from its public spaces by the middle of the twentieth century. (672-3)

In essence, through its historic homes and buildings, whether private or made public for tours, and accompanying narratives found in books and heard on tours, Charleston has created a breathtakingly beautiful presentation of itself that, at best, glosses over its darker aspects, most notably slavery.

Today, Charleston's success in tourism is clear: *Condé Nast Traveler* named the city the top tourist destination in the world in 2012 and in the United States for the years 2011-2014. Citing the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture and the opening of the Old Slave Mart Museum in 2007, some journalists (Rothstein, Hambrick) speculate that the city is beginning to acknowledge its slave past, but they also point to its "long tradition of silence" and the need for "something more systematic" (Rothstein). In 2008 the Toni Morrison Foundation installed a Bench by the Road marker on nearby Sullivan's Island to mark the slave port of entry. Even the hotly contested Denmark Vesey monument broke ground, although in less central Hampton Park, rather than the more touristy Marion Square, as Kytte and Roberts remark.⁴ It is notable that following the publication of Kidd's novel, the Preservation Society of Charleston included an *Invention of Wings* tour in its fall tour of homes. While gratified over its popularity, tour guide Carol Ezell-Gilson worries that there won't be an enduring acknowledgment of the Grimkés. A Charleston native who went to school in the center of the historic district, Ezell-Gilson never heard of the Grimké sisters until one brief mention in the tour guide licensure study materials thirty years ago.⁵ And Kidd reports that she first learned of the sisters from a museum in New York and "was astonished to discover they were from Charleston, South Carolina, the same city in

4 Denmark Vesey was a free black man who planned a violent slave rebellion in Charleston in 1822. The plan failed and he and his followers were executed. Supporters of the monument portray him as a freedom fighter and opponents portray him as a terrorist. The project took eighteen years to complete and there were eruptions of public opposition at various stages in planning, securing the site, fundraising, unveiling, etc. Vesey historian Douglas Egerton remarks upon the "historical myopia" in Charleston that "bills itself as one of the nation's most historic cities" when unable to develop an understanding of the circumstances that lead people to attempt this violence. For an example of the two arguments, see Egerton, Douglas R. "Abolitionist or Terrorist?" *New York Times* 26 Feb. 2014. A25 and Hunter, Jack. "Denmark Vesey Was a Terrorist: Targeting innocent civilians is never justified, and shouldn't be honored" *Charleston City Paper* 10 Feb. 2010.

5 Ezell-Gilson, Carol, telephone conversation with author, January 9, 2015. Ezell-Gilson and her sister, Lee-Ann Bain created The Original Grimké Sisters Tour.

which I was then living" ("Conversation"). Time and again, those of us who stumble upon the story of these remarkable women and their family marvel at their absence from mainstream Charleston and South Carolina history. Most of the historic and tourist literature and landscape is still oddly silent on slavery as well, quite a feat for a city that saw the transport of 25 to 40 percent of the estimated 360,000-500,000 slaves that came to the United States (qtd. in Kytte and Roberts).

From a Burkean perspective, the Grimké sisters' absence—and, by extension, the absence of the notion of abolitionist sentiment in the nineteenth century South—perpetuates a limited sense of the city's history, "directing the attention" of the public away from slavery, abolition, and women's rights and toward the genteel architectural and colonial character of Charleston. Charleston's efforts to pull itself out of decline by purposefully going about making the "south of broad" area historic has, in essence, "white-washed" much of Charleston's history for its visitors and, decades later, for its residents. By choosing one set of memories to preserve, it is neglecting another. This Burkean perspective, the recognition of a narrative's tendency to "direct the attention" through one terministic screen, when paired with the feminist historiographic stance of looking at the absences/silences, can, in fact, reveal what is hidden, forgotten, or ignored. By noting what is there, how it is presented, and why, we can then look to that-which-is-not presented. An awareness of the rhetorical nature of the cityscape and its accompanying narrative, then, can shift the attention and, in fact, point the researcher *back* to the people, places, events, facts, and artifacts from which the attention was directed. And an examination of the rhetorical acts of historic preservation and (re)presentation points to possible motives, causes us to ask questions, and offers ways to create a more inclusive presentation of history.



Figure 1. Heyward Washington House Signage.



Figure 2. Heyward Washington House, 87 Church St., Charleston. Sarah Grimké lived here as a young child.

In Search of the Grimkés in Charleston: Sites of Erasure

Filled with questions, I began searching for the Grimkés on trips to Charleston and the surrounding low country. Upon a visit to Magnolia Plantation, a property whose house did not survive the Civil War, but whose remarkable gardens did, I watched an introductory film about the Drayton family who still owns the property, and the Rev. John Grimké Drayton, who began the gardens in the nineteenth century. The film indicated that this Drayton was a nephew of Angelina and Sarah. After the tour I asked the interpreter about the family connection, and she said that the Grimké townhouse was on Church Street in Charleston. Later, walking up and down Church Street for any sort of historic marker, I found the Heyward-Washington House, one of several historic homes in the city open to the public. I took the tour, hoping to hear something about the Grimké sisters, but there was no mention of them. Built in 1772, the house, beautifully and painstakingly restored to reflect a colonial-era Charleston home, is on the National Register of Historic Places because it was owned by Declaration of Independence signer Thomas Heyward, Jr., and because George Washington stayed there on his tour of the southern states in 1791. Thinking I may have had the wrong house, after the tour I asked the interpreter if the Grimkés ever lived there. She said yes, they did live there, after the Heyward family. Later, I confirmed through the National Historic Register website that in 1794 the home was sold to “a Mr. Grimké.”⁶ Though buoyed by my successful sleuthing, I became irritated by how difficult it was to find information on Sarah and Angelina in Charleston. All I had found so far were indirect, incidental indications of their presence in the area, mostly brought about by my own questioning. Why was this the case? Shouldn't a historic site include as many significant aspects of its history as possible? Is it not possible that some of the artifacts found on the property belonged to

6 Sarah, born in 1792, would have lived in the house from its purchase in 1794 until the family moved to the more spacious 321 E. Bay Street. Purchased from William Blake, a wealthy planter, the Bay Street home (built in 1789) now contains a law practice and the Historic Charleston Foundation holds a protective covenant on it. As with the Church Street house, the historic marker on the Bay Street house made no mention of the Grimkés, simply calling it “The Blake House.” I was able to find the house through the direction of descendant Bill Grimké-Drayton. I had been directed to two different locations (one further south on Bay Street and one on Tradd Street) before finding Bill's blog and contacting him.

Sarah, her parents or her siblings? Was it the patriarchal lens of so much of our written history that eclipsed Sarah and Angelina in favor of Heyward and his presidential houseguest?

The relative silence surrounding the Grimké sisters seemed incredible to me, given other historic sites' efforts to present a more inclusive picture of history today. For instance, Historic Jamestowne, Virginia, the site of the first permanent English settlement in North America, presents its story as a "coming together of people from three continents: Native American, English, and African," with the park's introductory film discussing the colony from each perspective in the three different voices. Another notable example of a straightforward presentation of the darker, uncomfortable aspects of our nation's history is "Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello: Paradox of Liberty" at the Smithsonian Institute's National Museum of American History in 2012, but now with the permanent exhibit at Monticello: "Landscape of Slavery: Mulberry Row at Monticello." Developed by the National Museum of African American History and Culture in conjunction with the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, it examines Jefferson's contradictions as a slave owner and shaper of our country's principles of liberty and equality, complicating and enriching our understanding of our American heritage. And while not integral to the primary house tours, it is notable that the major Charleston area plantations, such as Drayton Hall, have developed separate tours, exhibits, or educational programs about the experience of enslaved Africans.⁷ These are examples of historic sites whose managers, whether the National Park Service, historic society foundations, or private owners, have made the decision to present a fuller, albeit darker and more complex picture of history to the public, in essence shaping a public memory that not merely includes, but integrates the stories and perspectives of American Indians and enslaved Africans. Charleston has taken steps to include the African American experience, yet the story of the slave trade is not integrated into the fabric of the city today, as was the trade itself prior to the Civil War. The lives and contributions of women are blatantly absent and the

7 As of the writing of this article, Drayton Hall admissions now includes "Connections: Africa to America" program. Visitors may also see African American cemetery on site. Boone Hall admission now includes Black History In America Exhibit, The Slave Street and History Tour, and a seasonal program "Exploring The Gullah Culture." The "From Slavery to Freedom" tour is offered at an additional price at Magnolia Plantation, though regular admission price is lower than the others. Middleton Place admission includes "Beyond the Fields" walking tour.

absence of the Grimké sisters, in particular, deprives the public of strong female models for nonviolent resistance to slavery.⁸

Struck by these absences, I began to investigate in earnest this silence surrounding the Grimkés. Mindful of the ways humans use language to “direct the attention,” I began listening to as many people as possible. I threw myself into the city, listening to tour guides, tourists, librarians, archivists, and fellow researchers, always with the goal in mind to “find” the Grimkés in Charleston, to find rhetorical evidence of them. In particular, I listened for the language used to talk about them, when they were talked about.

Seeking the Grimkés in the Archives

My first stop was the College of Charleston Special Collections. There, the archivist showed me the few items they had at the time that mentioned the Grimké family: an 1830 circular for a Bible society, of which favorite brother Thomas was chair, and a 1797 letter to the judge, their father.⁹ In the catalog there did not seem to be anything directly referencing any female family members. As I was reading through the two items, a young man came in to request some materials. As he sat down to read, he asked me what I was researching. When I told him, he said that he knew who they were, but they were notorious and not subjects that were brought up. He turned out to be a carriage driver who was doing research to help him answer questions on his tours. That a tour guide in Charleston knew about the Grimkés but knew not to acknowledge them implies that the Grimkés are, in fact, ignored on purpose. Stunned, I wondered whether this was about projecting a more pleasant version of history for tourism, about racism and sexism, or about a circle-the-wagons mentality that stubbornly resists uncomfortable truths.

As I continued to look through the limited resources, I noticed that the letter to the judge mentioned that he was a resident of both Charleston and Union District. Knowing he had at least two plantations elsewhere, I thought I would try to identify the location of his property in Union District, thinking that

8 A notable exception to the lack of memorials to women is civil rights activist and educator Septima Poinsette Clark. Among other public acknowledgments, U.S. Highway 17 in Charleston is named the Septima P. Clark Parkway.

9 Since that visit, the College of Charleston Special Collections acquired several boxes of Grimké family papers. Among the many papers spanning subsequent generations, there is a letter written by Mary Smith Grimké that affirms some events from Angelina's diary, a letter from Sarah on the occasion of her father's death, and a letter from Angelina, much later, on the occasion of Sarah's death.

it could provide some insight into Sarah, who recounts staying at a country home in her remembrances. The archivists helped me find an 1825 map of South Carolina and I was surprised to see how far into the piedmont Union District (now Union County) sits (easily 200 miles from Charleston). While I was taking pictures of this map, the archivist brought out a book she described as "historical fiction." I was going to discount it, supposing that I could not glean anything useful about real life from historical fiction, but given the limited resources available I decided to at least flip through it. This decision to remain open to possibilities, rather than stay rigid to only what seemed obviously relevant, was a good one. This book turned out to be the Mary Bushkovitch book, in which she decries the absence of the Grimké sisters from public education. Warmed by the discovery of a kindred spirit, yet distressed at the lack of impact her book made in this town, I pressed on.

The College of Charleston online catalog lists resources at other cooperating sites, such as the Charleston County Public Library and the South Carolina Historical Society. There were Grimké family files at the SCHS¹⁰, so I made it my next stop. Knowing that archives are organized differently than libraries, my plan was to rely both on what I knew was there from prior catalog searches and on the expertise of the archivist, who suggested related files. I was first handed files of loose papers, which were newspaper and magazine articles that told the story of the Grimké sisters for public consumption. There did not seem to be anything I did not already know from prior reading, so I turned to a stack of microfilm. After wrestling with film after film of the judge's Revolutionary War supply requisitions, thinking I had run into another dead end, I was just about to pack it in, but I took a second look at one of the folders that contained twentieth century newspaper and magazine articles about the family. In that folder, I found a reprinted article from an 1831 edition of *The Charleston Courier* describing a carriage accident. A public drain near Church and Tradd streets fell in and spooked the horse, which took off down Tradd, turned the corner at Bay but was blocked by other carriages, turned the corner at Broad too quickly, and then tipped the carriage and crashed. Who was in the carriage? Mary Smith Grimké, called by the Courier "the venerable relict of the late Judge Grimké." According to the article, the carriage was "broken literally into fragments":

A crowd gathered, and took Mrs. Grimke, who was alone in the carriage, and the driver, from under the ruins, having most providentially

10 While administrative offices remain at the Fireproof Building, the archives themselves were moved to the climate-controlled College of Charleston Addressstone Library Special Collections in late 2014 – early 2015.

escaped with their lives, although Mrs. Grimke received a severe concussion on the head, and we understand is otherwise seriously injured. The driver is said to be so much injured in the spine as to endangered [sic] his life. ("Serious Accident")

This was the first piece of information I had found that I had not encountered in any other source. The discovery of the newspaper article, the first direct reference I saw to a female Grimké, sent me back into the loose paper files in hopes that a second look would reveal a small detail that may shed light on the sisters or provide a reference to a connected person or place that I could research further. Other than the microfilm pictures of the father's war correspondence, none of these files held original documents, but I thought that the path to recovering these women might be an indirect one, so I proceeded. Right away, I found typed copies of several family wills, one of which was the 1838 will of Mary Smith Grimké, in which "All the Rest and Residue of my Estate, I leave to be divided among my Daughters, inproportion [sic] to the amounts each received from their Father's Estate, that is to say, the one who received most from the said Estate, is to receive least from my Estate; and the one who received least is to receive most" (Grimké Family History and Genealogy Research Files). In other words, after having paid her debts, given her sons some cash, and given her daughters and son Henry some special, personal gifts, she bequeathed the remainder to her daughters in inverse proportion to how the judge's will read. Looking, then, at his will (1818), he gave from oldest son to youngest son, then oldest daughter to youngest. She not only gave to the girls first, youngest to oldest, but also makes the point of *remarking* that her order is the opposite of her husband's order. This spirit, to go against convention to take care of her girls, to even things out after her own death, provides great insight into her personality, her relationship with her children, and especially her thoughts on how their gender affected their lives. Clearly, she created her will with a sense of purposefulness beyond the norm, exercising her sense of agency to influence the future in the one legal means available to her as an upper class woman in the nineteenth century.¹¹ Her will broadens our conception of the character of Mary Smith Grimké: she had great regard for her children, she recognized gender inequities in the law, and she acted on principle with respect to her children. Sarah and Angelina went against convention every time they spoke in public, and also in many other aspects of their lives. Like their mother, they used the means they felt

11 It is also interesting to note that along with her son Henry as executor, she also names her five daughters as "executrixes." The judge had been a proponent of naming women as executrixes of wills, naming his wife sole executrix of his will in 1818.

were available to them to have a voice. This newfound understanding of Mary, a scion of Charleston society aligned at least in this one way with her feminist daughters, could help change assumptions about the agency of women in the nineteenth century South if included in the historical narrative.

As it was closing time at the archives, I reluctantly gathered my materials and headed outside. I made my way to a shaded bench in Washington Square and just sat still and thought. Kirsch and Royster encourage us to engage the materiality of the archive, to notice the process, to sit and revel in it, contemplate, reflect, and give ourselves a chance to notice what has "been there all along but unnoticed" (658). That is what I had done, was doing. As I sat in the park lined with statues and memorials of male war heroes, I was mindful of the difficulty of finding that article and those wills. Given the dearth of primary documents by or about women in this time period and location, if I had kept a narrow focus and eliminated anything that didn't mention Sarah and Angelina directly, I would have missed the newspaper article and possibly the wills, or the implication of what was in the wills. I could have safely drawn conclusions about the way women have been written out of history, but I would have missed evidence of Mary's sense of purpose and agency on behalf of her daughters. I was grateful that day for the guidance from theorists and methodologists in feminist historiography and for whoever had donated or compiled those files, so that I could, indeed, notice what had been there, all along.¹²

Directing my attention from what was not there to what *was* there allowed me to experience the archive as heuristic, affirming for me the need to be open to discovery, rather than narrowly focused, and to allow discovery to lead to new questions or to the modification of the original line of inquiry. Moving beyond the archive as repository and allowing its structure to lead inquiry should remind twenty first century researchers of the need to set aside limiting mindsets, remaining aware of all variables and positions and holding in our hands and minds all perspectives in order to remain open to possibilities. Kirsch and Royster call this *critical imagination*. They ask:

When we study women of the past, especially those whose voices have rarely been heard or studied by rhetoricians, how do we render their work and lives meaningfully? How do we honor their traditions? How do we transport ourselves back to the time and context in which

12 I later learned that these files were compiled by Mabel Webber, a genealogist and an editor of the SC Historical Magazine in the early 20th century. Greene, Harlan, Head, Special Collections, College of Charleston Addlestone Library, email, May 19, 2015.

they lived, knowing full well that it is not possible to see things from their vantage point? (648)

Their answer involves a rhetorical listening, a repeated, reflective listening to and for the women in their contexts with “an *ethos* of humility, respect, and care,” without returning to “our assumptions and expectations” (649). Acknowledging the difficulty of this task when faced with beliefs, customs, or opinions with which we do not agree, such as slavery and sexism, they advise us “to attend to our own levels of comfort and discomfort, to withhold quick judgment, to read and reread texts and interpret artifacts within the context of the women’s chronologies, to interrogate the extent to which our own presence, values, and attitudes shape our interpretations of historical figures and periods” (652), not, I believe, in order to deny that subjectivity, but to acknowledge it systematically as an essential part of the research process. Despite her daughters’ campaign to convince her to free her slaves, Mary Smith Grimké remained a slave owner all her life. Yet we can still withhold judgment long enough to recognize in her an awareness of gender inequality and a desire to act against it, and to speculate about this influence on her daughters. Perhaps it is not a surprise to find a copy of the Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s Letters in the Grimké estate inventory (Inventory). Creating an authentic public memory of the Grimké sisters will mean rendering Mary Smith Grimké in her complexity: slave owner, church member, wife, mother, grandmother, nascent feminist.

Seeking the Grimkés in Tour Narratives

The next day, I found it more difficult to remain open and reserve judgment about the selective memory being presented in Charleston. When I took a popular two-hour walking tour of the city, there was almost no discussion of the role of slavery or the role of women; the tour highlighted churches, houses of architectural interest, evidence of the old city wall, and the harbor, and the discussion was, indeed, about Charleston at its economic and cultural peak, leading up to the Revolutionary War. Even though the slave trade was ubiquitous in the colonial era, I believe most people connect slavery with the antebellum period (ie *Gone with the Wind*). So, the tour I took purposefully focused the attention away from the unpleasantness of slavery, the guide beginning the walk with the admonishment, “If you think you are going to see *Gone with the Wind*, you are wrong. Charleston is a colonial city.”

Peopled mostly by northern tourists (I know this because the tour guide asked us to introduce ourselves before we began walking), it was when we reached White Point Gardens when a woman asked about race relations in Charleston. The guide, a forty-year resident of Charleston originally from Connecticut, said it was as good as it is anywhere. The tourist commented that

it seemed hard to believe, because of slavery. The guide then remarked that arrogant northern abolitionists would speak of slavery, but they had never been to the South. I pointed out that Sarah and Angelina Grimké were abolitionists from Charleston and *did* give witness to the horrors of slavery. Acknowledging the Grimké's, the guide quickly backed tracked and said she was responding to the original question about race relations today. Stumbling through this exchange, the guide was clearly uncomfortable discussing slavery and race. She made the point that the original slave traders were Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch and that the English began trading to avoid paying tariffs to foreign countries. It was almost as if this information was meant to defray blame, rather than acknowledge complicity. Again, I found myself wondering at this reticence to "look the thing in the face." Is it a desire to "get past" slavery, to not be defined by its slave past? As a southerner, I can recognize this perspective as I can also see the stubborn resistance to the insistence from outsiders that the South acknowledge and deal substantively with its past. Yet, as Lerner says, "Such collective forgetting of the dark side of events is hurtful to the individual as well as to the entire society, because one cannot heal nor can one make better decisions in the future, if one evades responsibility for the consequences of past actions" (52). The frank presentation of slavery in the Jamestown settlement, the Jefferson exhibit, and even the Old Slave Mart Museum in Charleston more inclusively reframes the collective memory, as would a frank acknowledgement of the Grimké sisters and abolition.

Capitalizing on these native daughters could be a good thing for Charleston. If Sarah and Angelina were featured more prominently at Magnolia Plantation, on walking tours, and especially at the Heyward-Washington House they would appear as a natural, expected, and valued part of the historical landscape in Charleston. Their very absence is more glaring than would be their inclusion: it is this glaring absence that communicates a lingering world view that still marginalizes women who step outside of their gender and class roles to exercise their voice in civic reform, especially on behalf of the slave. Telling the Grimké sisters' story as groundbreaking thinkers and reformers in the early years of our nation would reframe the public memory of the sisters and affirm Charleston's importance to United States history in a way that is consistent with and would add depth to the current narrative of Charleston as a city of influence and culture.

Building Public Memory of the Grimké's with the Museum of Charleston

In light of the silences I encountered around the Grimké's, I was compelled to do something in a tangible way to increase the public memory of the Grimké's.



Figure 3. Grimké sisters display, Heyward Washington House.

Since museums and monuments are sites for the construction of public memory, one way I could help insert the Grimké into the public memory in Charleston was to approach the museum that runs the Heyward-Washington House. Known as America's first museum, the Charleston Museum was established in 1773 by the Charleston Library Society. Today, it is comprised of its

main location on Meeting Street, where it houses collections emphasizing Charleston's and coastal South Carolina's natural and material culture, such as textiles, silver, Revolutionary and Civil War artifacts, and prehistoric animal skeletons. It also operates two historic houses that are National Historic Landmarks, one of which is the Heyward-Washington House. Concerned by the lack of public acknowledgment of these women in Charleston in particular and South Carolina in general, my goal was to convince the museum to create a display of some sort in the Heyward-Washington House.

First, I wrote a rhetorically well-crafted letter to the director of the museum, opening with my appreciation of the Heyward-Washington House, and transitioning to my mission, rationale, and request. I used much of what I knew about persuasion: a pleasant and respectful exordium to make my audience amenable to my message; an *ethos*-building statement of fact, giving my audience information needed prior to making a decision, including a quick, hard-hitting list of the Grimké sisters' achievements to emphasize their importance in history and to show the level of my own research; a clear request/call to action that I connected to the museum's mission statement; a humble and helpful closing that left the door open for further conversation. I followed up with a phone call to the director, during which we set up a meeting that was to take place a couple of months later, after the holidays. At the long-anticipated meeting, which was attended by the director, the assistant director, and the chief interpreter of historic houses, we discussed my findings, interesting connections with their own research, and then my proposal. Pointing out that the purpose of the house was to show colonial life and furniture, the director still agreed to a small display in the house because of the sisters' historical significance. Assuring the staff that I could, indeed, write concise copy for displays, I offered to help. In the space of a few months, we worked together to place

in one of the two front rooms a picture of the sisters with some words about their achievements and the family connection to the house. The copy reads:

Charleston natives Sarah Moore Grimké and Angelina Emily Grimké Weld became noted abolitionists and women's rights activists. Their parents, Mary Moore Smith and Judge John F. Grimké, purchased this house from Thomas Heyward, Jr., in 1794. Sarah, born in 1792, lived here until the family moved in 1803 to another townhouse, at 321 East Bay Street. Angelina was born in 1805. As adults, the sisters moved to Philadelphia, joined the Society of Friends, and became the first female anti-slavery agents. Sarah wrote public letters condemning slavery and defending the rights of women. Angelina, a gifted speaker, was the first woman to speak to a legislative body in the United States.

The display is small, approximately 12 x 12 inches, and it is placed in a glass-fronted display shelf along with miniatures of the Heyward family, silver and china associated with the Heywards, and pictures of the house as it appeared prior to its restoration. It was a small step, but an important intervention into public memory since its presence can prompt the interpreters to comment on the sisters at the beginning of the tour.¹³ In addition, the museum updated its webpage for the house to name the judge as subsequent owner and father to Sarah and Angelina, though regrettably it lists "Angeline" and calls them abolitionists and "suffragettes."

A few months after its installation, I was in Charleston for another research trip and I decided to visit the Heyward-Washington House to see the display in person and test whether or not it would prompt the interpreter to discuss Sarah and Angelina. In fact, the interpreter on duty that day did not mention them when we were in the front room. When she asked if there were any questions, I asked her about the Grimké sisters. Her response was to wrinkle up her nose and state that she didn't like that the display was in the house. At that point I had told her that I was responsible for it being there, so she did not tell me exactly what was behind her disdain, although I think it had something to do with their physical appearance. Showing the sisters toward the ends of their lives, the images are the only ones readily available for reproduction. They look stern, tired, and are dressed plainly, and in my experience in giving visual presentations about the sisters, their unattractiveness always

13 Since the project began in the classroom, I kept it connected to the classroom, using the entire project and also the letter itself to teach rhetorical theory, rhetorical strategies, and research methods and to model real-life applications that make a difference in our communities.



Figure 4. Above: Front view of newly dedicated Blake Grimké House, 321 East Bay St. Both Sarah and Angelina lived here.

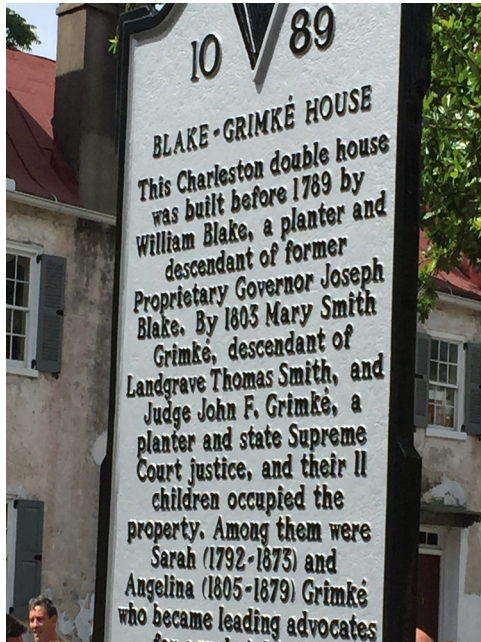


Figure 5. Right: Newly installed historical marker in front of the Blake-Grimké House.

gets a negative response that I feel I have to answer. My dander up, I said, "nevertheless, they are important to history, so it is important that they are in the house." I was crestfallen that they were not highlighted by the interpreter that day, whether because their appearance didn't match the beauty of the home or that their lives and vocation didn't match the narrative of the Southern lady. I learned that day that if something is not in the interpreters' notebook for the house, it isn't necessarily covered in the tour. If future steps involve asking that they be included in the notebook, how they are presented will be vital. Describing them as well-educated reformers, abolitionists, women's rights activists, daughters of a Revolutionary War patriot, and sisters of an educational reformer and unionist ties them to the narrative of the house as colonial, revolutionary, patriotic, and progressive. Yet, as with the Jefferson exhibit, it is also essential to deal with the clash of ideals of this family as slaveholders. Clearly, creating public memory is a multi-pronged, prolonged process involving a more sustained and comprehensive approach to promotion and education.

Conclusion: Seizing the Kairotic Moment

Capitalizing on the popularity of the Kidd novel, the Friends of the Library at the College of Charleston spearheaded an effort to erect a state historical marker at the Blake House, a later Grimké residence on Bay Street where much of the novel's action takes place. The dedication on May 5, 2015, coinciding nicely with the book's paperback release, was well-attended with remarks from Kidd and Mayor Riley. Yet, there is more work ahead. Seizing the kairotic moment could involve pursuing a similar acknowledgement at the Heyward-Washington House. Such permanent, visual sites infused with the authority of state and national agencies reframe the historic, civic, and tourist narrative in powerful ways, altering public memory over time. To have the Heyward-Washington House renamed the Heyward-Washington-Grimké House and to have the federal historic markers there corrected would help establish an enduring presence for the Grimké's in Charleston. This public legitimacy would do much to help the city present a rounder, more accurate, and more interesting picture of itself and whittle away at the sexism, classism, and racism that can be the only explanation for the rhetorical silent treatment that the Grimké sisters have suffered. Historical markers serve as interventions into the current narrative and can direct the attention toward women's contributions to history as well as to the power structure that undermined the sisters' agency at every turn – both important public acknowledgments.

Enoch and Jack say that the "rhetorical practice of remembering women can reshape ideas in the contemporary moment about who women have

been and who they might become" (534). We can reshape ideas today about the Grimké sisters by recovering Angelina and Sarah in Charleston: locating them in time, learning more about their lives and influences, and connecting these findings to who the sisters became and how they made their arguments. These were educated, reflective, spiritual, and spirited women who serve as examples of the best of this first generation of children born as United States citizens. Adding to our understanding of these women adds to our conception of women's rhetorical tradition in the United States and what is and has been possible for women.

In order to see more clearly this era of our collective history, we have to draw our attention to both the good and the bad and the Grimkés can be a vehicle for examining these contradictions. They were the offspring of a class of people in the South who kept other people enslaved, but at the same time fought for independence from Great Britain and shaped a new nation. Sarah and Angelina Grimké's early lives among these people, before they became public figures, is an important time period in which to flesh out their rhetorical history because their eventual position as Southerners within the abolitionist movement was so central to their success as rhetors. Their unique position as upper-class women from a slave-owning family, growing up in the thick of this society, allowed them to give first-hand accounts of punishments and degradations that other white abolitionists could not offer. Unable to deny the truth that they spoke, critics then attempted to dismiss their speeches on account of their gender, pointing to the audacity that women should speak in public at all. The characteristics, ideologies, inclinations, and talents that alienated them from family, home, and, later, the historical narrative of Charleston, were the very things that made them effective. In *Why History Matters: Life and Thought*, Gerda Lerner comments on women's relative absence from recorded history. She writes, "History is the archives of human experiences and of the thoughts of past generations; history is our collective memory" (52). When, however, "the history of women was . . . refracted through the lens of male observation and distorted through an interpretation based on patriarchal values," the result was an inaccurate, unbalanced picture of the past (53). The Grimké sisters, as seen through the skewed lens of historical tourism in Charleston, have been misfits – not fitting the colonial narrative emphasizing architecture, furniture, silver, cobblestone streets and old city walls. Shift that narrative to highlight the people who shaped our new nation, and the Grimké sisters come into clear focus.

Works Cited

- "About the Fireproof Building." South Carolina Historical Society.com. South Carolina Historical Society. n.d. Web. 2 Feb. 2014.
- "Bench by the Road Project." The Official Website of the Toni Morrison Society. The Toni Morrison Society. 2008. Web. 24 Jan. 2014.
- Birney, Catherine H. *The Grimké Sisters, Sarah and Angelina Grimké; The First American Women Advocates of Abolition and Woman's Rights*. Boston: Lee & Sheppard, 1885. Print.
- Bushkovitch, Mary Townsend McChesney. *The Grimké's of Charleston*. Greenville, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1992. Print.
- "City of Charleston Opens Old Slave Mart Museum." Charleston: Where History Lives. Charleston Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau. Nov. 2007. Web. 24 Jan. 2014.
- "Conversation with Sue Monk Kidd." Sue Monk Kidd. 2015. Web. June 20, 2015.
- Enoch, Jessica, and Jordynn Jack. "Remembering Sappho: New Perspectives on Teaching (and Writing) Women's Rhetorical History." CE 73.5 (May 2011): 518-537. Print.
- "Everybody Loves Charleston: Voted USA's No. 1 City For Third Consecutive Year." Condé Nast Traveler.com. Condé Nast. 15 Oct. 2013. Web. 24 Jan. 2014.
- Grimké, Angelina. *Walking By Faith: The Diary of Angelina Grimké 1828-1835*. Charles Wilbanks, ed. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003. Print.
- Grimké Family History and Genealogy Research Files. (30-4 Grimké) South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, SC. June 2012, Jan. 2013.
- Grimké, Mary Smith. Letter to Anna Grimké Frost. Box 1, Folder 10. MSS 0175. Grimké Family Papers, 1678-1977, circa 1990s. Special Collections College of Charleston Library, Charleston, SC. 7 Feb. 2014.
- Grimké, Thomas. Letter to Henry Grimké. Feb. 1818. Grimké Family Papers, 1761-1866. (1040.00) South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, SC. June 2012, Jan. 2013.
- "Heyward Washington House" National Register of Historic Places. National Park Service. n.d. Web. Feb. 1, 2014.
- Historic Jamestowne. Film. Preservation Virginia. Historic Jamestowne, Virginia. 1 July 2012.

- Inventory of the Estate of John Faucheraud Grimke, 1819. Charleston District, South Carolina Estate Inventories and Selected Bills of Sale, 1732-1872, Inventories and Appraisement Books, 1783-1846, Book F (1819-1824), Inventories of Estates, page 140.
- Kirsch, Gesa E., and Jacqueline J. Royster. "Feminist Rhetorical Practices: In Search of Excellence." *CCC* 61.4 (June 2010): 640-672. Print.
- Kyle, Ethan J., and Blain Roberts. "Looking the Thing in the Face: Slavery, Race, and the Commemorative Landscape in Charleston, South Carolina, 1865-2010." *Journal of Southern History* 78.3 (2012): 639-684. Print.
- Lerner, Gerda. *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers for Women's Rights and Abolition*. 1967. Rev. ed. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. Print.
- Lerner, Gerda. *Why History Matters: Life and Thought*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997. Print.
- Lumpkin, Katharine Du Pre. *The Emancipation of Angelina Grimké*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974.
- Mills, Robert. "Atlas of the State of South Carolina 1825" *Mill's Atlas 1st Ed.* SC Folio G 1305 M5 1825. Special Collections College of Charleston Library, Charleston, SC. June 2012.
- Rothstein, Edward. "Emancipating History." *New York Times.com*. New York Times, 11 Mar. 2011. Web. 24 Jan. 2014.
- Salley, Jr., A. S., Secretary, Historical Commission of South Carolina. Letter to Louisa B. Poppenheim, Feb 28, 1909, Box 2, Folder, Correspondence, 1900-1909 [no folder number specified], Louisa Bouknight Poppenheim and Mary Barnett correspondence, 1871-1955. Rubenstein Library, Duke University, Durham, N.C.
- "Serious Accident." Backward Glances: News Our Great-grandfathers Read in *The Charleston Courier* July 19, 1831. Grimké Family History and Genealogy Research Files. (30-4 Grimké) South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, SC. June 2012, Jan. 2013.
- "South Carolina Social Studies Academic Standards." South Carolina Department of Education, Columbia, SC. 18 Aug. 2011. Web. 18 Jan. 2014.
- Thomas, W. H. J. "Blake House on East Bay To Get New Lease On Life." *News and Courier* [Charleston] 9 May, 1968. 23A. *The Post and Courier Archive*. Web. 24 Jan. 2014.

Weld, Theodore Dwight. *In Memory: Angelina Grimké Weld*. Boston: Press of George H. Ellis, 1880. Print.

Wilbanks, Charles, ed. *Walking By Faith: The Diary of Angelina Grimké 1828-1835*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003. Print.

About the Author

Amy S. Gerald is an Associate Professor of English at Winthrop University who teaches courses in rhetoric, women's literature, and composition theory and pedagogy. Her scholarship lies in the intersection of feminism, rhetoric, and writing, with work appearing in journals such as *Composition Studies*, *Feminist Teacher*, *Journal of Advanced Composition* and in the collection *The Teacher's Body: Embodiment, Authority, and Identity in the Academy*. Amy earned her PhD from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

NeCamp, Samantha. *Adult Literacy & American Identity: The Moonlight Schools & Americanization Programs*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2014. Print.

Jane Greer

In *Adult Literacy & American Identity: The Moonlight Schools & Americanization Programs*, Samantha NeCamp brings together two educational movements that sought to resolve perceived literacy crises in the early twentieth century—the Moonlight Schools that were founded by Cora Wilson Stewart to provide basic literacy training to residents of Appalachia, and the Americanization programs that offered educational opportunities to immigrants. NeCamp draws upon sources ranging from Stewart’s voluminous correspondence held in Special Collections at the University of Kentucky, to textbooks and other pedagogical materials used in classrooms, to the published proceedings of the annual meetings of National Education Association (NEA), to diverse reports issued by state commissions and federal agencies concerned with illiteracy and adult education. More, though, than offering readers a richly contextualized sense of the shared histories of the Moonlight Schools and Americanization programs, *Adult Literacy & American Identity* usefully reminds contemporary literacy teachers of how our pedagogical programs and the institutions that support our work do not stand alone and may well be intertwined with a wide range of disparate educational enterprises. With such relationships in mind, NeCamp urges contemporary educators to pay careful attention to how discussions of our work, our qualifications as literacy teachers, and representations of our students enter broader public discourses.

NeCamp opens her study by establishing how literacy became linked with a sense of American-ness at the turn of the twentieth century. She notes that immigration patterns shifted between 1890 and 1910, with an increasing number of new arrivals to the U.S. tracing their roots to southern and eastern Europe. Marked as linguistically and educationally different from native-born U.S. citizens, these newest immigrants prompted both revisions to government policies and a re-mapping of identity based on language rather than country of birth. As NeCamp observes, being literate in English quickly “became a marker of assimilation, worthiness, and American identity, because literacy ‘stood in’ for racial and social difference” (2). Thus, educating immigrants and providing opportunities for them to become literate in English came to be

viewed as an essential tool for expunging difference, supporting democratic processes, and sustaining a unified sense of the nation as a whole.

Even as literacy education was being conjured as a tool for assimilating new immigrants, each decennial census from 1880 to 1910 underscored that native-born whites actually represented the greatest proportion of illiterates in the United States, including the residents of Appalachia (3). Without sacrificing nuance for brevity, NeCamp succinctly traces the paradoxical cultural construction of the Appalachian resident both as an “other” whose untamed, uneducated, and lawless nature marked him or her as different from the modern, rational American citizen and as a direct genealogical and cultural descendant of the nation’s earliest and most revered European settlers. As was the case with newly arriving immigrants, addressing the illiteracy rates of Appalachians thus became an “issue of cultural and racial defense” (9). For NeCamp, the rhetorics of crisis simultaneously surrounding the illiteracy of immigrants and Appalachian residents served as a warrant for placing in dialogue the Moonlight Schools and Americanization programs.

In chapter two, NeCamp offers readers a necessary and useful historical overview of the Moonlight Schools and the Americanization movement, and, in doing so, she forecasts the narrative arc of her argument. She begins with the 1911 founding of the Moonlight Schools in Rowan County, Kentucky, where Stewart served as county school superintendent. Under the tutelage of volunteer teachers, Moonlight School students developed basic writing and reading abilities (e.g., signing one’s name and writing checks, deciphering simple sentences and reading short passages related to agrarian life) in just eight weeks. A charismatic leader, Stewart used her success in Rowan County to launch a statewide “crusade” to end illiteracy under the auspices of the Kentucky Illiteracy Commission (KIC). Empowered by the adoption of the Moonlight School model in a variety of southern and western states and by the need to provide literacy education to soldiers being mobilized to fight in World War I, Stewart was able to take her crusade to the national stage. In 1918, she was asked to lead the NEA’s Illiteracy Committee, but she became increasingly frustrated as programs to educate immigrants garnered a greater share of public attention and funding (27-28). The professional educators who ran Americanization programs and founded what came to be called the field of adult education resisted both Stewart’s model of volunteer teachers providing students with the most basic abilities to read and write and her crusading rhetoric. Though Stewart successfully lobbied President Herbert Hoover to create a National Advisory Committee on Illiteracy (NACI) in 1929, the committee’s membership included a significant number of professional educators and educational researchers who were able to limit Stewart’s influence on the committee’s work. By 1933, Stewart retired from public life to focus on a

religious avocation, and, according to NeCamp, the vision of literacy education represented in the Moonlight Schools began to fade away (30).

The Americanization movement and the adult education programs it evolved into were far less centrally organized than the Moonlight Schools. Not aligned with a charismatic leader or singular program, opportunities for training in spoken and written English offered to immigrants were sponsored by businesses, including Ford Motor Company, trade unions, social service organizations, and state and city governments in the early decades of the twentieth century (31-35). With the outbreak of World War I came increasing pressure to bureaucratize and standardize literacy education for immigrants under the leadership of trained professionals. Such education was, after all, a matter of national security. But in the aftermath of World War I and with the passage of more restrictive immigration laws, the need for Americanization programs declined precipitously, and newly certified, professional literacy educators, faced an uncertain employment outlook. They thus began to adopt the broader mission of adult education, looking beyond the immigrant population and seeking to provide learning opportunities that were more ambitious than mastering the basic skills of speaking, reading, and writing in English (37-38).

In chapter three, readers have an opportunity to take a close look at the pedagogical agendas of the Moonlight Schools and various Americanization programs. Though both movements were taking up the highly influential ideas of John Dewey and his call for student-centered education, the pedagogical practices of these literacy programs were strikingly different (40). In authoring *The Country Life Readers* and other materials for Moonlight School students, Stewart was committed to creating texts that would capture the interest of beginning adult readers and writers. This is reflected in the topics Stewart chose for lessons (e.g., writing one's own name, new agricultural technologies, and value of creating and supporting civic institutions, like libraries and schools) as well her commitment to the "whole word" method of teaching literacy. Such a whole word approach was often grounded in conversation as the teacher introduced new ideas and new words to the student(s), and there was little concern for standardized spelling (51-53). By contrast, classes offered by many Americanization programs tended to favor phonics, an approach to literacy instruction that required students to develop phonemic awareness and then to understand the correspondence between sounds and spelling patterns. Though phonics instruction is perhaps initially less likely to engage students' interest, many literacy educators working with immigrants believed that this approach provided a necessary foundation so that students could eventually move beyond the basic literacy tasks necessary to secure employment as manual laborers (70-73). It is in her close work with pedagogical materials that NeCamp most powerfully makes her case for the value of placing seemingly

disparate but contemporary educational movements in dialogue with each other. After moving through NeCamp's analyses of the divergent pedagogical practices of the Moonlight Schools and Americanization programs, despite their common roots in Dewey's pedagogical philosophy, readers might well find themselves considering how their own classroom practices might be linked in surprising ways to the practices of other educators through complex social, cultural, political, economic, and intellectual genealogies.

In chapter four, NeCamp moves beyond classroom spaces and the pedagogical methods and materials deployed there. Turning her gaze to the public sphere, she documents how the Moonlight Schools and the Americanization movement presented their educational projects to fellow educators, funders, and policymakers. NeCamp makes the case that both Stewart and advocates of Americanization programs were most successful when their calls for funding and support were presented as a matter of cultural and racial defense, rather than as an issue of social justice or compassion (84). Moreover, NeCamp begins more precisely pinpointing in this public discourse the causes of Stewart's waning influence in educational circles. For NeCamp, Stewart's rhetorical choice to focus on the educational needs of "real" Americans (white and native born), despite the fact that Moonlight Schools existed in African American communities and on Native American reservations, created an unbridgeable gulf between the Moonlight Schools and Americanization programs. Stewart's inability to gain traction for her educational agenda was further exacerbated by her disdain for the ways in which the existing intellectual resources of immigrants, who might be quite accomplished as readers and writers of their native languages, were discounted in classes focused on phonics as the gateway to future academic opportunities (98-102).

Chapter five affords readers further opportunity to consider why Stewart and her Moonlight Schools receded from the national scene as the adult educators who traced their roots to Americanization programs gained ascendancy. The Moonlight Schools' reliance on volunteer teachers and commitment to the notion that any literate person could teach others to read and write was quickly eclipsed by rapidly escalating, government-endorsed standards of literacy. Such literacy standards required credentialed teachers, not well-intentioned, crusading volunteers. While Stewart relied on the personal testimony of students and volunteer teachers, mostly women, to document the good work of the Moonlight Schools, proponents of adult education, who had allied themselves with colleges and universities, were able to invoke research studies and scientific rhetoric to establish the efficacy of their pedagogical methods and chart the outcomes of their work (145-49). With only a tantalizingly brief acknowledgment of the gender dynamics involved in the processes of professionalization that overtook many occupations in the late nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries, NeCamp leaves open the door for further feminist analysis of the Moonlight Schools, Americanization programs, and the rise of adult education as a specialized endeavor requiring professional credentials (134). Perhaps not surprisingly, Stewart's most vocal and effective detractors were men committed to the professionalization of literacy instruction, including Robert Deming, chair of the NEA's Committee on Adult Education, and his successor, Lewis R. Alderman, as well as NACI chair M.S. Robertson, and the NACI's secretary, Rufus Weaver.

In her final chapter, "Implications and Conclusions," NeCamp drives home the case that the Moonlight Schools and the Americanization movement "spawned a rhetoric of literacy education that framed—and continues to frame—the disciplinary identity of literacy educators" (142). NeCamp rightly reminds today's teachers of reading and writing that we need to be aware of how we participate in the public representations of literacy education. She urges us to be particularly mindful about how we take up questions of teachers' qualifications to provide instruction in reading and writing, particularly as graduate students and part-time teachers are thrust into college composition classrooms with varied amounts of training and support. Moreover, she calls teachers of reading and writing to be fully cognizant that how we choose to describe literacy as a complex (or not so complex) task has implications for how the wider public conceives of our students, our institutions, and our nation.

In *Adult Literacy and American Identity*, Samantha NeCamp unequivocally makes the case for including the Moonlight Schools and Americanization programs within broader histories of literacy education. NeCamp also, though, presents readers with an invaluable opportunity to consider how the pedagogical programs that educators develop at particular moments in time do not exist in isolation from other educational endeavors and that pedagogies must be continually revised and (re)presented to the public in response to changing historical circumstances. By reconstructing the histories of the Moonlight Schools and Americanization programs in tandem, NeCamp ensures that the voices of diverse educational activists from the early twentieth century remain relevant for twenty-first century literacy educators as we continue the work of defining our place in the public's imagination.

About the Author

Jane Greer is Director of Undergraduate Research at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, where she also serves as Associate Professor English and Women's & Gender Studies. She is the co-editor, with Laurie Grobman, of *Pedagogies of Public Memory: Teaching Writing at Museums, Archives, and Memorials* (Routledge, 2015) and editor of *Girls and Literacy in America: Historical Perspectives to the Present* (ABC-Clio, 2003). Her research on the rhetorical practices of girls and women has appeared in *College English*, *College Composition and Communication*, *Women's Studies Quarterly*, and numerous edited collections.

Eble, Michelle F and Lynée Lewis Gaillet.
***Stories of Mentoring: Theory and Praxis.* West**
Lafayette: Parlor Press, 2008. Print.

Lisa Ede

For a scholar of my generation (Ohio State Ph.D. 1975) this fine collection of essays on the theory and praxis of mentoring in rhetoric and composition evokes strong memories. As an undergraduate student at Ohio State University I was lucky if I could find an advisor to talk with me about my schedule, much less a mentor. As a Ph.D. student, much of my mentoring came via informal peer networks. I remember one and only one formal mentoring experience during my years as a Ph.D. student, a meeting to help Ph.D. students getting ready to go on the job market to prepare. The only thing I remember from this meeting is a statement by Richard Altick—a distinguished and to my eyes somewhat scary Victorianist (he never spoke to me until the day after I passed my preliminary exams in that area)—that if he read a letter of application that misused the word “presently” he immediately threw that applicant’s letter in the trash. I still have a phobia about the correct usage of that term.

Two English department faculty members did play a key role in my development in graduate school, though at the time I would not have used the terms mentor and mentee to characterize our relationship. James Kincaid, my dissertation advisor, had the perfect (for me) blend of support and rigor. Susan Miller, who came to Ohio State to direct the writing program when I was completing my dissertation in Victorian literature, gave me leadership opportunities in the program’s Teaching Assistant Advisory Council and encouraged me to take a scholarly, as well as a pedagogical, interest in the teaching of writing.

I could narrate additional mentoring (or non-mentoring) stories from my career as an academic, but I will just note that in the 40 years since I received my Ph.D., it was only recently that my department established a formal peer mentoring program for tenure-line faculty. This says something important, I believe, about the need for and value of *Stories of Mentoring*, which breaks new ground in its exploration of this topic and its role in our field.

I hope my trip down memory lane, however abbreviated, does not seem self-indulgent. (The Victorianist in me can’t help noting that this is for you, dear reader, to decide). It is certainly in line with the commitment to stories—to

narrative—that is evident in Michelle F. Eble and Lynée Lewis Gaillet's *Stories of Mentoring: Theory and Praxis*. This is not to say that this collection is limited to stories. Stories do indeed play a powerful role, quite appropriately, in this inquiry, for they provide windows into the diverse forms of mentoring that can occur—and just how much can be at stake in mentoring relationships. But the essays included in this collection—the bulk of which are coauthored (more on this later)—also theorize and historicize. Many also raise powerful and thought-provoking questions about the role of power, authority, and control in mentoring and the potential benefits and challenges of formal mentoring systems.

Stories of Mentoring: Theory and Praxis builds upon earlier research by Theresa Enos and Janice Lauer, both of whom in the late 1990s challenged the master/apprentice model of mentoring and argued for the necessity of developing alternatives to this model. The editors of and contributors to *Stories of Mentoring* have clearly heeded their call. Many essays address this issue explicitly. Jenn Fishman and Andrea Lunsford's "Educating Jane," for instance, discusses their discomfort with the term "mentor"—they prefer the term "colleague to mentor"—and argue for mentoring that is "radically reciprocal, mutually supportive, and characterized both by trust and risk-taking" (29). The question of what constitutes appropriate and ethical power relations in mentoring situations is also addressed in Diane Ashe and Elizabeth Ervin's "Mentoring Friendships and the 'Reweaving of Authority,'" Doug Downs and Dayna Goldstein's "Chancing into Altruistic Mentoring," Barbara Cole and Arabella Lyon's "Mentor or Magician: Reciprocities, Existing Ideologies, and Reflections of a Discipline," Amy C. Kimme Hea and Susan N. Smith's "Transformative Mentoring: Thinking Critically about the Transition from Graduate School to Faculty through a Graduate-Level Teaching Experience Program," Krista Ratcliffe and Donna Decker Schuster's "Mentoring Toward Interdependency: 'Keeping It Real,'" Joan Mullin and Paula Brown's "The Reciprocal Nature of Successful Mentoring Relationships: Changing the Academic Culture," and Cinda Coggins Mosher and Mary Trachsel's "Panopticism? Or Just Paying Attention?"

Issues of control, power, authority, reciprocity, and risk are woven throughout this collection and constitute one of its strengths. But *Mentoring Stories* addresses other subjects, as the organization of this collection makes clear. Part I "Definitions and Tributes" comprises five essays, all but one of which—Winifred Bryan Horner's "On Mentoring"—were written by coauthors. In her essay, Horner reflects on her early experiences as a graduate student and young professor who was decidedly not mentored—but who over the course of her career mentored many, including Gaillet.

As Jennifer Clary-Lemon and Duane Roen point out in “Webs of Mentoring in Graduate School,” mentoring can extend outward in powerful ways. The mentoring relationships of Horner, Gaillet, and Eble are a good example of this phenomenon. As Eble notes in the essay that concludes the collection, “Reflections on Mentoring,” Horner’s mentoring of Gaillet was carried on via Gaillet’s mentoring of Eble. Together Eble and Gaillet created a mentoring program for new TA’s at Georgia State. And Eble now engages in a variety of formal and informal mentoring relationship at East Carolina University. The power of these and other experiences—such as the mentoring that takes place via the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition—led Eble and Gaillet to undertake *Mentoring Stories*, which itself represents a form of textual mentoring.

Three of the essays in Part I constitute multi-voiced reflections on mentoring webs. Some of these webs are grounded in particular places and times. In “Their Stories on Mentoring: Multiple Perspectives on Mentoring” Janice Lauer and seven former graduate students who entered Purdue’s program in 1994 weave together reflections on the multiple ways that mentoring (including peer mentoring) occurred and on the power of these relationships. Similarly, in “Mentorship, Collegiality, and Friendship: Making Our Mark as Professionals” Steven Bernhardt and nine former Ph.D. students from New Mexico State University (1988-2001) explore the relationships that sustained them during and after graduate school. But there are different kinds of mentoring webs, as “Wendy Bishop’s Legacy: A Tradition of Mentoring, a Call to Collaboration”—co-written by Anna Leahy, Stephanie Vanderslice, Kelli L. Custer, Jennifer Wells, Carol Ellis, Meredith Kate Brown, Dorinda Fox, and Amy Hodges Hamilton—demonstrates. Several of the authors of this essay, for instance, never met Bishop in person but instead communicated with her over email. Nevertheless, they emphasize, her mentoring was both essential and generous.

Part II “Mentoring Relationships” continues to explore the complex web that mentoring relationships can take. These explorations take diverse forms and are situated in a variety of contexts—from friendship, mothering, and collaborating to conducting research and observation. “Performing Professionalism: On Mentoring and Being Mentored” continues the emphasis in Part I of exploring situated mentoring webs: in this case the relationships among Cheryl Glenn and her former students Jessica Enoch and Wendy Sharer. In another essay in this section, “Mentor, May I Mother?,” Catherine Gabor, Stacia Dunn Neeley, and Carrie Shively Leverenz look at the role of mentoring in the context of the decision of whether to bear children or not. The stakes, they argue, can be high, as the title of Carrie Shively Leverenz’s section of the essay attests: “I Guess,” Shively recounts after learning that she

is (as she and her husband wished) pregnant, “I’ll Never Be Andrea Lunsford.” (All three coauthors were mentored by Lunsford and emphasize her unqualified support during their pregnancies and afterward.) The final essay in this section, Doug Downs and Dayna Goldstein’s “Chancing Into Altruistic Mentoring” is particularly thought-provoking for the position the authors take about mentoring. While a number of other essays in the collection argue for the value and importance of formal mentoring systems (even as they acknowledge the tensions and contradictions that such systems can create), Downs and Goldstein argue against required, formal mentoring, observing that “To us this feels analogous to requiring volunteerism, establishing by fiat what may be best left to ecology and time” (149). Their essay describes how their relationship—that of an undergraduate and third year Ph.D. student—at the University of Utah developed.

Part III, “Mentoring in Undergraduate and Graduate Education,” continues the emphasis of Downs and Goldstein’s essay on the relationship between students and faculty mentors. As is the case throughout *Stories of Mentoring*, contributors discuss a variety of situations and mentoring relationships. Lisa Cahill, Susan Miller-Cochran, Veronica Pantoja, and Rochelle L. Rodrigo discuss “Graduate Student Writing Groups as Peer Mentoring Communities.” Angela Eaton and seven undergraduate students from her Introduction to Research Methods class describe a collaborative research project they undertook in “Mentoring Undergraduates in the Research Process: Perspectives from the Mentor and Mentees.” At the time this collection was published, this collaboration had resulted in “two student conference presentations, one national conference presentation, and an article manuscript currently under review” (159). Nancy A. Myers “Textual Mentors: Twenty-Five Years with The Writing Teacher’s Sourcebook” (hereafter TWTS) is particularly interesting for the way it expands conventional notions of mentoring. Myers narrates her connection with TWTS in her essay, observing that “For the publication of the first two . . . [editions] I was a member of the intended teacher-audience; for the last two, I was teacher-editor” (230).

Two central essays in Part III of *Stories of Mentoring* take on the issue of the opportunities and challenges that formal mentoring can pose. In “Webs of Mentoring in Graduate School” Duane Roen and Jennifer Clary-Lemon make a case for the value of formal mentoring relationships and projects. They also argue that mentoring should be viewed as a scholarly activity and that mentoring can and should be evaluated in systematic ways. Barbara Cole and Arabella Lyon do not necessarily disagree with Roen and Clary-Lemon, but in examining “a specific set of obstacles to forming mentoring relationships within an English composition practicum” they call attention to the challenges that a formal required mentoring program can face, such as potential conflicts

between some students' commitment to literary studies and their affiliation with the teaching of writing as new graduate students. Cole and Lyon's essay reminds readers of the role that ideological conflicts can play in mentoring efforts, and that "the process of becoming is a process of struggle and trail-blazing" (202).

Part IV "Mentoring in Writing Programs" appropriately is the concluding section in *Mentoring Stories*. For as Gaillet notes in the introduction to this collection, given their responsibility to train and mentor teaching assistants, writing program administrators (WPAs) have made particularly significant contributions to research on mentoring and mentoring programs. Several strands emerge in this section. Two of the essays—Alfred E. Guy, Jr. and Rita Melenczyk's "A New Paradigm for WPA Mentoring? The Case of New York University's Expository Writing Program" and Holly Ryan, David Reamer, and Theresa Enos's "Narrating Our Revision: A Mentoring Program's Evolution"—provide detailed case studies. Particularly valuable in both essays is the situated nature of the analysis, which emphasizes the importance of attending to local constraints and opportunities. Other essays continue the critique of the master/apprentice model of mentoring and emphasize the importance of reciprocity and trust. These include Krista Ratcliffe and Donna Decker Schuster's "Mentoring Toward Interdependency: 'Keeping It Real,'" Joan Mullin and Paula Braun's "The Reciprocal Nature of Successful Mentoring Relationships: Changing the Academic Culture," and Cinda Coggins Mosher and Mary Traschel's "Panopticism? Or Just Paying Attention?" The final essay in *Mentoring Stories*, Michelle F. Eble's "Reflections on Mentoring," describes the mentoring genealogy that in part motivated this collection: Win (to whom *Mentoring Stories* is dedicated) mentored Lynée, who mentored Michelle—and together they engendered other acts of mentoring, including the mentoring that Gaillet and Eble enacted as editors of this collection, which given the many scholars who will read and use it, itself represents a powerful form of textual mentoring.

In her essay Eble joins other contributors in arguing that effective mentoring—or what Lunsford and Fishman call collegial mentoring—is based on mutual benefit and respect. The essays in this collection demonstrate, I would argue, these two characteristics. Collectively, the essays in *Mentoring Stories* provide a rich portrait of collegial, reciprocal mentoring in action. In so doing, the collection clearly, as Eble notes, "moves beyond the common strategies and practices for professional development ... and provides new ways of thinking and reflecting on mentoring metaphors and historical uses of the term" (306).

The essays in this collection demonstrate respect in a number of ways. They are respectful of the necessity and power of stories—and of reflection

and of theoretical critique. They are respectful of the importance of attending to the politics of location (Adrienne Rich). As a reader, I appreciated the diverse contexts in which various analyses of mentoring were situated: Ph.D. programs, writing centers, writing programs, personal and professional friendships, textual mentoring, and more. As an advocate, with my friend and co-author Andrea Lunsford, of collaborative writing I was thrilled to see the high percentage of collaboratively authored essays in this collection. It is heartening to see the editors and authors of this collection enacting—performing—a critique of single authorship and the academic norms that support it. But equally important are the benefits that accrue when, as Gaillet notes in the introduction, “a chorale of seventy-eight voices ... depict current theories and practices of mentoring” (3). These voices sometimes speak generationally, and sometimes they speak out of a common experience, as (for instance) the graduate students writing with Janice Lauer and Steve Bernhardt do.

Collectively, these essays expand our notion of mentoring—stretching it to include mentoring via email (as in the case of Wendy Bishop) and textual mentoring (as in the case of Nancy A. Myers’ experience of textual mentoring via her engagement with *The Writing Teacher’s Sourcebook*). The essays also raise significant questions. What are the opportunities and challenges inherent in formal mentoring relationships and programs versus mentoring that happens in different ways—through friendship, for example? What would it take to successfully challenge the ideologies in the academy that disvalue mentoring as merely service: a good and nice thing (just as, alas, some view strong teaching as a good and nice thing), but in no way comparable to scholarly work?

Some questions strike me as particularly important—if also particularly challenging. Might there be ways in which formal mentoring programs (programs that are most often limited to Ph.D. students and tenure-line faculty) deepen the chasm that already exists between tenure-line and hope-to-be tenure-line scholars and contingent and adjunct faculty? In her essay, Eble acknowledges this issue, noting that *Stories of Mentoring* provides only a few options for those who don’t have access to mentoring” (309). Eble also calls attention to the need for more work on mentoring that focuses on “fostering mentoring relationships that occur across boundaries of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and disability” (309).

In raising questions such as these, and in assembling such a fine collection of essays, co-editors Michelle F. Eble and Lynée Lewis Gaillet carry on the work of such earlier scholars as Janice Lauer, Theresa Enos, and Win Horner—even as they and their authors chart new ground for future work on mentoring.

Works Cited

- Enos, Theresa. *Gender Roles and Faculty Lives in Rhetoric and Composition*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1996. Print.
- . "Mentoring—and (wo)mentoring—in Composition Studies." *Academic Advancement in Composition Studies: Scholarship, Publication, Promotion, Tenure*. Ed. Richard C. Gebhardt and Barbara Genelle Smith Gebhardt. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1997. 137-46. Print.
- Lauer, Janice. "Graduate Students as Active Members of the Profession: Some Questions for Mentoring." Ed. Gary A. Olson and Todd W. Taylor. *Publishing in Rhetoric and Composition*. Albany, NY: SUNY P, 1997. 229-36. Print.
- Rich, Adrienne. "Notes Toward a Politics of Location." *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose, 1979-1985*. New York: Norton, 1986. 210-31.
-

About the Author

Lisa Ede is Professor Emeritus at Oregon State University. She has authored, coauthored, edited, or coedited nine books. Her excellence in mentoring has been recognized by Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition through the establishment of the Lisa Ede Mentoring Award, an honor bestowed biennially to an individual or group with a career-record of mentorship, including formal and informal advising of students and colleagues; leadership in campus, professional, and/or local communities; and other activities that align with the overall mission and goals of the Coalition.

Harrison, Kimberly. *The Rhetoric of Rebel Women: Civil War Diaries and Confederate Persuasion*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2013. Print.

Molly Wertheimer

In *The Rhetoric of Rebel Women: Civil War Diaries and Confederate Persuasion*, Kimberly Harrison writes with several purposes: to provide more evidence of the growing feminist-inspired literature that rhetoric occurs in more places than merely public occasions; to reinforce that women's nineteenth-century rhetoric includes more than Northern white women speaking and writing in support of causes; to note that rhetoric includes both speech and silence; and to conclude that Southern white women of privilege during the Civil War and its aftermath used diaries to cultivate agency by critiquing past rhetorical encounters and rehearsing future ones. To accomplish her purposes, Harrison deftly reviews different literatures, including rhetoric and women's rhetorical activities, the South during the Civil War era and women's roles in it, and the validity of using diaries as evidence, given their uncertain purposes, uses, and intended audiences. Her work is a treasure trove for anyone working on scholarship in these or related areas.

Harrison bases her study on the diaries of over one hundred Southern white women from upper and middle classes. She recognizes how different these women writers were from each other, ranging in age, location, wealth, number of slaves owned, urban or rural, and so on. Yet despite their differences, they "shared ideological assumptions about societal structure and their place within it" (9). They assumed class and race privilege, as well as gender roles prescribed by patriarchy. Further, they shared something somewhat ephemeral—the expectation that Southerners should act with honor, an expectation difficult to enact during conditions of war. Harrison traces patterns within each author's periodic writings, allowing her to interpret any one woman's single entry within her own context.

Different readers, no doubt, will highlight different insights from Harrison's study. The most interesting insight for me was her observation and discussion of self-rhetorics in her diarists' writings. In her introductory chapter, Harrison explains what she means by self-rhetorics: "...I use the term 'self-rhetorics' to describe women's cultivation of agency and of a rhetorical self, as evidenced

and carried out by self-talk" (15-16). Moreover, she views the self "as a site for rhetorical negotiation of competing ideologies and material conditions" that reckons with "the possibilities and limitations" of one's identity or "self-definition." Importantly, she extends the notion of "self-rhetoric" beyond the self-talk aimed at identity-formation/negotiation and agency-cultivation, to include self-talk that functions as an internal rehearsal of what to say, what to do, how to act with another or others during likely or anticipated encounters requiring rhetoric or persuasion. Self-rhetoric, therefore for Harrison, has at least the two-fold functions of 1) self-persuasion and 2) preparation of persuasion of others.

Harrison organizes her material by categorizing the situations about which Southern white women of privilege wrote. They wrote entries reflecting on past conversations they had or heard about and other entries where they considered what they could or should say (and not say) in future encounters. Recognizing that their roles were changing, with the absence of their men and the vicissitudes of war, these women nudged themselves into agency by talking to themselves in writing. Examples of agency development abound in *The Rhetoric of Rebel Women*. For example, consider a comment written by Eliza Fain, who after describing her interactions with Union soldiers, told herself "Every conversation I have with them tends to strengthen me" (72).

In chapter one: "Dangerous Words/Domestic Spaces: Invading Union Forces and Southern Women's Rhetorical Efforts in Self-Protection," Harrison categorizes some of the situations her diarists faced as encounters with Union officers and soldiers. She describes one type of encounter as causing diarists fear of pillaging soldiers who were looking for food, supplies, and plunder. The Southern world where these women were raised taught them to be genteel, obedient, and to expect their relationships with men to be civil, even chivalrous. Now, they were caught in new and unavoidable encounters that required them to stand their ground, protecting family members at home, their possessions, and their land. Sometimes, the best they could do was simply to exercise self-control and to remain silent, which constrained and frustrated them.

Harrison explores the strategies of resistance her diarists used to protect themselves, their families, and their property in chapter two: "A Ladylike Resistance? Finding the Time, Place, and Means for Voicing Political Allegiances." They knew that one wrong comment, expressing sympathy for the Confederacy openly or too strenuously, for example, could result in disaster such as being thrown in jail or having their homes burned to the ground. Southern elite white women turned to more subtle, indirect forms of resistance. They enacted their resistance in private or unofficial spaces, using tactics such as breaching the rules of etiquette with Union soldiers and

communicating their support of the Confederacy nonverbally by waving handkerchiefs and wearing the colors and emblems of the Confederacy on their clothing. They wrote letters of support to Southern soldiers and, of course, confided how they really felt in their diaries.

Harrison also categorizes Southern elite white women's interactions with family members and their communities, sometimes to conduct business and to communicate with freed slaves, detailed in chapter three: "Guarded Tongues/Secure Communities: Rhetorical Responsibilities and 'Everyday' Audiences." The war disrupted living arrangements and forced changes in location, driving relatives to live in more secure locations with family or in rented rooms. The diaries Harrison studied reveal a deep concern to keep the peace by moderating what they said and by their opting to remain silent during challenging situations. Business obligations fell to some of the women as they negotiated prices for crops and managed their slave labor. As the war progressed and slaves began to understand their new freedom, negotiating new relationships often became difficult.

Harrison categorizes the coping mechanism of prayer that her diarists used, which is detailed in chapter 4: "Public Voices/Divine Audiences: Confederate Women's Prayers during the Civil War." Many turned to God in church, at home, and in their diaries, pleading for their own safety, the safety of loved ones, and for Confederate victory. Prayers filled both spiritual and political functions. Women were asked to pray by religious leaders; popular literature also encouraged them to pray. One of the most interesting parts of this chapter is Harrison's discussion of how the diarists seemed to assume a causal connection between the earnestness of their prayers and the outcomes of the war.

When the Civil War ended, upper and middle class Southern white women had new rhetorical challenges: to accept defeat and to determine how best to talk with disillusioned family members returning from war, victorious Union soldiers still living among them, and newly freed slaves who threatened to leave their service. Those who lost their slaves often had to perform duties for which they were never trained such as cooking, cleaning, and even milking cows. Amid the changed circumstances and confusion of early Southern reconstruction, the diarists expressed their thoughts and feelings as they struggled to reclaim their old gender roles.

With each of the audiences and circumstances described in her five chapters, Harrison provides ample and nuanced examples drawn from the diaries. She provides rich details that help the reader understand the extraordinary and threatening circumstances these women faced and allows them to speak in their own voices—at once, halting, scared, defiant, determined—by quoting

passages from what they put down on paper. Harrison does this in a masterful way.

On a personal note, I wrote my Master's thesis on the question of whether rhetorical invention could include imaginings or fantasized alternative scenarios as preparation for persuasion. At the time, I believed that internal narratives depicted in novels could reveal elements of rhetorical invention, but it never occurred to me that a better source would have been diaries, wherein writers set down internal conversations and self-deliberations regarding different means to persuasion. Instead, I examined psychological theories ranging from psychoanalysis to pragmatism, but never really could find a way to write about the functions of internal talk—in words or pictures—as part of rhetorical problem-solving. I want to offer my sincerest thank you to Kimberly Harrison for pinning down the concept of self-rhetoric to include two meanings—agency construction and rhetorical rehearsal. Especially useful is the way she provides excerpts from her diarists' writings as evidence of internal rhetorical processes and activities and ties her insights to scholars such as Vicki Tolar Collins, Jean Nienkamp, and Kenneth Burke.

In her concluding chapter, Harrison suggests lines of research that are available to scholars who have an interest in filling the gaps in women's rhetorical histories to include non-traditional approaches—"strategic silences, choice of clothing, purposeful conversation, careful listening, and pointed gestures" (172)—as proposed by rhetorical scholars such as Cheryl Glenn, Carol Mattingly, Linda Buchanan, and Jane Donawerth. Harrison's book is well-conceived, meticulously researched, carefully contextualized, thoughtfully argued, deeply informative, and gracefully written. It is a must-read.

About the Author

Dr. Molly Wertheimer teaches courses in public speaking, rhetorical criticism, mass media and society, organizational communication, communication and conflict resolution, and women, the arts, and the humanities at Pennsylvania State University-Hazleton. She has edited and authored books and articles on women's rhetoric including *Inventing a Voice: The Rhetoric of American First Ladies of the 20th Century* (2004); *Listening to Their Voices: The Rhetorical Activities of Historical Women* (1997); and *Elizabeth Hanford Dole: Speaking from the Heart* (2004). She has guest edited a special issue of *Philosophy and Rhetoric on feminizing the philosophy of rhetoric* (2000). Presently, she is writing a book on the rhetoric of first lady autobiographies.

Eldred, Janet Carey. *Literate Zeal: Gender and the Making of a New Yorker Ethos*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2012. Print.

Sean Zwagerman

The central figure in Janet Carey Eldred's *Literate Zeal* is Katherine S. White, editor at the *New Yorker* magazine from 1925 to 1960. Long excerpts from White's correspondence with authors and with other *New Yorker* staff comprise so much of *Literate Zeal* that one may enjoy the book as an intimate and revealing epistolary biography of an important figure in twentieth-century American print culture. And *Literate Zeal* is indeed such a book, but Eldred clearly has more than that in mind, writing, "One can't simply make autobiography, memoir, and personal letters stand in for critical histories" (34). And as a critical history, *Literate Zeal* is a pointed intervention in the history of feminist media studies and a persuasive challenge to the popular conception of the *New Yorker* as the epitome of highbrow sophistication, worlds apart from popular (and thus lowbrow) women's magazines such as *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Vogue*, or *Mademoiselle*. As a work of feminist media studies, *Literate Zeal* "tread[s] the vast middle waters" between oversimplified binaries and sweeping polemical claims. Eldred respectfully—almost deferentially—challenges the assertion of late 1960s and 1970s feminism that all women's magazines are "irredeemably sexist," tools of patriarchy which keep their readers—like poor Marge Simpson, who looks up from her copy of *Better Homes than Yours* to see a fawn grazing in her living room—striving for a domestic ideal while feeling always that their own efforts are inadequate. But Eldred knows it would be just as extreme and fallacious to claim that feminism "created ex nihilo the fiction of Stepford wives" (35). And though Eldred will show that the brow heights of *New Yorker* readers and *Vogue* readers are not so different after all, it would be foolish to refute these misconceptions by claiming that "there is no difference between the *Paris Review* and *People Magazine*" (35).

By 1930, 23% of American magazine editors were women. As Eldred explains in the Introduction, a number of forces motivated women in the 1930s and 1940s to seek work as editors. More women were going to college, majoring in English, and feeling the simultaneous influence of careerism and progressive education, the latter elevating literacy to "a kind of secular faith" (21). And though the standard critique of the era's "glossy women's magazines" is

that they were “designed to lull readers into complacency and conformity” (18), Eldred argues that this critique only works if one discounts the motives and experiences of women editors, who zealously exercised their considerable literate agency in the interest of women’s issues, social causes, and the democratization of elite literature.

Chapter one, “Between the Sheets: Editing and the Making of a *New Yorker* Ethos,” engages the oxymoron in the previous sentence: the desire to popularize the exclusive. Eldred presents the *New Yorker* as a middlebrow publication with a highbrow “ethos,” a term Eldred defines as a rhetorically crafted place of identification. The *New Yorker’s* editors crafted its ethos, its character of place, as “simultaneously accessible and secure from infiltration” (47). As a businesswoman working for a magazine competing with “women’s magazines” to publish the best new literature, Katherine White sought to attract advertisers and increase circulation. As a savvy editor, White gave the *New Yorker’s* readers accessible, familiar, perspicuous, and often sentimental fiction and nonfiction, within a space whose ethos persuaded these readers that they were “sophisticated, highbrow, high-class, [and] supremely literate” (80). As a gifted rhetor, White flattered the genius of submitting authors while justifying the magazine’s often heavy-handed editing in the interest of clarity for the sake of “our rather straight forward and not esoteric public” (49, from a letter to Djuna Barnes). “In the pages of the magazine,” Eldred writes, “the editorial ‘we’ frequently alluded to the sophistication of its discerning audience. Between the sheets, the editors frequently drew a picture of a different audience, . . . one impatient with lengthy or difficult or challenging pieces” (49). “Oh I loathe it,” wrote editor-in-chief Harold Ross to White, regarding a poem by Louise Bogan. “I suspect she writes it with a dictionary, to gain superiority. Think she writes for poets, and the arty poets at that” (51–2). Though the *New Yorker* certainly published important literature, its audience was not those whom Dorothy Parker derided as “the booksie-wooksies” (“Words, Words, Words” 522).

Eldred’s spatial, community-centered definition of ethos bridges two understandings of “character”: character as the true self (the genius author), and character as something performed (the “original” work, in reality heavily edited and located within the ethos and the genres of the *New Yorker*). Over time, the *New Yorker* was increasingly criticized, by Corey Ford, Brendan Gill, and Tom Wolfe among others, on the grounds that its character had become caricature, its type of story all too typical: “self-analytical and pastel stories-without-plots,” as Ford described them (61). In this way, ethos is at the heart of both the possibilities and the potential problems of a magazine’s identity. For without some distinctive type (pun intended, I suppose), there cannot be a magazine. Something—and someone—must make the content coherent. The audience too, both invoked and addressed, must in some ways be typical. Yet

Katherine White took personally the criticism of the *New Yorker* and its types, and it consumed her to the point of distraction. For the criticism, as Eldred explains in Chapter two, targeted the *New Yorker's* now notorious editing practices, practices critical not only to the *New Yorker's* character but to the progressive zeal of its editors. And indeed, as the chapter title indicates, editing at the *New Yorker* involved "More Than Just Commas." Editors routinely made "significant changes in plot, character, dialog, or setting in order to align individual authorial vision with the *New Yorker's* editorial vision" (98). But were they editing away the voice and genius of "unspoiled literariness" (109)? Ross saw the editors "as collaborators free to make suggestions" (98). Some authors accepted, out of appreciation or economic necessity, the "collaboration." Others refused it and decided to publish elsewhere. Many of the latter, White wrote to Ross, "write so badly they haven't a leg to stand on but some write well and even the foreigners like to feel their individual style can be kept" (106). If this conversation about the *New Yorker's* editing practices is beginning to sound like a conversation about students' writing, Eldred herself notes that it "takes us to the edge of a central issue in rhetorical studies, the degree to which composition is (or should be) a product of individual genius or collaboration" (83).

Despite the omnipresence of Katherine White, the subject of gender has seemed mostly beside the point in the first two chapters. It returns as an explicit focus in Chapter three, "*Mademoiselle, the New Yorker, and Other Women's Magazines.*" To Eldred, the argument that the *New Yorker's* editing practices and its characteristic ethos "produced substandard literature" is a gendered argument, one which considers writing that is "in any degree collaborative" or is read by "middle-class consumers (women among them)" as "emasculated" (109). Eldred is after a more "complex appreciation" of *New Yorker* writing, and indeed the matter seems even more complex than her assertions here suggest. For one of Eldred's examples of particularly heavy and insistent editing involves White's work with the author Frances Gray Patton. But White states directly that her goal in this particular "collaboration" is to make Patton's writing "more masculine" (102). So while the stereotypical figure of authorial genius is certainly gendered masculine (Hemingway and Faulkner would accept no editorial queries [107]), it does not necessarily follow that all acts of collaboration must therefore emasculate the product. Yet *Literate Zeal* is less about disputing normative attitudes toward masculine and feminine writing than dismantling, with the *New Yorker* as the center of focus, the stereotypical distinctions between masculine and feminine magazines. This dismantling is thorough and persuasive. First, while many may think of Harold Ross as the embodiment of the *New Yorker*, the direct, hands-on influence of Katherine White and of resident grammarian Eleanor Gould made the *New Yorker*, in a quite literal and physical sense, a women's magazine. Second, the

New Yorker competed in the short story market with magazines like *Redbook* and *Mademoiselle*, the latter known for lighter editing and a willingness to take chances with more difficult or experimental fiction. Here the gendered terms and stereotypes are turned neatly on their heads: *Mademoiselle*, the “women’s magazine,” lets genius be, and confidently publishes less traditional, sentimental literature. Third, Eldred points to the prevalence in the *New Yorker* of advertisements targeting women and to the enduring popularity of Lois Long’s fashion column. So just as Eldred has challenged the class myth that the *New Yorker* is, compared to other large-circulation magazines, “an icon of literary sophistication,” she here upends the gender myth that “women’s magazines had no significant literary content” and “that the *New Yorker* is decidedly not a women’s magazine” (116).

Reviews sometimes criticize a book for not being a different book, or for omitting something which may in truth be more important to the reviewer than to the author or the argument. At the risk of doing that, I will say that I often found myself expecting the relationship between the *New Yorker*’s belletristic ethos and the belletristic tradition in rhetoric to receive more than a note in the introduction stating that belletrism is “a term from rhetoric” (vii). Eldred convincingly characterizes the *New Yorker* as “haute literacy” by showing that its content was similar to that of the fashionable women’s magazines and its purpose to that of progressivism. But to me, to use the word belletrism in a conversation about attitudes toward, and uses of, literature is to conjure the spirit of Hugh Blair. In his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), so influential on nineteenth-century higher education, Blair writes, “The most busy man, in the most active sphere” needs something to fill life’s “vacant spaces” (13). And what could be “more agreeable in itself, or more consonant in the dignity of the human mind, than in the entertainments of taste, and the study of polite literature?” (13–14). Blair could be describing the *New Yorker*, its haute literacy derived from an attitude toward literature as improving the reader but also as a “leisured commodity” (ix). And though it would be anachronistic—and wrong—to call Blair a progressivist educator, both his belletrism and the *New Yorker*’s share progressivism’s paradox: belles lettres cannot improve all minds or entertain all readers without ceasing to be belles lettres. As a former student of mine said in a discussion of Oprah’s book club, “If those people are reading *Beloved*, what’s the point of us being *here*?” It is a “correct and delicate” taste for literature, Blair asserts, that separates “the polished nations of Europe” (9) from “Hotentots” and “Laplanders” (20). *New Yorker* editors struck a delicate balance astride this paradox, inviting readers to feel sophisticated and discerning, and competing in the literary and advertising marketplace, all while maintaining an ethos of exclusivity and difference. This tension in both belletrism and progressivism can be seen in the contrast between the

rhetorical virtuosity of Katherine White's correspondence with authors, where she convinces them that their works of high genius might be just a touch too challenging for *New Yorker* readers, and the ethos—in the sense of a space—that the *New Yorker* created for its readers: an aspirational address of exclusive taste and class. Taste is the quality which distinguishes the sophisticate from the masses, and perspicuity—the quality Ross, White, Gould, and the other *New Yorker* editors worked so hard to present—is the most important element in rhetoric, according to belletrism (Winterowd 21). In response to criticism of the *New Yorker's* heavy-handed editing, White began to second-guess herself, wondering if the editors should make a distinction between amateur and professional writers. But what if they can't tell them apart? What if they are not able to "spot when a beginner ceases to be a beginner" (108)? And what if an amateur—especially possible if there really is a *New Yorker* type—is able to pretend to be a professional? This anxiety is belletrism's anxiety too: invention strategies like the *topoi* allow the student to become an effective rhetor "without any genius at all" (Blair 317). *Literate Zeal* locates the *New Yorker* within the context of other magazines, the rise of "the lady editor," and progressivist attitudes toward literature and literacy. As the fourth side of this location, the history of belletrism is comparatively underdeveloped.

On the other hand, it is a pleasure to read *Literate Zeal* with some knowledge of the history of rhetoric and see the spectre of Blair without having it pointed out each time. And a reader primarily interested in media studies or in the *New Yorker* itself might find a more thorough history of belletristic rhetoric largely uninteresting and unpleasurable. And this book *needs* to be interesting and pleasurable, not to mention perspicuous. To write about the *New Yorker* in ponderous academic prose would be a (rather ironic) rhetorical failure; to write in imitation of *New Yorker* style would seem precious and affected. In her introduction, Eldred provides a concise thesis for her book:

Drawing on histories of U.S. women's rhetoric and theories of literacy, I analyze archival sources to argue that editors, including many women editors, committed themselves with missionary zeal to a publishing culture in which high American letters became something to be consumed alongside haute couture. (x)

Anyone who has tried to succinctly yet thoroughly answer the question, "What is your book about?" knows how difficult it is. Yet right from the start, Eldred makes perspicuity look effortless.

Works Cited

- Blair, Hugh. *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. 7th American Ed. New York: E. Duyckinck, 1817. Print.
- Parker, Dorothy. "Words, Words, Words." *The Portable Dorothy Parker*. Ed. Marion Meade. New York: Penguin, 2006. Print.
- Winterowd, W. Ross. *A Teacher's Introduction to Composition in the Rhetorical Tradition*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1994. Print.
-

About the Author

Sean Zwagerman is an associate professor in the Department of English at Simon Fraser University. He is the author of *Wit's End: Women's Humor as Rhetorical and Performative Strategy (Pittsburgh 2010)* and essays on plagiarism, public attitudes toward composition, and the rhetoric of humor.

Peitho

The Journal of the Coalition of Women Scholars
in the History of Rhetoric & Composition

