

# Peitho

Spring / Summer 2015  
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The Journal of the Coalition of Women Scholars  
in the History of Rhetoric & Composition



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

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## Editors' Welcome

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In this issue of *Peitho*, 17.2, we have been able to feature humble kinds of creativity that women notice, produce, and celebrate. Thus, the issue's articles speak to how creativity and work construct and are constructed by materials we find close at hand--be they yarn, hair styles, alternative texts, or even the more abstract materials held in rhetorical concepts. The issue addresses the creative ways that work can be managed by canny reconstitution of its drudgery quotients at the same time as it testifies that creativity itself involves sustained attention and sometimes pushes us to work outside our normal societal lines.

Maureen Daly Goggin engages us with the rhetoricity found in public displays of yarn art in her "Joie de Fabriquer" as she shines light on the an aspect on the hand crafting movement--namely, yarn bombing for purposes of activist crafting. Arguing it is a form of graffiti, perpetrated by third-wave feminists as a way to call attention to uncomfortableness with some splits between labor and domestic skill, public and private, high and low arts, making and mending, to name some of binaries these remixings and repurposings challenge. Goggin challenges us to engage in gendered activisms in ways that subvert our increasingly too comfortable postmodern categories.

David Gold interrogates how fashioning bodies' work through activist hairstyling helped co-eds in the 1920s create identities that transform images of themselves and their societal power in his "Whose Hair Is It, Anyway?" He offers us portraits of young women who are changing societal norms through hair styling and loyalty to those simple refashionings of their bodies.

In "Mapping Topoi in the Rhetorical Gendering of Work," Sarah Hallenbeck and Michelle Smith argue that at least since the Industrial Revolution we can profitably examine the gendering of work through the topoi of duty, education, and technology. Using both contemporary and historical discussions, Hallenbeck and Smith cover such issues as women in corporate leadership, contingent labor, and welfare deadbeats as ways to articulate how gender and work circulate around and through these topically gathered issues, and assist us in gathering seemingly disparate discussions into a coherent collective.

In "A Community of Beloved Femmes" Ruth Osorio examines how the making and sharing of the zine *Femme Shark Communique #1* (and femme shark totem) called forth a new community of radical self love among lesbians of color in the San Francisco Bay area. The rhetorical enactments used, argues Osorio, include five overlapping and recursive (not linear) moves intended to elicit/make/support radical self love: cultivate exigency, self define, break the rules, unite, and mobilize. Ultimately Osorio shows how women of color and

of disabilities use zines and their impacts to dismantle racist aesthetics used against them, as they reach toward self love.

This issue also includes reviews of four books. Janelle Adsit weighs in on why we should read Geraldine Clifford's *Those Good Gertrudes: A Social History of Women Teachers in America*. Jessica Houf turns our attention from teachers to medical professionals in her discussion of Carolyn Skinner's *Women Physicians & Professional Ethos in Nineteenth-Century America. Studies in Rhetorics and Feminism*. In another turn G Patterson focuses our attention on religion by addressing *Renovating Rhetoric in Christian Tradition* edited by Elizabeth Vanderlei, Thomas Amorose, Beth Daniell, and Anne Ruggles Gere. In a final turn Jennifer Sano-Franchini interrogates diversity in the academy through *Bridging Cultures: International Women Faculty Transforming the US Academy* that has been edited by Sarah Robbins, Sabine Smith and Federica Santini.

Peitho remains committed to publishing quality book reviews as a way to promote feminist rhetorical scholarship in the field.

We also thank our reviewers who contributed generously to improving the work of the journal. Reviewers involved in volume 17 were: Risa Applegarth, Michelle Comstock, Jane Donaworth, Tarez Samra Graban, Karen Kopelson, Christine Masters, Lisa Mastrangelo, Lisa Meloncon, Kristen Moore, Alexis Ramsey-Tobienne, Clancy Ratliff, Liz Rohan, Amy Ferdinandt Stolley, Donna Strickland, Pamela Takayoshi, Jen Talbot, Christa Teston, and Jaclyn Wells.

We hope you enjoy this excitingly creative issue.

Jenny & Pat

## Joie de Fabriquer: The Rhetoricity of Yarn Bombing

Maureen Daly Goggin

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*Materiality in its many forms, and an intense devotion to the making of things, has renovated and reenergized the world of handcraft . . . While this change has given prominence to craft materials and techniques, the transformation has been most dramatic in the area of fiber, and quite possibly the most diverse in its manifestation.*

David McFadden

Since the end of the twentieth century and the turn into the new millennium, hand crafting has experienced a steep resurgence globally among both women and men, both young and old, both urban and rural. For many crafters, hand work is a dynamic response against the separation of labor and domestic skills, the split between public and private, the disconnection between mass made and handmade, the division between producers and consumers, and the other binaries rendered by modernity and the industrial age. As the Museum of Arts and Design mission statement for the exhibition *Pricked: Extreme Embroidery* points out in the epigraph; of all the art crafts revamped, fiber art crafts, what Jack Bratich and Heidi Brush call “fabriculture,” are among the most prominent. Why? No doubt part of the answer lies in the fact that “fiber is the oldest material manipulated by human beings for practical and aesthetic purposes and at the same time, the most ordinary and ubiquitous in daily life” (McFadden 1).

In this piece, I examine the rhetoricity—the material practices and rhetorical functions—of a specific kind of contemporary knitting and crocheting, namely, yarn bombing. Yarn bombing is a transnational street art that is popping up all over the world in unexpected places, for unexpected reasons, and toward unexpected ends.<sup>1</sup> Globally, women and men are taking up their knitting needles and crochet hooks to make political, social, cultural, aesthetic, artistic, and activist statements and arguments in urban, suburban, and rural public places. Throughout this essay, I have incorporated images—some as illustrations of yarn bombing and others as sources for a brief rhetorical analysis of one kind of yarn bombing—activist crafting.

As Figure 1 shows, some yarn bombing sites offer an aesthetic statement; covering the pillars and railing in knitted and crocheted pieces adds a fun decorative sparkle to an ancient bridge. This project was devised by the



Figure. 1: *The ancient Lana Bridge Yarn Bombed in Cesenatico, Italy by the Cesenatico Knitting Group, March 2014. Wikimedia Commons photograph by Sleppa. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license.*

Cesenatico Knitting Group in Italy and reveals planning of the color arrangement across the pillars moving from green in the middle in equal arrangement of colors to yellow at the end—a sign that this installation was undertaken with some thought, and that the yarn bombers had the time to arrange it equally, spreading the colors across with a particular design in mind.

The practice of covering “things” with hand knitted or crocheted yarn in outdoor urban, suburb, and rural places raises many questions: How is yarn bombing created? Why do people engage in yarn bombing? How does yarn bombing function rhetorically? What purposes does yarn bombing serve? Whom does yarn bombing serve? Why should we pay attention to yarn bombing as a material and rhetorical practice?

These rhetorical questions resonate with, but vary from, those Carole Blair suggests we ask in order to interrogate material rhetoric: “(1) What is the significance of the text’s material existence? (2) What are the apparatuses and degrees of durability displayed by the text? (3) What are the text’s modes or possibilities of reproduction or preservation? (4) What does the text do to (or with, or against) other texts? (5) How does the text act on people?” (33). Blair’s discussion of material rhetoric offers an important window onto the rhetoricity of yarn bombing. She defines rhetoric as “any partisan, meaningful,

consequential text, with ‘text’ understood broadly as a legible or readable event or object” (18). For Blair, the materiality of rhetoric serves as a counterpoint to the way rhetoric has been traditionally defined “according to its most ephemeral quality: its symbolicity” (18) as well as its purposefulness. Yet, as she points out, “rhetoric has material force beyond the goals, intentions, and motivations of its producers, and it is our responsibility as rhetoricians not just to acknowledge that, but to try to understand it” (22). To understand rhetoric’s materiality, Blair writes we ask “not just what a text means but, more generally, what it does; and we must not understand what it does as adhering strictly to what it was supposed to do” (23).<sup>2</sup> Given, as we will see, the nature of yarn bombing, some questions are easier to answer than others. But the answers to the questions I pose above should make clear how yarn bombing as a feminist material rhetoric can be understood in the way Blair recommends—“how the material, symbolic, and purposeful dimensions of rhetoric may interact, interfere, or intersect with one another” (50).

In this paper, I argue that yarn bombing is worth paying attention to because it is a postmodern, posthuman, postindustrial third-wave feminist rhetorical practice steeped in new roles for rhetors and interlocutors.



Figure 2: Yarn bombing in the Arnold Arboretum, Jamaica Plain, Boston, Massachusetts. May 27, 2013. Wikimedia Commons photograph by Daderot. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license.

## What is Yarn Bombing?

Yarn bombing is a form of graffiti. In fact, the term “bombing” in “yarn bombing” comes from graffiti slang, where “to bomb” is to spray paint one or more surfaces in free style or with a stencil (Cooper and Chalfant 27; Whitford 1).<sup>3</sup> Graffiti is, of course, an illegal practice—and so is yarn bombing. Also called yarn graffiti and yarn storming among other terms, the connection with *graffiti* underscores the rhetoricity of the practice of yarn bombing. The word “graffiti” comes from the Greek term γράφειν—*graphein*—meaning “to write.” In fact, “Writer” is a term of art for a graffiti artist, especially because early on and for many still, the main interest has been in creating attention-grabbing forms of alphabets. When the Iranian graffiti artist—the one credited with beginning the contemporary graffiti movement in Tehran—was asked about the meaning of graffiti, the artist named A1one (a.k.a. Tanha—a Hindi word meaning “a lonely heart”) said: “A drawing on the street is similar to a letter: It proves that there is a writer. Whether people want to receive this letter or not is a different question” (Uleshka). In other words, graffiti expresses meaning and confirms the presence and reality of a “maker” in a public space that is typically controlled by and reserved for those in power. Yarn bombers then are subalterns in relation to the spaces they bomb, grabbing the spaces to express all sorts of subversive meanings. Yarn bombing is a rhetorical act of material, symbolism, and purpose that requires a particular *techné*—an understanding of how to work with yarn and needles. Jennifer Edbauer notes of graffiti more generally: “Graffiti’s rhetoricity thus becomes saturated in/as discursive practices that respond to a particular context” (139).

Figures 2-4 reveal yarn bombings across different contexts and



Figure 3: Trees on Holy Isabel Street next to the Queen Sofia Museum in Madrid, Spain were yarn bombed. February 2012. Wikimedia photograph by Alvaro Leon. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license.

countries—a decorative, playful knitted piece covered in flowers stretched across a bench in the Arnold Arboretum in Boston, Massachusetts, a series of brightly covered trees along a major street in Madrid, Spain, and a clock tower covered in knitted squares with one adorned with a heart, another with the year 2013, and still another with the coat of arms for Hörde, Germany. The clock tower, *Schlanke Mathilde* (Lean Matilda), was rebuilt from historic images in 1983. Originally meant to represent a former mayor’s wife who was far from slim, it allegedly was installed to annoy the mayor. “Dressing” the Lean Matilda can thus be read as a somewhat ironic patriotic act. These pieces from different cultural contexts resonate with one another—a feature of yarn bombing around the world—and offer a glimpse of what yarn bombing typically looks like.

Knitting and crocheting by choice and for one’s own personal, if not political, reasons sums up yarn bombing well. Crafters hand knit or crochet pieces in various patterns and styles to cover anything from a parking meter to a motorcycle to a tree to an entire building. Thus, a yarn bombing can be as simple as a crocheted chain on a fence to something as complicated as different knitting stitches fitted together to cover something huge such as a vintage Whitehorse DC-3 plane—something the Yukon Yarn Bomb club accomplished in August 2012 (“Yukon”).<sup>4</sup>

Drawing on “thing theory,” I argue that yarn bombing such as those in Figures 2-4 can be understood to constitute a materialist epistemology, what Davis Baird has termed “thing knowledge...where the things we *make* bear knowledge of the world, on par with the words we speak [emphasis added]” (13).<sup>5</sup> Baird, a philosopher of science, argues



Figure 4: *Guerilla Knitting on Lean Mathilde in Hörde, Germany. March 2013. Wikimedia Commons photograph by Erich Ferdinand. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license.*

that we need to augment text-based theoretical knowledge with thing knowledge; that is, we need

an epistemology opposed to the notion that things we make are only instrumental to the articulation and justification of knowledge expressed in words or equations. Our things do this, but they do more. They bear knowledge themselves, and frequently enough the words we speak serve instrumentally in the articulation and justification of knowledge borne by things. (Baird 13).

Hence, materialist epistemology challenges the accepted notion that the things we make are only instrumental to the articulation and justification of theoretical knowledge expressed through discourse—whether words or numbers. Although Baird focuses on scientific things crafted by humans his point is equally valid for artistic things crafted by humans. Graffiti—whether yarn or paint—bears knowledge of the world and its maker(s); it expresses “thing knowledge” dynamically as yarn bombers craft installations, and audiences co-construct meaning from them. However, the “thing knowledge” is of a special kind since yarn bombing takes place in unexpected places that disrupt the *genius loci* of the place. In a word, yarn bombing is ironic.

In classical Roman times, *genius loci* referred to the resident spirit of a place and were represented in religious iconography by figures dedicated to specific protective or guardian spirits. Today *genius loci* refer to the distinctive character of a location. As Ivo Stecker, drawing on Norwegian architectural theorist Christian Norberg-Scholtz’s discussion of *genius loci*, states, “all places have character, that is, distinct features, for example, ‘festive,’ ‘solemn,’ or ‘protective’ for buildings. . . . [P]eople perceive the characteristics of their environment as a kind of ‘environmental image’ that provides them with orientation and a sense of security” (86). Even when a passerby does not “notice” a place (usually because it is *always* there to her), it nevertheless exerts an influence, for places are not static. As Danielle Endres and Samantha Senda-Cook note in “Location matters: The Rhetoric of Place in Protest,” “locations, bodies, words, visual symbols, experiences, memories, and dominant meanings all interact to make and remake place” (277). Typically these makings and remakings are part of a schema and as such are expected. Yarn bombing disrupts the schema of the *making* and *remaking* of place.

Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian Ott point out that “Place making, as a *techné* (or more accurately, a coordination of various *techné*) of public memory, thus becomes vital to any understanding of the means by which that memory is formed and by which it may be embraced” (25). They go on to argue that a memory place is an object of both attention and desire:

It is an object of attention because of its status as a place, recognizable and set apart from the undifferentiated space. But it is an object of *special* attention because of its self-nomination as a site of significant memory of and for a collective. The signifier commands attention, because it announces itself as a marker of collective identity. It is an object of desire because of its claim to represent, inspire, instruct, remind, admonish, exemplify, and/or offer the opportunity for affiliation and public identification. (25-26)

Yarn bombing draws special attention to the place, and depending on the purpose of the installation can inspire, instruct, admonish, exemplify or protest among other functions. Yet it departs from many kinds of memory places—war memorials (Bodnar; Calder; Blair, Balthrop, and Michel), grave stones (Sterckx; Wright), particular buildings (Bowman), and museums (Aoki, Dickinson, and Ott), to name a few—because it is unexpected, ephemeral, and disruptive. It is, like graffiti, most often done undercover anonymously. Thus, people do not typically go to see a yarn bombing (unless they have been tipped off about it) so much as stumble across it.

What does this rhetoric—yarn bombing—do? Yarn bombing installations offer what Kenneth Burke termed “perspective by incongruity” in that they disrupt patterns of expectations and experiences regarding both the use of yarn and the *genius loci* of public space. Clothing outdoor “things” in yarn disrupts the domestic use of yarn and the public use of space. As Burke explains, “perspective by incongruity” serves an invention device—a “method of gauging situations by verbal ‘atom cracking.’ That is, a word belongs by custom to a certain category—and by rational planning you wrench it loose and metaphorically apply it to a different category” (*Attitudes* 308). In *Philosophy of Literary Form* he defines perspective by incongruity as “a rational prodding or coaching of language so as to see around the corner of everyday usage” (400). As Abram Anders points out, perspective by incongruity thus serves as “a tool for challenging and reshaping the orientations through which we experience the world.” Perspective by incongruity is not a tool restricted to verbal language. Functioning through both words and images, “perspective by incongruity,” in Ross Wolin’s words, “pushes to the limit our ability to generate meaning and make sense of the world through rational, pragmatic means. Perspective by incongruity is a violation of piety for the sake of more firmly asserting the pious”<sup>6</sup> (76). This violation calls attention to itself to assert firmly the issue at stake in the yarn bombing—an issue that might be as crass and mundane as the marketing of a product,<sup>7</sup> to as sensitive and extraordinary as raising charitable funds to fight breast cancer, to as partisan and vigorous as protesting nuclear power.

## How is Yarn Bombing Created?

In this section, I focus on the *making* of yarn graffiti installations, from conception to installation and all the labor in between. Understanding yarn bombing as an act of rhetoric asks us to consider its full *officia*—invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. Although the ancients who introduced the canon never meant for it to be understood as separate linear acts, it is difficult to write about these as intricately interdependent as they are in practice. Thus, Blair, Dickson, and Ott remind us to take seriously “the relationships of invention and memory as they operate in conjunction” (32), and I’d add the relations of these two to those of arrangement, style and delivery as they all work in concert together. But here I begin with invention with the caveat that it is a function of analytical convenience to isolate it. What prompts one or a group to undertake the labor of yarn bombing? As Edbauer observes, “Before you are ‘called’ to write as a reaction or act of participation, you are ‘culled’ by writing into the (bodily) sensation of involvement. You are first *involved* in the writing, which allows for the ‘call’ to get heard in the first place” (139). What prompts yarn bombing—what calls it into being—varies tremendously according to different exigencies. For example, Magda Sayeg, founder of the guerrilla group Knitta, Please!, began by covering door handles, lamp posts, car antennae, and trees with yarn graffiti tags as a way to brighten up the drab dehumanizing urban streets of Houston. Knitta, Please! is a gang of young mothers and their name is an allusion to an O! Dirty Bastard song that “uses a pejorative term against black people—each member adopts a moniker such as AKrylik, PolyCotN, P-Knitty, LoopDog, or WoolFool” (Wills 63). Other groups such as the KnitRiot Collective (a group of guerrilla knitters from Los Angeles) are usually motivated by economic and political problems. In June 2012, outside the Bank of America on 1715 North Vermont Ave, in Los Feliz, California (an affluent neighborhood in Los Angeles, California, USA), the KnitRiot Collective hung 99 hand-knitted houses among the ficus trees to protest the foreclosure crises (“Los Feliz” 2012). Ironically titled HOMEsweetHOME, this yarn storming was intended to demonstrate solidarity among Americans who have lost or are losing their homes to foreclosures. On the back of the knitted houses, KnitRiot attached a tag urging viewers to call on banks and elected representatives in the State Assembly to vote in favor of the California Homeowners Bill of Rights, a bill to curtail illegal foreclosures. Calling on viewers to “stop supporting Big Banks” in favor of “ethical lending practices,” the tag offered information on how to apply for compensation after a foreclosure.<sup>8</sup> The leftwing political position of this knitting group is clear in both the visual rhetoric and the written rhetoric on their installation. Finally, a yarn bomber who participated with a group in the October 2012 Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign by yarn bombing a park with pink breasts was asked by an interviewer why yarn bombing; she replied: “Breast cancer doesn’t



Figure 5: *Knit the Bridge Installation on the Warhol Bridge, Pittsburgh, PA. 14 August 2013-10 September 2013.*

ask for permission, so neither did we" (Hayes). As Edbauer argues of graffiti as writing scenes, they "are overwhelmingly populated by bodies shocked, angry, delighted, and feeling-full bodies" (133).

The social dimension of yarn bombing—and other kinds of "making"—is crucial. Most yarn bombing is done in groups—both small and large—who work on the knitting and crocheting of pieces, put them up in public places, and de-install, if that is what is called for. In short, yarn bombing connects people, both those who do it and those who witness it. As David Gauntlett argues, "making is connecting" in at least three ways because:

- you have to connect things together (materials, ideas, or both) to make something;
- acts of creativity usually involve, at some point, a social dimension and connect us with other people;
- through making and sharing them in the world, we increase our engagement and connection with our social and physical environment (2).

Certainly there is a social meaning to creativity in making anything—whether you make something in or with a group or alone you when you work with a memory of a pattern shared with or made by another and then you pass it on to someone else. In other words, making connects throughout the five rhetorical canons, from inception through circulation of “materials, ideas, or both.”

The practice of knitting and crocheting today looks very similar and yet is very different from yarn work done ages ago. Yarn bombing calls attention to the radical paradigm shift in the *practice* of crocheting and knitting. In the words of one yarn bomber, in the past, “the expectation is that knitting has to be linked to something useful;” by contrast, yarn bombing is usually purely aesthetic with little or no tangible function. “So although a new group of young women [are] now engaging in the same type of activity that their great-grandmothers had engaged in some hundred years earlier [and that second-wave feminists by and large vehemently rejected], there [is] one very major difference: now, they [are] doing it by choice and for their own personal reasons” (Bot 36).

Most yarn bombing is crafted with left over yarns from other projects, or with yarn from UFOs (unfinished objects), or from recycled pieces bought from second hand stores or found in the attic. In some cases, when the installation is taken down, the pieces are donated to needy causes such as the homeless in Yukon installation. Yarn bombing, then, is typically a repurposing, recycling, and remixing process. It can take hours, days, weeks or months to plan and prepare for a yarn bombing. Once up, an installation may last a year, several months, weeks, days, hours, or even minutes.<sup>9</sup> For example, on August 10th and 11th, 2013, the Andy Warhol Bridge in Pittsburgh was yarn bombed. Amanda Gross, a local fiber artist, headed up the record-breaking “Knit the Bridge” public art installation on the 87-year-old, steel suspension bridge spanning the Allegheny River. Gross gathered 1,847 participants from around the city to spend fourteen months planning, fundraising, knitting and crocheting 580 hand-made 3” by 6” panels to cover the walkway of the bridge and 3,000 linear feet of knitting to cover the bridge towers. 337 volunteers installed the panels over two days in August for what is to date the largest recorded yarn bombing.

Just one month later on September 10, 2013, several hundred volunteers de-installed the yarn over two 15-hour days. Why do crafters engage in such an ephemeral practice?

## **Why do Yarn Bombers Engage in the Ephemeral?**

Yarn bombing is a temporal art. Before artists can de-install pieces, installations are often taken down by the public who see them as a nuisance, by the police who see them as vandalism, or even by those who see the whimsy of them and appreciate the art as well as the message but take them precisely because of those reasons. Given that it is unclear how long a piece will remain,

yarn bombers, like artists everywhere, are plainly more invested in the *process of creating* and *performing* an installation than in the finished product itself. Thus, it is both the *creative process* and the *performance* of yarn bombing that holds much of the meaning rather than the object itself. That is, those parts that involve the body—embodied making and putting up—are what hold the most reward. As anyone who creates art or crafts knows, the entire *process* of planning, preparing, and creating is as important, if not more so, than the finished project. Sociologist David Gauntlett points out that “the process [of making] provides space for thought and reflection, and helps to cultivate a sense of the self as an active creative agent” (222). Feminists Betsey Greer and Debbie Stoller<sup>10</sup> argue that the resurgence of interest in knitting and crocheting comes from an epistemic and an ontological perspective that values *making over made*, production over consumerism, and process over product. This renewed interest opens up new roles for rhetors and interlocutors.

Valuing the doing over the done and the self-made over the mass made is to claim the slow, laboring practice of crafting as a reaction to the staggering rate of technological change of today, what Colin Bain, Dennis Des Rivieres, and Sean Dolan call “hyperculture.” Paradoxically, however, it is this speedy race of communication technology that has permitted yarn bombing to spread across the globe so quickly.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the internet has been absolutely



Figure 6: *Pink M.24 Chaffee Tank*. Marianne Jorgensen. April 2006. Courtesy of Marianne Jorgensen.



Figure 7: *Strick and Liesel Yarn Bomb Protest against Nuclear Power. 4 September 2011. Wikimedia Commons photograph by Fluffy on Tour. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license.*

vital to circulating and sharing yarn bombing strategies through viral videos, blogs, and social networks. In the words of one reporter, “This global reach is one reason why some yarn-bombers believe their work has the potential to make political statements” (Yarn-bombing). Thus, this cultural paradigm shift in hand crafting is part of a much larger one that is interdependent with the emergence of the internet.

Of course, the internet has radically changed how we participate in all sorts of activities across the globe. Political activist and Harvard Law professor Lawrence Lessig notes, “One of the most important byproducts of digital technologies, not yet really recognized, or if recognized, not quite enough, is the capacity to enable a wider range of artists to create” (ix). This byproduct is part of a larger paradigm shift created through the internet, what Lessig calls a shift from a read-only culture to a “read/write culture.” In the read only, and I would add listen-only culture, many participants are passive consumers of information generated by a few, usually an elite few. The read/write, listen/create culture of today permits anyone to create art, products, and artifacts as readily as they consume them. In discussing this paradigm shift, Australian



Figure 8: *Post Yarn Bombed in Marysville, Ohio on Memorial Day, 28 May 2012. Wikimedia Commons photograph by Vtimman. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license.*

media scholar Axel Bruns introduced the term “produsage” to describe the collapse of the boundary between producers and consumers in a variety of online environments.<sup>12</sup> These environments are characterized by voluntary open collaboration, fluid heterarchies of governance through stigmergic participation, palimpsestic artifacts, and disavowal of conventional intellectual property rights. In other words, the internet provides the technological framework for a marked “shift from static to dynamic content, from hierarchically managed to collaboratively and continuously developed material, and from user-as-consumer to user-as-contributor” (Bruns “FCJ-066”). The contributions are proliferating at a dizzying rate. Cultural critic Sophy Bot says, “The upshot of all this new content we’re adding is an explosion of productivity, innovation and self-expression” (27). This dizzying rate happens, however, both on the web and outside the web. Who is served by this explosion? And specifically, who is served by yarn bombing and for what purpose is it taken up?

## **Whom Does Yarn Bombing Serve? What Purpose Does it Serve?**

Clearly, yarn bombers experience *joie de fabriquer*, the joy of making, when they work to prepare and plan to construct yarn pieces, work their needles on

yarn pieces, and put up an installation. But is that all there is? If it were just that, it would be a rather self-serving activity.<sup>13</sup> But yarn bombing is done for all sorts of reasons and serves all sorts of people beyond the crafters themselves. One salient purpose is that of activism.<sup>14</sup> Feminist Greer argues that “each time you participate in crafting you are making a difference, whether it’s fighting against useless materialism or making items for charity or something betwixt and between” (“What?”). Even stronger, in her book *Knitting for Good* she proclaims: “I think every act of *making* is an act of revolution” (144). She coined the term “craftivists” for activist handcrafters; however, Greer explains that

Craftivism is about more than ‘craft’ and ‘activism’—it’s about making your own creativity a force to be reckoned with. The moment you start thinking about your creative production as more than just a hobby or ‘women’s work,’ and instead as something that has cultural, historical and social value, craft becomes something stronger than a fad or trend (“Craftivism” 402).<sup>15</sup>

Still elsewhere on her website Greer defines craftivism “as a way of looking at life *where voicing opinions through creativity* makes your voice stronger, your compassion deeper and your quest for justice more infinite.” (“Definition”). For third-wave feminists like Greer, craftwork is reconceived as formidable, compelling, and subversive feminist activism. In this way, the term calls



Figure 9: *Ground Cover* by Ann Morton installed 6 December 2013 in Phoenix, Arizona. Photograph by Todd Photographic. Courtesy of Ann Morton.

attention to the word “craft” in German—*kraft* with a K—which means “power.” Power here does not signal hierarchy, domination, or hegemony rather it is more like a force, strength, energy, and ability what I have termed “soft power”— an oxymoron for contemporary activism such as yarn bombing that challenges and explodes the connotation of “soft” as flimsy, weak, stereotypically feminine and the connotation of “power” as brute force, strong, stereotypically masculine. Both words are turned inside out in many current activist movements: Soft is strong and power is nonaggressive. Soft is physical and power is cerebral. Soft is durable and power is creative.

Whom beyond the yarn bombers are served by the rhetorical act? Those who pass by and are startled to find this odd domestic arrangement on a public place. Those who have not seen but benefit from the activism of the act. Below I offer several examples of activist yarn bombing cases. Let me point out that as Edbauer notes reading about graffiti, reading yarn bombing “primarily in terms of discourse risks missing something that exists beside(s) its function as/in the symbolic. Tags [we might add yarn bombings] themselves become a material force that encounters a whole array of other bodies and forces. It is not only a material effect of certain literate and discursive practices, but it also creates visceral effects” (150). The visceral effects are what many activist yarn bombers are counting on.

Here are just a few examples. In April 2006, Danish artist Marianne Joergensen created a war protest against the US and British involvement in the Iraqi war when she yarn bombed a World War II tank (borrowed after much negotiating with Danish government) (Joergensen). Titled *Pink M.24 Chaffee Tank*, the installation was made up of 3,500 pink crocheted squares donated by more than one thousand contributors from the US and Europe that were assembled together and fit over the borrowed combat tank. (See Figure 6). The piece was displayed in front of the Nikolaj Contemporary Art Center in Copenhagen from April 7-11, 2006. As Ele Carpenter points out about this protest:

This symbolic transformation of military hardware into an object of comic irony seeks to disarm the offensive stance of a machine justified by its defensive capability. Whilst the sinister Trojan undertones of disguising a real weapon as soft and fluffy lead us to review the deaths from ‘friendly’ fire, as well as the women and children who suffer the largest percentage of deaths in most conflicts. Activist craft has many forms of symbolism and disguise. ... [M]ost importantly the *Pink M.24 Chaffee* enables, or should enable, an alternative critical discourse about global militarism. (Carpenter 4)

Here we see the measures of perspective by incongruity where “comic irony” enables “an alternative critical discourse” to the war in Iraq. This discourse carries a visceral reaction as it interacts with other bodies and forces.

In fall 2010, the German parliament passed a law to extend the operation time of the country’s seventeen nuclear power plants. In response, many protests were held against nuclear power in general and this law in particular. Among them was the protest work of two young German university students who call themselves by the pseudonyms Strick and Liesel (named after ‘Strickliesel’ or “Knitting Nancy,” a children’s toy used to learn how to knit). (See Figure 7.) The yellow knitted square presents the familiar nuclear activity logo used on warning signs, especially near reactors or nuclear facilities in the branded yellow and black but with two flowers at the top right-hand corner. The round black circle in the middle sports white cross-stitches as an allusion to a dead figure. The two young women hung banners of this and other similar designs on trees, street lamps, bridge banisters and pillars in front of the state parliament building and elsewhere. In another square, the middle yellow and black logo sports the words “Nein Danke” “No thanks,” echoing part of the logo of the large international Anti-Nuclear Movement. This low-key anonymous activism relying on a private domestic practice attached to a public space offers a powerful example of perspective by incongruity. Here against crowded graffiti covered walls, the yellow knitted square stands out. No shouting, no crowds, no force, it nevertheless makes a robust statement against nuclear power through its irony and it promises to generate a rising affective reaction from those who pass by it.

On May 28, 2012—Memorial Day—in Marysville Ohio, tekkbabe859 surreptitiously yarn bombed a pole in red, white, and blue for the remembrance of veterans on Memorial Day. (See Figure 8.) She worked in icons of a heart, a peace sign, and a star, and attached a QR tag with a quote from Oliver Wendell Holmes: “Lord, bid war’s trumpet cease; Fold the whole earth in peace.” The juxtaposition of this quotation from Holmes against the red, white, and blue icons make clear the protest is against war and conflict of any sort, and especially US involvement. An artist of another yarn bombed site noted that those who passed by would “pause to reflect on the ‘knitting together’ of people, their communities, and the beauty in the space that surrounds them” (“Castle”). The same might be said of this yarn bombing. The knitted piece on the post works as a metaphor, supplying warmth, nurturing, and protection. Here the domestic combines with the outdoor to craft a powerful perspective by incongruity and a quiet reflection on peace.

In 2013, artist and activist Ann Morton designed and created the “Ground Cover” Public Art Project that pulled together 300 handmade blankets crafted

by 600 volunteers from the US and Canada, most of whom Morton never met (Ann Morton) to form a drawing of brightly colored flowers. (See Figure 9.) Each blanket consists of 28 10-inch squares that have been knitted, crocheted, or quilted. Morton sent each blanketeer—as she called the volunteers—detailed color charts for their blanket with “yarn and fabric samples of the exact reds, oranges, browns and greens needed to create the overall effect she envisioned” (Hwang). Laid out together side by side, these blankets formed a giant desert flower in a vacant lot in downtown Phoenix, Arizona. Of the title, Morton observed that “‘Ground Cover’ is a play on words because you think of plants and flowers but you also think of people on the ground, the homeless” (Hwang). The installation was put up on December 6, 2013. When the installation was taken down just two days later, the 300 blankets were delivered to homeless agencies across Phoenix so they could be distributed to the homeless throughout the city (Pamela Burke). As Kellie Hwang reported, “To [Morton], the project is much more than art for a good cause. ‘Ground Cover’ nurtured a deep sense of community across generations and social strata, she said; it fortified her faith in the kindness and caring of strangers, and it brought attention to the plight of the homeless.”

Morton’s project offers a great example of bringing attention to the homeless in a unique way. In her words, “The installation is not really the piece. The piece is the people that are getting involved, their experience in it, being a part of it. I tried engaging the makers along the way and, as an artist, the whole process has been the piece. I hope people will have a broader understanding of homelessness, and maybe volunteer again at a shelter, and just understand the need” (Hwang). This testimony calls attention to the social dimensions of making as connecting and to the visceral response along the way.

## Conclusion

Yarn bombing, as I have shown here, is a postmodern, posthuman, postindustrial third-wave feminist rhetorical practice that has carved out new roles for rhetors and interlocutors. Cultural Studies scholar Ann Gray defines feminism as “a *practice* as well as a politics and a strong intellectual movement” (90). Feminists throughout time have engaged in a variety of different practices that distinguish different ages even though they have never been unified as a group. Whereas some first-wave feminists chained themselves to fences, broke windows, and did other kinds of violent acts of civil disobedience in the quest for suffrage, and some second-wave feminists marched, held consciousness-raising sessions, and burned bras for a whole host of women’s issues, third-wave feminists have adopted other kinds of strategies for still other agendas, most notably issues pertaining to women of color, of varying classes, and alternative sexualities, but also those of political, economic, and

social problems beyond gender. That is, third-wave feminists have taken on more complex intersecting issues and tend to use much more pliable strategies than earlier feminist groups.<sup>16</sup> As feminists Stacey Sowards and Valerie Renegar point out, today feminist activism includes tactics such as “creating grassroots’ models of leadership, using strategic humor, building feminist identity, sharing stories, and resisting stereotypes and labels” (58). These strategies are in line with the issues at the heart of even discordant third-wave feminists. Yarn bombing fits within this new postindustrial, postmodern, post-human paradigm of feminism as, among other things, it confronts modernist constructions of art and craft.

Contemporary artists challenge the vertical hierarchy of art versus craft to dismantle it. They question the use of galleries as exhibition spaces, curators and juries as judges, and commerce and consumerism using art. These new artists, such as yarn bombers, have turned to the streets, parks, and other outdoor spaces as exhibition sites for a variety of media. Artist Kate Themel speaks for many when she says, “Art is not a separate ‘world’ from Craft. These two things are not entities themselves but rather they are specific aspects of all creative work.” The artificial distinction of art from craft by the *product*—art is painting, craft is embroidery; art is sculpture, craft is pottery—is the source of the problem. Themel points out, “ART is not a physical object. ART is an expression of thought, emotion and/or intent. ART is communication. When we create a work of art, we are reaching out to the world because we have something to say.” Craft as a praxis is art and is rhetorical. As artist Julie Teeple argues, “Being an artist is a craft. You must have the ability to craft something to be an artist.” Psychologist Ellen J. Langer, pushes this idea further, in her book *On Becoming an Artist*, by reviewing dozens of experiments—her own and those of her colleagues—that are designed to study mindfulness and its relation to human creativity; this research shows that creativity is not a rare gift that only some special few are born with but rather an integral part of everyone’s makeup.

This contemporary perspective on art and craft resonates well with Aristotle’s horizontal concept of art and artist whereby artists are not distinguished by their products—what they make—but by being “wiser *not* in virtue of being able to act, but of having the theory for themselves and knowing the causes” (1.1).<sup>17</sup> In other words, artists are those who have come to know their knowing. As Aristotle continues, “it is a sign of the man [and woman] who knows and of the man [and woman] who does not know, that the former can teach, and therefore we think art more truly knowledge than experience is” (1.1). John Dewey also promoted a horizontal notion of art by defining art as any form of work that is “unusually conscious of its own meaning” and the artist as distinguished by the extent of her awareness of what she is *doing*

(260-61). Both Aristotle and Dewey refocus our attention on praxis rather than object or a thing, something contemporary artists have also been doing for some time now.

In conclusion, yarn bombing can best be understood as a contemporary third-wave feminist rhetorical response to and a postmodern explosion of the separation of labor and domestic skills, the split between public and private, the movement of remixing and repurposing rather than always consuming new, and reactions against the limitations of legal restrictions on making and mending anything as well as on displaying something in public. Through its *perspective by incongruity*, yarn bombing challenges many other assumptions concerning high and low arts, male and female practices, handmade and mass made, hand wrought and machine wrought, official and unofficial, public and private spaces, personal and political, hierarchical arrangements of governing and open collaborative fluid heterarchies, and, user-as-consumer and user-as-creator.

By engaging in practices that have been gendered in the past, yarn bombers—both men and women—seek to reclaim and repurpose these “traditionally feminized” activities through subverting both knitting and graffiti in order to dismantle the status quo of all sorts of issues and commonplaces.

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## Notes

- 1 The origins of yarn bombing are fuzzy at best. Books, magazine articles, newspaper accounts, and blogs typically report that the first recorded yarn bombing took place in Den Helder in the Netherlands in 2004 and that in the US it was founded in 2005 in Houston, Texas by Magda Sayeg. However, as early as 1992, contemporary Canadian artist Janet Morton was covering up public spaces with crocheted and knitted pieces. Her first installation was a huge knitted sock that she laid on a memorial in Queen’s Park, Toronto. The following year she covered a bicycle, calling the installation “Sweater Bike.” In 1994 she exhibited a huge mitten she named “Big, Big Mitt” by hanging it off an urban building. See the Center for Contemporary Canadian Art Canadian Art Database ([ccc.a.concordia.ca](http://ccc.a.concordia.ca)) for images of Janet Morton’s knitted work. Since Morton’s first work, a number of fiber artists have taken up knitting and crocheting in outdoor spaces. Among the more famous is Agata Oleksiak (or Olek as she is known), a Polish-born artist who now lives in New York. She has been

enshrouding humans, bicycles, buildings, statues, and swimming pools in neon-colored crochet since 2003.

- 2 Also see Deborah Brandt who argues that “the trick for writers and readers is not how to make a text make sense but how to make what they are *doing* make sense. The essence of literate orientation is knowing what to do now” (emphasis added, 192).
- 3 The specific term “yarn bombing” was coined by Leanne Prain, a graphic artist, writer, knitter, and crafter. See Moore and Prain.
- 4 The Yukon project took 100 volunteers, 368,800 yards of yarn, and 6,000 square feet of knitting to cover the DC-3 plane. When the installation was taken down, the knitted blankets were washed and given to the homeless.
- 5 Also see Davis Baird’s book *Thing Knowledge*. The question of whether things and humans have equal capacity for active agency, life, and biography is beyond the scope of this essay. On *things* as active social agents, see Bruno Latour as well as Dennis Weiss, Amy Proppen, and Colbey Reid. In light of these posthuman arguments, yarn bombing installation can be argued to have social agency.
- 6 Also see Barbara A Biesecker.
- 7 For instance, Fortune 500 companies now pay Magda Sayeg upwards of \$70,000 to wrap their wares in yarn for print ads.
- 8 The California Homeowners Bill of Rights passed and became law in January 2013. For more information on this bill, see “California Homeowner Bill of Rights,” State of California Department of Justice, Office of the Attorney General at <http://oag.ca.gov/hbor>.
- 9 On Flickr, self-described yarn bombers were asked “How long do your yarn bombs last?” Over a dozen answered. All agreed that length of depends on the location and on the design. One reported, “I had one last less than 24 hour;” another “we’ve got some that stay up until the weather kills them; others disappear much sooner for reasons unknown.” Still another wrote: “Really depends on so many things. The shortest I’ve had was less than half an hour and another I’ve had up for over a year” (“How Long”).
- 10 Debbie Stoller is founder of *BUST* magazine and the writer of the *Stitch* and *Bitch* series of knitting and crochet books.
- 11 On the first International Yarn Bombing Day, June 11, 2011, founded by Joann Matvichuk of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, Matvichuk wrote on her blog: “

I had no idea when I came up with the idea for International Yarnbombing Day that it would have gotten this big. I figured a few hundred Canadians and Americans would be participating but I had no idea that I would have people from all over the World including countries like Iceland, Norway, Egypt, Israel, Germany and Australia.

It has been an annual event across the world ever since.

- 12 Bruns coined the term in his paper “Producersage” for the *Creativity & Cognition* conference in Washington, DC, 2007. Also see his book *Wikipedia, Second Life and Beyond: From Production to Producersage*.
- 13 Emily Matchar in *Homeward Bound: Why Women are Embracing the New Domesticity* worries that some of the DIY folks, where many of the yarn bombers come from, attend to their own individual needs at the expense of the social. She points out that the DIY movement is motivated by the “idea—that it’s disempowering to be disconnected from the preindustrial skills of our great- or great-great-grandparents” (194). But she cautions that while DIY-mania is to be applauded for its creativity, community, and sustainability, “this same DIY-mania can lead to a troubling hyperindividualism” (248). She quotes gender scholar Chris Bobel who asks “Why is it we don’t intervene in the bureaucracy” to fix social problems that are motivating the DIYers? She says DIYers respond by saying “We don’t want to be in bed with the enemy. That’s not where change happens. That’s old-school activism. We’re all about DIY.” Not only does she find this response inadequate, but she sighs as she says “A lot of these activists weren’t even registered voters” (qtd. p. 248). This leads to the question of how many yarn bombers are actually voters?
- 14 On yarn bombing as activism, see Bot; Carpenter; Knitshade; Greer, *Knitting*; Greer, *Craftivism*; Matchar; McFadden and Scanlan; Moore and Prain; Petney; Sheppard; Shirobayashi; Stoller *Happy Hooker*; Stoller, *Knitter’s Handbook*; Tapper; Werle; and Wills.
- 15 *American Craft Magazine* put the term “craftivist” on one of the great moments in crafts to mark their 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (“70 years”).
- 16 For a discussion of tactical differences between second- and third-wave feminists, see R. Claire Snyder. While contemporary feminists such as Nancy Hewitt rightly challenge the metaphor of waves for analyzing feminism across time, arguing that feminism has never receded, the metaphor nevertheless provides a useful construct for understanding differences diachronically.

17 In Middle English, “art” typically meant a “skill in scholarship and learning” (c.1300), especially in the seven sciences and liberal arts. This meaning remains in the term *Bachelor of Arts* that denotes “human workmanship” as opposed to *nature*. In other words, the *making* of things by human hands is an epistemic endeavor whether scholarship, art, or something else.

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## **"Whose Hair Is It, Anyway?" Bobbed Hair and the Rhetorical Fashioning of the Modern American Woman**

David Gold

In 1930, at Florida State College for Women, then one of the largest women's colleges in the nation, Virginia Anderson was voted most "old fashioned girl." In the yearbook "Features" section, she stands demurely before a plantation-era Greek Revival mansion,<sup>1</sup> wearing an off-the-shoulder tiered white dress and choker necklace. Despite the intentional antebellum imagery of the photo, Anderson's hair is a thoroughly modern bob—as was that of most of her "featured" peers, including the campus' most stylish, most popular, most representative, most intellectual, most athletic, and, of course, "most modern girl" (Florida State College for Women n. pag.).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, a sampling of nearly any page in the yearbook reveals the cut to be not merely popular but standard (see Figure 1).

The first bob reportedly appeared on campus in 1919; by 1924, according to a campus poll, 69% of students had bobbed their hair, the "slowly dwindling long-haired" holdouts primarily citing a lack of "nerve" ("To Bob or Not to Bob" 2) rather than any moral objection. Recalling the "feminine decorum" of the school's more traditionally coiffed prewar students, dean of the college William G. Dodd later observed, "They would have been utterly astounded if someone had told them that a change would come, and soon, where a young woman could still be a lady and bob her hair and leave off most of her unmentionables" (Dodd n. pag.).

To Dodd's credit, he did believe a young woman could still be a lady, even shorn of locks and shed of the various undergarments integral to polite, turn-of-the-twentieth-century middle-class feminine dress. His opinion, however, was not universally shared. During the decade of the 1920s, millions of American women participated in what was widely reported as the "fad," "fashion," "craze," and even "epidemic" of bobbing their hair.<sup>3</sup> The cut was the subject of intense national discourse, contemporaneous with and at times indistinguishable from the incursion of women into new professional and public spaces in the wake of World War I and suffrage. Indeed, the vociferous debates featured in news items and editorial pages suggest that both defenders and detractors understood the haircut was as much a declaration of women's liberation as of style, and a symbol, for better or worse, of the modern era and women's place in it. "Bobbed Hair is in line with freedom, efficiency, health and cleanliness," wrote one supporter in 1921 ("Bobbed Hair" 15). That same year,

Marshall Field in Chicago banned the bob from its sales floor, and, nationwide, business, educational, and religious leaders dismissed the haircut as evidence of immodesty, frivolity, vanity, libertinism, and moral decay. How did mere fashion become so fraught—and, for many, so fearsome?

In this article, I examine the rhetoric surrounding bobbed hair in the U.S. in the 1920s, drawing on popular press treatments in contemporary newspapers and magazines, including news items, opinion essays, beauty and advice columns, editorials, and letters to the editor. Not quite a social movement, but far more than a mere fashion or fad, the bob was an important rhetorical phenomenon worthy of scholarly study. In treating the bob as an object of inquiry, I respond to scholarship in rhetorical studies and feminist historiography that calls for attention to rhetorics of dress (Buchanan; Mattingly; Roberts; Suter), rhetorics of space (Enoch; Jack), and epideictic scenes of women's participation in public life in the often-neglected historical period between the first two waves of American feminism (George, Weiser, and Zepernick).

I argue that discourse over the bob reflected societal tensions generated by women's changing public roles and in particular women's incursions into new public and professional spaces. I begin by offering a brief reception history of the cut and discourse surrounding it. Drawing on the theoretical framework of Gerard Hauser's *Vernacular Voices*, I suggest that this discourse constituted a vernacular public sphere which coalesced into civil judgment about the cut, with lasting effects. I then identify three rhetorical commonplaces—nature/order, efficiency, and liberty—invoked in debates over the bob. Opponents saw it as an affront to the natural order of society; advocates saw it as appropriate to a new social order that valued efficiency and individual liberty. In both arguing for the bob and by wearing the bob, women challenged conventional gender norms and aligned themselves with emerging contemporary ones. The intense public debate over the bob thus not only exposes the extent to which women's bodies and behavior can be regulated by social norms but also suggests how those norms may be challenged and changed.

## First Cut: The Bob in Popular Discourse

For such a well-known and important cultural event, the bob's origins in the U.S. are somewhat obscure.<sup>4</sup> Some contemporary sources suggest the trend was sparked by dancer and film star Irene Castle, who in 1915 cut her hair before entering the hospital for an appendectomy, for the sake of convenience during recovery (Castle E2); others suggest it was inspired by women workers engaged in the war effort who found short hair convenient, or by women during the influenza epidemic cutting their hair for wigs as insurance against it falling out if they became ill. Others point to the influence of Greenwich Village bohemians and Bolsheviks. Once it caught on, however, it

spread rapidly; contemporary newspapers offer a few scattered news reports prior to 1920, then suddenly a deluge, with hundreds of headlines a year, these articles vividly documenting a national conversation about the cut and what it forecast for both women and American society at large.

From a contemporary perspective, the perceived radicalness of the cut can be somewhat difficult to fathom. Though we perhaps associate the bob today with its most mannered examples—the close-cropped look of Louise Brooks or Josephine Baker, for example—more common was a fuller, mid-length cut ending just below the earlobe that would be unremarkable today (see Figure 2).<sup>5</sup> To better understand the attraction of the bob, it may be helpful to recall what came before. Before the advent of the bob, most American women wore their hair long—hair care and style guides of the period do not appear to even consider cutting as an option for adult women—and in a manner that required extensive maintenance in the form of elaborate washing procedures and daily fixing. Typical styles required women to wear their hair up, commonly piled atop the head in a pompadour and sometimes held in place with pads or extensions, or arranged around the sides of the head and coiled into braids or held in place with a knot at the back. Social conventions typically required African American women to straighten their hair as well through the use of combs or relaxing agents.<sup>6</sup> Susan Brownmiller, for whom the bob represented “an anguished act of rebellion” (62), eloquently documents the lingering conventions of nineteenth-century hair care women sought to escape: “sticky pomades and greasy dressings [that] made long hair a hospitable nest for dirt, soot and head lice...particularly for the urban poor” and “boring, repetitive hours spent washing and drying and brushing and combing and dressing and braiding and pinning and winding and curling on damnable rags” (64). Of course, the ease or comfort of a style is no guarantee of its success. The reform dress of the mid-nineteenth century was never taken up widely outside of reform circles, and even women activists eventually abandoned it in favor of dress that more visibly signaled respectable femininity, aware of the need to “construc[t] a favorable image of the public woman” to their audiences (Mattingly, *Appropriate[ing] Dress* 109).

Like advocates of the reform dress, wearers of the bob were subject to intense public scrutiny and often critique. Yet the bob arrived at an opportune moment for widescale adoption. The first two decades of the twentieth century saw women entering public and professional life in force, trends exacerbated by World War I and the ratification of suffrage in 1920; at the time of the bob's ascent, women's gains, ever precarious, seemed to many now unstoppable. In adopting the cut, women were signaling their allegiance to this new social order and their confidence in its stability.



Figure 1: Typical hairstyles, Florida State College for Women, 1930. Chi Gamma fraternity, *Flastacowo* 1930. Courtesy of the Florida State University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives. For other examples online, see *Flastacowo* yearbooks at the Internet Archive or the Florida State University Digital Library.



Figure 2: Bobbed hairstyle common in 1920s Philadelphia. John Frank Keith, "Two Nicely Dressed Young Women Standing in Front of Brick Building." Courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia. For other examples online, see the Library Company's John Frank Keith Collection.

As a subject of rhetorical study, the bob resists easy classification. Critics of fashion and consumer culture have suggested mass media creates desire, and certainly mass consumer culture, particularly the cinema, spread images of the bob. But contemporary news reports also suggest a fashion industry often flummoxed by the cut and desperately trying to catch up by offering new products to accommodate the trend—headbands, bobby pins, smaller hats—or unsuccessfully trying to halt it by repeatedly declaring the cut to be passé, even as it was becoming ever more popular.<sup>7</sup> As a collective action, the bob did not constitute a social movement as the term is generally understood; there was no wide-scale, organized campaign on its behalf, and those who adopted the cut had a wide range of motives for doing so. Yet it was more than a mere fashion or fad, due to its pervasive spread, long persistence, and lasting impact, as well as the intense rhetorical discourse it generated.

I believe that the bob may be best understood through the lens of Gerard Hauser's conceptualization of the public sphere, which emphasizes its rhetorical, and often vernacular, nature: "a discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment about them" (61). For Hauser, publics and public spheres cannot be determined a priori; rather, they are "emergences" (14; see also 32-33), arising in response to mutually perceived exigencies and made manifest through vernacular discourse, "often the dialogues of everyday life" (65). When such vernacular exchanges "converge to form a prevailing view of preference and possibly of value," they constitute *civil judgments*, which, though not formalized procedurally, may have "palpable" constitutive force (74). Though Hauser is interested primarily in deliberative political rhetoric, vernacular public spheres may also encompass epideictic forms of rhetoric aimed at defining, shaping, or asserting a community's allegiance to a set of values, particularly in response to events that appear to destabilize those values.<sup>8</sup> Through epideictic rhetoric, suggests Celeste Michelle Condit, a community may "rene[w] its conception of good and evil by explaining what it has previously held to be good and evil and by working through the relationships of those past values and beliefs with new situations" (291). The advent of the bob provided both defenders and detractors a kairotic new situation with which to reevaluate past values and beliefs regarding the proper roles of women in American society. In short, the bob constituted a communal exigence that generated a powerful call to rhetorical action. In the vernacular public sphere which organized itself about the cut, ordinary citizens as well as opinion shapers debated its merits and meanings, with its eventual acceptance rendering a civil judgment that resulted in a renorming and

expanding of the range of acceptable public looks for women, as well as behavior.

An important discursive act within this public sphere was the very act of getting the haircut itself. During the decade of intense discourse surrounding the bob, the cut always signified. Feminist scholars have long noted the ways in which women's bodies are marked. As such, women's presentations of themselves in public through their choice of dress, accessories, hairstyle, makeup, or speaking style are often read through their ostensible conformance to or departure from expected gender norms. Writes Deborah Tannen, "There is no unmarked woman. There is no woman's hair style that can be called 'standard,' that says nothing about her" (110). This markedness was especially pronounced during the bobbed hair era, when adopting the cut could cause a woman demonstrable social or economic harm. By bobbing their hair, millions of women who did not have access to channels of mass media dissemination as writers or speakers voted with their physical bodies for a new definition of feminine propriety. Indeed, the eventual acceptance of the bob may have been fostered less by a change in attitude of those wanting to restrict it but their acquiescence in the face of the sheer number of women who bobbed their hair, rendering restrictions against it in places of employment moot and pronouncements against its impropriety ineffectual.

The contemporary cultural significance accorded to the bob is evident in the wide range of opinion makers who contributed to the vernacular public sphere surrounding it. Prominent women from Charlotte Perkins Gilman to Dorothy Parker joined the conversation. Gilman, perhaps not surprisingly, was an early advocate, declaring in 1916, "It was not the Lord who gave men short hair...it was the scissors" ("*Fair Tresses*" ES14).<sup>9</sup> Parker, certainly not surprisingly, mocked all parties, men and women, fans and foes. In a 1924 satirical essay in the popular magazine *Life*,<sup>10</sup> she "reports" on one business owner who had two bob-wearing employees taken out and shot, while another declares, "A woman who will bob her hair will do anything.... I am all for the idea" (9). Doctors and other medical experts debated the bob's potential health effects, speculating on whether it would promote hair growth (through cutting) or loss (from tighter hats), harm the skin, or extend the lifespan. Business writers weighed in on the bob's effect on the health of various industries—in particular hat, hatpin, and hair- and beauty-product manufacturers—and the livelihoods of hairdressers and barbers, even considering the merits of a bobbed hair tax. Fashion writers and culture watchers as well monitored such reports for empirical evidence of the cut's permanence or passing. Religious leaders debated Paul's supposed injunction that women not cut their "crowning glory,"

and writers religious and secular debated the relative degree of sin and wantonness the cut represented. A number of articles looked to historical precedents for short-haired fashion, from ancient Egypt to Revolutionary France to late-nineteenth-century America, seeking to either dismiss the cut or the fuss about it.

Ordinary women actively participated in conversation about the bob as well, through letters to the editor and op/ed pieces responding to attacks, quoted comments in news pieces by journalists seeking public opinion, conversations with friends and family, the reading of news and fashion articles, localized public protests against the banning of the bob in schools and places of employment, the daily negotiation of private and public critique, and through the public and sometimes collective act of getting their hair bobbed themselves. Indeed, the public—and rhetorical nature—of women adopting the cut was a central part of this discourse. At the turn of the twentieth century, women's hair care was conducted at home and was "for most women a private and time-consuming task" (Stevenson, "Hairy Business" 139). Professional hairdressers typically "dressed" but did not cut hair, and those women who employed hairdressers typically had the dresser come to them. Women who early on wished to have their hair bobbed often had to enter the formerly exclusive gendered domain of men's barbershops, a bold move if not an outright social transgression, before barbers began catching up, either converting their shops to salons or actively soliciting women patrons.

A significant controversy arose over the propriety of bobbed hair for women in the professions. In those fields popularly coded as feminine, such as teaching and nursing, observers fretted over whether bobbed-haired women could be considered mature or moral enough to be trusted with their charges. From a contemporary standpoint, the objection to nurses seems curious given the apparent sanitary advantages of the cut, but a number of senior staff and supervisors saw it as an affront to the "dignity of the profession" ("Bans Bobbed-Hair Nurses" 3).<sup>11</sup> In fields where women were newly emergent, such as business, employers wondered whether bobbed-haired women could attend to their responsibilities with the same seriousness of purpose presumably inherent to men. As clerical work became increasingly feminized in the first decades of the twentieth century, the "display of the female body in the office" became a site of "contested terrain" (Strom 370), with women workers subject to both dress regulations and mixed signals regarding dress and deportment (371-72).

As the bob became increasingly public, it also became the subject of workplace bans. These bans affected not only established "women's professions" such as teaching and nursing but newly emergent sites of women's public visibility, such as the business office. At both ends of the spectrum,

employers made explicit their desire to reassert and enforce traditional visual signifiers of feminine propriety. Thus, in July 1921, the Aetna Life Insurance Company, a major employer of women, generated national headlines when its employment manager, Frank K. Daniels,<sup>12</sup> issued an edict against the bob: "I can tolerate the women who lay aside their corsets. That is comfort, but it is carrying comfort too far to bare one's self in bobbed hair" ("Blondity Tabu" 1). Elsewhere he was quoted as saying, "We want workers in our offices and not circus riders" ("Bobbed Hair Given the Bounce" 19). Daniels was no mere crank; a Hartford alderman (and at the time acting mayor) and an officer in the Aetna Life Club, he was a prominent local figure. Aetna was moreover a significant site of contest as it embodied the national changes in office culture as a result of the feminization of the clerical workforce. Aetna did not hire its first woman office worker until 1908 and as late as 1916 had only 150 women employees. Responding to the labor shortage created by World War I, the company began hiring women in large numbers; by 1922, 44% of workers at its home office in Hartford were women (Murolo 37-38). It is perhaps not surprising then that conservative managers such as Daniels were ill-equipped to deal with the social ramifications of these changes.

Aetna's ban was soon eclipsed when, in August 1921, the luxury department store Marshall Field in Chicago made national and international headlines when it banned the bob from its sales floor, reportedly dismissing those who refused to hide theirs under nets, and following this up with a further edict against the popular trends of rouge and rolled-down stockings ("Bobbed Hair Barred"; "Rouge, Low Stockings").<sup>13</sup> While it might seem curious for a retail establishment to take a stand against an emerging fashion—Saks in New York was already offering smaller hats styled to fit bobbed heads—management may have felt that the haircut was not in keeping with the air of bourgeois respectability it sought to evoke.

Both the Aetna and Marshall Field actions generated wide news coverage as well as responses in the form of opinion essays, editorials, and letters to the editor, many of the latter from women themselves. In the wake of these actions, and perhaps emboldened by them, a number of hospitals, nursing schools, public school districts, and employment agencies also announced and enforced bans—or tried to. In the end, most of these efforts failed, in part because the bob was becoming so ubiquitous so quickly that enforcement was impossible. A few weeks after Daniels's decree, the *New York Times* reported that young women seeking employment at Aetna simply covered their bobs with a net until hired, "then let loose," their male managers "grinn[ing] at the joke played on Daniels" and "judg[ing] the new employees by their spelling and punctuation rather than by their coiffure" ("Bobbed Hair Gets" 4). After the initial Marshall Field decrees little more was heard from the company

on the matter, perhaps in part because of editorial ridicule or because the firm's competitors took the opportunity to declare their own sales floors bob friendly (Rice). Visiting Chicago in 1922, Gordon Selfridge, founder of London's Selfridge's and a former Marshall Field executive, could not help tweaking his old firm: "There is no objection to bobbed hair in London.... We believe in progress" ("They Let 'Em Flap" 6).

Restrictions on bobbed-haired teachers also proved to be short-lived. In 1924, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that despite the widespread fear of a teacher shortage due to reported prejudice among many principals against bobbed hair on teachers, some 449 of 500 recent graduates of the state university had adopted the cut ("Bobbed Hair School Teacher" 5). While these numbers might perhaps be exaggerated, they signal the acceptance of the cut among younger professional women; an impromptu survey of delegates at the 1925 International Kindergarten Union (now the Association for Childhood Education International) convention found only one-fifth in bobbed hair but unanimous agreement on its professional propriety ("To Bob or Not, Is Quandary" 1).

Student nurses in particular played a prominent role in fighting for the bob, perhaps because they recognized the sanitary value of the cut in their work environment. In hospitals and nursing schools in a number of North American cities, petitions and protests, including walkouts and threatened walkouts, against the banning of bobbed hair resulted in orders being rescinded or revised and sanctions against those dismissed or disciplined being reversed. Such actions may have been on the mind of the Colorado school superintendent who queried the *American Journal of Nursing* in 1924, "Since 90 per cent of women, young and old, have their hair bobbed and if we continue to exclude them from our training schools, will we have sufficient number of students?" (H. J. 836). In 1926, in what might be taken as a sign of national capitulation, the *New York Times* reported that the Army's Quartermaster General's office was seeking to redesign its nurse's uniform hat to accommodate the new hairstyle, the old one being nearly impossible to pin to a bobbed head ("Army Nurses").<sup>14</sup>

Judging by contemporary college yearbook photos and news reports, by 1925, the bob in some form had become near-universal among school- and college-aged women, and it was becoming increasingly common among women in their 30s, 40s, and older. In 1921, Mary Garden, 47, star soprano and newly appointed director of the Chicago Opera, made national news when she returned from Europe with her hair bobbed. In 1928, actress Mary Pickford, 36, having previously declared that she would not cut her trademark long curls, famously did so, in part because she wanted more *mature* screen roles (Pickford; "Mary Pickford"). Former First Lady Grace Coolidge, born

in 1879, was reported to have bobbed her hair in 1931 and again in 1935. Contemporary reports suggest one reason for the uncertainty; she had long worn her hair "so perfectly marcelled" that the transition to a bob "would not readily be apparent" ("Mrs. Coolidge" N9).<sup>15</sup>

The bob was a phenomenon that extended across both race lines—it was debated in the black as well as the predominantly white press, though perhaps with less fervor in the former—and class lines, simultaneously seen as a marker of high fashion and low, being favored by movie stars, celebrities, and fashion icons, as well as by flappers, working women, and "bad girls." Perhaps because of its association with youthful license, older and more conservative women were initially hesitant to adopt the bob—a 1924 *Washington Post* article notes the paucity of short hair amongst leaders of the General Federation of Women's Clubs ("Women's Clubs' Heads" 2).<sup>16</sup> Its association with women in the labor market may have also led to charges among more economically privileged women that the cut lacked a certain womanly dignity. "It is a boon to the young business woman who has but little time to give to her coiffure when she has had to make and breakfast to prepare before she must rush madly to store or office," wrote one Kentucky women's club officer in 1923, but is inappropriate for the older "society woman" ("Bobbed Hair Loses" 9). By decade's end, however, the same groups of women who might have earlier dismissed the bob as undignified were getting bobbed themselves. Writing in 1928, *Washington Post* beauty columnist Viola Paris observed that the only pressure toward longer hair might be from "younger girls...born into a world of short-haired women" seeking a way "for the younger generation to be distinguished from its mother" (10).

## Meaning and Modernity

Why such intense and widespread debate? What did the bob signify? One feature of the discourse is invariable: the bob was universally taken as a sign of modernity, and, as such, it exposed fault lines in society's conceptions of proper roles for and behavior of women in a time of shifting social norms. In this section, I identify three rhetorical commonplaces, or *topoi*, invoked by participants in the bobbed hair debate: nature/order, efficiency, and liberty. Foes of the bob saw it as a threat to the natural order of society, a visible sign of the decline of traditional femininity and morality; advocates praised its efficiency and convenience as appropriate to the times and celebrated it as marker of individual liberty and freedom. Each of these commonplaces held substantial hegemonic force; that is, few were willing to question their value in the abstract. When engaging with their opponents, parties on both sides thus tended to argue from the stasis of definition, critics suggesting the cut represented a disruptive libertinism rather than liberty and supporters

challenging traditional notions of what constituted “natural” dress and behavior.

### *Nature/Order*

Opponents of the bob frequently insisted that the cut was an assault on the natural order of society. These arguments rested both on traditional normative assumptions of women’s roles emerging out of nineteenth-century gender ideologies and on popular understandings of evolutionary theory that held that a key marker of civilization and evolution was differentiation of the sexes (see Hamlin; Newman). At the turn of the twentieth century, the American feminine ideal was perhaps best represented by the “Gibson Girl,” the creation of illustrator and editor Charles Dana Gibson. Though the Gibson Girl was meant to symbolize—and sell—the emerging “New Woman” of the 1890s, more public and progressive than her Victorian elder sister, her image also served to tame the potential threat entailed by changing gender norms by emphasizing traditional markers of (white, middle-class) femininity: an exaggerated hourglass figure, long hair, fashionable though respectable dress, and the practice of leisure rather than labor (see Patterson 27-49). Despite the highly constructed nature of her image, she was also meant to represent an unstudied, “natural” American beauty, ostensibly devoid of make up and wearing her hair, however painstakingly and elaborately coiffed, long and glorious as God and nature had intended it. The Gibson Girl was ultimately an evolutionary figure, not a revolutionary one, and she functioned as an object of near-universal desire for men and women alike.

If the Gibson Girl represented natural evolution, the Flapper with her bobbed hair forecast disruption of the social order and even devolution: the *New York Times* in 1924 reported on one German social scientist who feared that as women increasingly took on formerly male tasks they would eventually grow beards themselves (“Bobbed Hair Brings Beards”). In disrupting gender expectations, bobbed-haired women were simultaneously cast as both unfeminine and licentious. At one extreme, the angular look and bobbed hair of the Flapper, combined with her ostensibly transgressive behavior—smoking, drinking, working—made it difficult for many observers to discern in her any normative secondary-sex characteristics at all. To the extent that she also engaged in expressions of sexuality—wearing make up, dancing, practicing “free love”—she was also read as aberrant. Throughout the 1920s, bobbed hair widely served as a metonym for social disruption. One reform school superintendent noted in 1924 that his new charges “invariably” had short hair (“All Bad Girls” 6). That same year, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the bob had invaded women’s prisons, becoming the rage among notorious female murderers in San Quentin (“Bobbed Hair Fad Invades”).<sup>17</sup> The decade, indeed,

saw a number of what were popularly termed "bobbed-hair bandits," leading one letter writer to the *Washington Post* to ask in 1927, "Once burglary, train robbing, bank robbery and holdups...were arts exercised exclusively by humans of the male gender.... Every female robber wears her hair bobbed. Is there something in bobbing the hair that drives these girls to crime?" (Estey 6; see also Duncombe and Mattson).

The desire for a return to an older social order was manifest in the various articles each year insisting that the bob was but a doomed, dying, or already dead fad. Such pieces were not just about women's hair, but behavior, the implication—and more often explicit declaration—being that the ostensible return to longer hair signaled "a return to the ways of femininity" ("Bobbed-Hair Fad Fading" 6) and a restoration of traditional gender norms. The crowning of a long-haired local beauty contest winner, Dorothy Hughes, in 1922, prompted one newspaper to declare "Miss New York Marks the End of Bobbed Hair." "Her long, beautiful curls turned the trick," said one contest judge, artist and illustrator Neysa McMein ("Miss New York" B5).<sup>18</sup>

Despite accusations that the cut violated natural norms for women by being either mannish or immodest or that it would devalue them in the marriage market, women seemed to have widely accepted the cut as feminine. "Bobbed hair," wrote journalist and screenwriter Adela Rogers St. Johns in 1924, "symbolizes the progress of woman in the twentieth century toward more freedom, more worth-while achievement, and more time devoted to what is under the skull instead of on top of it. But it doesn't mean that woman is less feminine" (36). Even female critics acknowledged that it suited young "girls" ("Bobbed Hair Loses" 9) or that it looked, if not beautiful, at least "smart" (Pickford 9)—that is, efficient and appropriate for the times. Women's adoption of the bob thus stands in contrast to that of the nineteenth-century reform dress, which women abandoned in the wake of popular press backlash that cast the outfit as ungainly or masculine (see Mattingly, *Appropriate[ing] Dress* 62-84). The toga of the elocutionists, meanwhile, had given women freedom in a delimited space to both literally move and speak with ease as well as mark their agency and even citizenship in a non-threatening manner, but it does not seem to have been widely adopted beyond their circle (Suter), perhaps because it would not have been seen as a functional or appropriate garment for the workplace or daily wear. Women adopting the bob did not see it as a threat to pure womanhood as critics charged, but representative of an updated version of femininity appropriate to the times, one based on liberation from outmoded cumbersome dress, outdated social practices, and even the male gaze. In short, the bob represented progress and thus, to its advocates, a *natural* evolution of the social order. "The bob came in," speculated the hairstylist Antoine, who had helped popularize the cut, "because of a profound need on

the part of women.... Long hair belonged to women moving gently around in carriages.... It had no place in the world of busy women who had to ignore the weather, who had to move fast" (98-99).<sup>19</sup>

### *Efficiency and Liberty*

As Antoine suggests, the increased speed and busyness of the modern era figured heavily in discourse surrounding the bob. In the early twentieth century, "efficiency" was a buzzword in American culture. Inspired by the scientific and technological advances of the industrial era, a broad-based efficiency movement sought to employ scientific principles to improve education, business, manufacturing, government, and society. Contemporary cultural critics often associate these principles with the dehumanizing effects of Taylorism and Fordism, but they were widely shared across the political continuum, and invoked as often by Progressive-era reformers as by hard-headed captains of industry. Mass-market goods also promised Americans convenience and time savings in their daily lives.

In arguing for the bob, women advocates frequently lauded its efficiency and appropriateness to the new labor market, arguing that it saved working women valuable time and allowed them a degree of parity with men, whose hair could presumably be fixed without fuss each morning and thereafter require little maintenance during the working day. In contrast to traditional hairstyles, bobbed hair was widely described as cooler and more comfortable, more practical, "sensible and sanitary" ("Home Made Blondes" 15), and easier to keep "fresh and clean" (P. H. H. 9). Attending the 1921 National Education Association convention, Sarah Given, an assistant professor of physical education at Drake University, said, "Every girl and woman will wear her hair bobbed eventually....We've been following a foolish, bothersome custom long enough. Why should not women have the convenience of short, unbound hair, the same as men?" ("Bobbed Hair for School Mams" 6). Women also insisted it was the traditional long-haired woman who was the more frivolous and superficial, as she spent far more time on her appearance than did the modern woman with bobbed hair. Some critics did suggest that the bob required more maintenance and expense in the form of regular trips to the hairdresser and was thus less efficient, but they did not gain many adherents.

Male observers also had to concede ground where efficiency was evoked, even as they revealed their personal misgivings about the look. Wrote one editor, "It may not have the womanly charm of long hair, but in industries and in business girl workers are workers. They are judged by their efficiency and not by their charm, or are supposed to be, and generally it is through efficiency and not sex that they keep their positions." The writer appears to have had some concerns that this trend might lead to "the woman in overalls," but

ultimately defended the right of "girl workers to get rid of incumbrances [sic] and wear clothes suited to their work ("Says Bobbed Hair" 36).

"Efficiency," of course, could be a double-edged sword, suggesting women's capitulation to the urban labor market and unquestioning acceptance of its values. As labor historian Sharon Hartman Strom reminds us, divisions among women workers by class, age, and marital status "probably undermined the likelihood of devising cooperative strategies for attacking discrimination and exploitation," despite the sharing of a "common workplace culture" (369). Moreover, "sex discrimination, sexual stereotyping of jobs, and the cultural framing of men's and women's participation in the work force limited women's choices" (379).<sup>20</sup> At Aetna, for example, women were segregated into routinized clerical jobs—stenography, typing, filing, card-punching—and at the time of Daniels's decree were required to use a separate back entrance and elevators (Murolo 38). Later in the decade, Aetna hired a scientific management expert, Dr. Marion A. Bills, who instituted an experimental bonus system that pitted women workers against each other by rewarding the most "efficient" while gradually paring the least; while retained employees netted an average pay increase of 20%, personnel in affected departments were reduced by 39%. Managers of male-staffed departments, such as underwriting, resisted Bills's efforts, insisting their work was not routine (Murolo 43-44, 48). Under these circumstances, the victory of winning the right to wear bobbed hair to the office might ring somewhat hollow. Moreover, under the aegis of efficiency, women workers might be subject to bodily scrutiny that reinforced gender stereotypes as well as limited their ability to control the pace of their labor; thus one manufacturer who claimed to hire "only bobbed-haired stenographers" lauded them for their ability to quickly comb their hair at their desks and return to work while their long-haired counterparts wasted time in the dressing room conversing with their peers ("Flappers and Efficiency" 2).

Closely associated with the topos of efficiency was one of liberty, expressed as the freedom of autonomous individuals in a democracy to make life choices for themselves. Advocates of the bob proclaimed the right of women to bob their hair on the basis of "individual" or "personal" liberty, which women as well as men post-suffrage were presumed to share. Replying to a young woman whose fiancé threatened to break off their engagement if she persisted in bobbing her hair, *Washington Post* advice columnist Frances McDonald declared, "What a very un-American attitude. A wife's hair is part of her personal estate. She may administer it according to her fancy.... You are an American girl. Your hair and personal liberty are your own. Hold fast to your property rights in both" (14).

Though men's reactions to the bob were varied through the period—from supportive to tolerant to violently opposed—they typically appear as foils for

women's behavior, acting reactively to decisions women had already made for themselves. Women responded to accusations that the bob represented "typical" feminine obsessions with artifice and frivolity by asserting that the cut was honest and democratic and that it was men's obsession with something ostensibly so trivial as hair that was frivolous and antidemocratic. "I would suggest that men find some weightier problem...than worrying about our hair," wrote one defender. "Whose hair is it, anyway?" (H. A. C. 8). In defending personal choice, writers both male and female also pointed out the ridiculousness of various styles of men's hair, mustaches, and beards, as well as the fact that the wearing of them was, as we would put it today, almost entirely unmarked—a personal eccentricity to be tolerated, even celebrated, and not indicative of any moral or intellectual failing. "What has mere man to brag about concerning his own hair," asked one male editor. "He certainly bobs it, pompadours it, shaves it, dyes it, curls it, or wigs it, as he pleases. Does any employer fire him and give as the cause or reason, the manner in which his hair is cut?" ("Bobbed Hair Snarl" 14).

It is perhaps a testament to the changing times that men who abandoned or sued their wives for divorce for bobbing their hair or otherwise sought to legally enjoin them from doing so found little support in the courts, one judge declaring, "Surely a person capable of casting a ballot must be presumed capable of choosing a haircut" ("Wives Have Right" SM5). Even writers not entirely sympathetic to the bob—or "modern" women—tended to agree that a woman need not seek permission from a spouse, parent, or employer to bob her hair and that the choice was entirely a private matter. A 1922 *Washington Post* editorial, while dismissing working women as being in the marriage market, grounds its support for the bob in terms of individual and equal rights: "In an enlightened democracy the privileges allowed to one sex as to attire should be freely and gladly accorded to the other" ("An Attack" 6). Responding to the Marshall Field decree, John Fitzpatrick of the Chicago Federation of Labor said, "They're taking personal liberty away from the working girl.... If a girl wants to bob her hair or wear her skirts knee length, what's it of her boss' business. No man has that right of censorship.... The working girl must express her individuality in her own way" ("Labor Comes to Aid" 5). It is of course a somewhat narrow vision of liberty to define it in terms of personal self expression, which is perhaps why the bobbed hair cause never morphed into a broader or more organized social movement.<sup>21</sup> Regardless, contemporary women largely saw the bob as a visible step in women's emancipation, in both practical and symbolic terms, and frequently invoked commonplace god terms such as freedom, liberty, and democracy in its support. "To my way of thinking," wrote Mary Garden in 1927, "long hair belongs to the age of general feminine helplessness. Bobbed hair belongs to the age of freedom, frankness, and progressiveness" (8).

## Permanent Waves: The Bob and Its Aftermath

Writing in the *New York Times* in 1921, the anonymous "Ex-Bobbed One" asserted, "There is not a woman of the present generation who does not hail with relief any reform in dress which tends to greater comfort.... But as women veer toward common sense and comfort in their toilette the more they are made the subject of masculine attacks.... No matter how attractive a woman may look, the fact that her hair is short is damning in their eyes—she is either a short-haired fanatic or a silly young thing, and not until every woman's hair is shorn will they bow to the inevitable" (sec. 6, 6). Her words were prescient; so many women bobbed their hair that it became a standard; critics could complain, but ultimately could not stop it. The sheer number of college and working women adopting the style meant that nursing schools, school districts, and public and private employers could not regulate the bob—and subsequently other manifestations of contemporary dress (e.g., rouge, short skirts, colored hair)—even had they wanted to.

By the end of the 1920s, the bob had become commonplace enough that discourse on it began to cease, almost abruptly as it began.<sup>22</sup> By 1935, women were beginning to wear their hair longer again, though still "bobbed" from the point of view of the earliest part of the century, and by the end of World War II it seems that short anything—clothes or hair—had the ring of austerity, and long hair for women became standard once again. But the bob was no mere fashion or fad, quick to arrive, quick to disappear, relevant to only a small subculture. Throughout the 1920s, the intensity of discourse surrounding the bob meant that the haircut always signified, always generated what Roland Barthes termed a "second-order semiological system" (113), or connotative or mythical level of meaning. Indeed, the intensity of response suggests that some observers could literally not see beyond the second-order symbols the bob represented, could not see the actual woman behind the associations generated by the cut. Thus, no matter a woman's own motivation in getting a bob, from a fashion statement to a political one, and no matter the observer's attitude toward bobbed hair, the cut was invariably read as signaling allegiance to the modern era, with its ever more visible and varied roles for women. The vernacular public sphere that arose in response to the cut urges us to consider the means by which fashion, as Mary Louise Roberts suggests, may drive as well as reflect social change. Depicting the social significance of post-World War I fashion in France, in which the bob played a central role, Roberts argues that "fashion constituted a semi-autonomous political language that served as a maker as well as a marker of the modern woman.... [and] figured in a larger struggle for social and political power" ("Samson and Delilah" 665).

As scholars such as Roberts, Lindal Buchanan, Carol Mattingly, and Lisa Suter have demonstrated, dress and other forms of bodily display can serve

as a means of rhetorical delivery, as well as a manifestation of contemporary rhetorical commonplaces and constraints, signaling the limits and available means of persuasion. Buchanan depicts how antebellum women reformers made use of feminized spaces and feminine delivery styles to “interject their views into the public milieu” (105) and Mattingly how nineteenth-century women reformers used dress to signal rhetorical decorum and boost their ethos (*Appropriate[ing] Dress*; see also *Well-Tempered Women*). Suter memorably describes the togas of late-nineteenth-century women elocutionists as “arguments they wore,” signifying their claim to citizenship in a society that still denied them the franchise. Following these scholars, I suggest that women wearing the bob, too, were practicing rhetoric. In an era in which women’s excursions into public forums and the public sphere were still emergent and highly contested—and in which many women, working-class and otherwise, had little access to channels of political power or public literacy—wearing the bob allowed women a degree of rhetorical agency to form, if not a counter-public, a counter-narrative to and critique of prevailing norms of femininity. As Karen Stevenson observes, “neither the threat of dismissal nor disapproval...deterred women from cutting off their locks *en masse*.” Rejecting “the time-consuming bother of long hair in favor of the historically unprecedented ease and simplicity of short and largely unadorned hair,” women “transformed feminine style norms in the face of considerable social pressure” (“Hair Today” 229). The intense public debate over the bob thus not only exposes the extent to which women’s bodies and behavior can be regulated and disciplined by social norms but speaks as well to possible shifts in the habitus that can arise from challenges to these norms. The vernacular public sphere that arose in response to the bob and culminated in its acceptance was engendered by women not only *arguing* for the bob but *wearing* it.

Of course, it was not merely rhetoric that made the bob possible. To understand phenomena such as the bob, it is also important to attend to the material environments and conditions in which they occur. Jessica Enoch, for example, has asked scholars to consider the ways rhetorics of space—“what [a] space should be, what it should do, and what should go on inside it”—define, enable, and constrain a scene’s inhabitants (276), while Jordynn Jack has called for “feminist rhetoricians [to] pay more attention to gendered rhetorics of bodies, clothing, space, and time *together* in order to construct more thorough accounts of the rhetorical practices that sustain gender differences” (286; italics original). Responding to their framework, I suggest that the spread of the bob and the reaction to it was inextricably tied to women’s participation in the labor force; that is, their inhabiting of a new physical and subsequently discursive space at a time of widely felt social upheaval, particularly in the growing urban centers

where debate over the bob was most fervent. These women formed a ready audience and source of advocacy for the bob.

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, the population of the United States became increasingly urban, from 40% in 1900 to 56.2% in 1930 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census* 6), with a subsequent shift in the labor force. During this time, the percentage of the women's labor force working in white-collar professions rose from 17.8% to 44.2%, while those in farm work declined from 18.9% to 8.4% and manual and service work from 63.2% to 47.3% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Occupational Trends* 6).<sup>23</sup> Many of these new jobs for women—as teachers, nurses, clerks, secretaries, telephone operators, sales workers—were in urban areas and required either historically high degrees of literacy education or, at the very least, the ability to communicate effectively in spoken and written English (Blackwelder 63). These jobs also required greater attention to physical appearance than did the agricultural and manufacturing jobs they supplanted. Of particular significance to the bobbed hair movement is the increase in women as a percentage of clerical workers, from 4.7% in 1880 to 29.2% in 1900 to 45% in 1920 (DeVault 12), a trend that dramatically changed and to a large degree "feminized" office culture.

As more and more young, educated women entered urban public and professional spaces, they increasingly transformed the discourse in those spaces. I am not suggesting these public and quasi-public professional spaces necessarily became regendered or even more egalitarian. Indeed many women found these new professional spaces limiting or left them upon marriage. However, as more women occupied these spaces, they increasingly drew on contemporary rhetorical commonplaces to argue for personal and public freedoms within them. They insisted that the bob represented part of the natural evolutionary progress of women in society. They celebrated its efficiency and convenience as appropriate for the modern office and the modern era. They resisted the reading of their bodies as public and, like men, insisted on a private space within public domains, drawing on a commonplace rhetoric of individual rights. What a woman did with her hair, many women insisted, was a private concern, one ideally off limits to public debate, though of course argued, and ultimately accepted to a large degree, through public debate and public presentation. To borrow Lisa Suter's apt phrasing, the bob was an argument women wore—and, for a time, an argument they largely won.

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## Notes

- 1 Locals would have recognized it as the Grove, a local landmark and home of an antebellum governor.
- 2 Early Florida State College for Women *Flastacowo* yearbooks are available for browsing on the Internet Archive (archive.org). The 1930 “Features” section described above begins at <<https://archive.org/stream/flastacowo171930flor#page/n192/mode/2up>>.
- 3 In 1927, Gertrude B. Lane, editor of the *Woman's Home Companion*, estimated that 14 million American women had bobbed their hair; this would have represented roughly one-third of the approximately 43 million women aged 15 and older (“14,000,000 Bobbed Heads”; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census* 9). Any period estimates must be taken with caution, but contemporary reports and photographs suggest a majority of school- and college-aged women adopting the cut and widespread acceptance by women overall as the decade progressed. Bobbed hair also contributed to the rise of the modern beauty salon; from 1920 to 1930, a period during which the labor force increased 15.2%, the number of barbers, beauticians, and manicurists rose from 214,000 to 371,000, a 73.4% increase (U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics* 140, 144).
- 4 The bob was an international phenomenon as well, with reports on the cut ranging from Mexico to Europe to the Far East. In France (where its advent is commonly attributed to Coco Chanel), it served as a resonant symbol of post-war social disruption; see Mary Louise Roberts, “Samson and Delilah” and *Civilization without Sexes* (63-87); see also Steven Zdatny, *Fashion, Work, and Politics in Modern France* (53-77).
- 5 Some women took advantage of the cut to have their hair done in a permanent wave or marcel, which, though adding expense and maintenance, was thought to offer a softer, more feminine look.
- 6 Though the ethics of hair straightening was debated in the black press, African American women do not commonly appear to have felt free to eschew the practice (see Byrd and Tharps 25-49).
- 7 A 1923 *Los Angeles Times* headline captured this note of frustration, asking, “Bobbed Hair May Be Passé—But How Can You Stop the Craze?”

- 8 Recent conceptualizations of epideictic rhetoric have called attention to its reflective, argumentative, and constitutive purposes and considered genres beyond traditional forms of ceremonial display (see Bordelon; Condit; Ramsey; Sheard).
- 9 The women of Gilman's feminist utopia in the novel *Herland* notably wear their hair short and functional (59-60); for further treatment of Gilman's views, see Stevenson, "Hair Today."
- 10 *Life* (1886), edited during this period by Charles Dana Gibson, was a popular humor magazine akin to the early *New Yorker* (1925); it was purchased in 1936 by *Time* publisher Henry Luce, who sought the name for his about-to-launch photojournal (Baughman 90).
- 11 It may also have been felt that long hair could be more easily kept pinned up and out of the way and that bobbed hair was more unruly, thus necessitating the use of nets.
- 12 Daniels was sometimes erroneously reported as company president; news reports suggest Aetna employed from 3,000 to 6,000 women.
- 13 Contemporary reports vary as to how many women were actually fired or quit.
- 14 A 1925 millinery textbook suggested a three-inch difference in hat size circumference between a bobbed and unbobbed head (Loewen 11).
- 15 It appears that, as First Lady, propriety may have kept Coolidge from bobbing her hair, though by the time of her husband's inauguration she was favoring a tight, bob-like marcel, braided in the back, that reputedly inspired many women unable or unwilling to commit to bobbing their own hair. See the 1923 photo, "Grace Coolidge," available at the Library of Congress website: <<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002712381/>>.
- 16 The writer suggests one possible reason why older leaders of the GFWC may have been reluctant to bob their hair: memory of how earlier women's rights activists Anna Elizabeth Dickinson and Anna Howard Shaw "were ridiculed because they cut their hair" (2). In her well-known autobiography, Shaw acknowledged the rhetorical challenges her short cut had presented in explaining her return to long hair: "I had learned that no woman in public life can afford to make herself conspicuous by any eccentricity of dress or appearance" lest she "injur[e] the cause she represents" (260).
- 17 Such reports might have inspired one of the cartoon illustrations that accompanied Parker's essay, a spiky buzzcut titled the "Sing Sing Sing" (9).

- 18 McMein, well established in New York bohemian circles, wore her own hair fashionably short. A successful commercial illustrator and portraitist, she is perhaps best known for her magazine covers for *McCall's* and other publications and for designing the first official image of Betty Crocker, used by General Mills from 1936-55. Hughes, who would have a brief career as an actress before marriage, would go on to place third in that year's Miss America contest; in reporting on the event, the *New York Times* noted that "not one of the four finalists had bobbed hair" ("Beauty Crown" 14).
- 19 The Polish-born Antoine [Antek Cierplikowski] gained fame first as a Parisian hairdresser and later as a stylist for a number of leading Hollywood actresses; he claimed to have invented the modern bob before World War I in cutting the hair of French stage actress Eve Lavallière for a part in which she was to play a teenager (Antoine 47-50).
- 20 Strom notes age-based tensions in the office between older women who wanted or needed to maintain permanent employment and younger women thought to be in the workforce only temporarily, amplified by a male-dominated environment that favored—and sexually objectified—beauty and youth (398-405).
- 21 Mary Louise Roberts speculates on the extent to which the bob in France offered actual liberation or an illusion of such, but acknowledges its symbolic import to wearers and observers.
- 22 Though the stock market crash likely contributed, headlines show their sharpest drop off from 1927 to 1928, suggesting that it was the ubiquity of the cut, rather than subsequent economic uncertainty, that displaced it from the news.
- 23 In 1900, there were 5,319,397 women in the labor force, with 948,731 engaged in white-collar work, 1,007,865 in farm work, and 3,362,801 in manual and service work; in 1930, there were 10,752,116 women in the labor force, with 4,756,263 in white-collar work, 907,789 in farm work, and 5,088,064 in manual and service work (U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Occupational Trends* 6). Figures have been approximated for comparison purposes (1).

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PQ= ProQuest; AHN=America's Historical Newspapers.

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## Mapping Topoi in the Rhetorical Gendering of Work

Sarah Hallenbeck and Michelle Smith

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In recent years, some very prominent women have engaged in public debates about whether women today can “have it all”: specifically, a successful and rewarding career and a rich and involved home life. Princeton law professor and former advisor to President Obama, Anne-Marie Slaughter, weighed in on this question in a controversial 2012 piece in *The Atlantic*, sharing her own experience as evidence that if women are to ever “have it all,” “. . . it is society that must change, coming to value choices to put family ahead of work just as much as those to put work ahead of family.” First in a popular TED Talk and then in a best-selling book, Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg offered a counter perspective, citing an “ambition gap” in younger working women and urging them to “lean in” to their jobs—asserting themselves vocally and physically, volunteering for more responsibilities, and not allowing careers to take a backseat to marriage and family. More recently, other women in leadership positions, such as PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi (Forbes), have since been asked for their perspectives, making the question of “having it all” a controversial issue for many career women.

This ongoing debate invites more feminist scholarly attention to the myriad ways in which women’s relationship to work is framed, whether through the contemporary lens of choice (by which women’s choices are individualized and divorced from larger, systemic issues shaping the options available to many women) or through other rhetorics that have, historically, influenced how we define and value both gender and particular forms of work. Such scholarship would build on feminist rhetorical historiographers’ ongoing efforts to recover the rhetorical practices of working women, which include women’s forays into professional occupations ranging from teaching (Enoch; Gold) to medicine (Wells; Skinner) to the sciences (Jack; Applegarth). However, whereas most existing scholarship has primarily considered how women develop agency in and through professional or work-related genres and discourses, a focus on work-related rhetorics would consider the rhetorical positioning of work itself—both as a broad concept and as it is manifested in specific occupational contexts. We argue that although feminist rhetoricians have attended carefully to women’s individual and collective rhetorical performances in professional contexts, we have not, as a field, often understood these projects as themselves constituting a particular sort of intervention crucial to feminist scholarship in rhetoric: one involving the rhetorical construction and valuing

of work.<sup>1</sup> That is, “work” has been both ever-present in our scholarship and simultaneously, somewhat tacit, invisible—under-theorized as a discrete area of study. This absence of self-conscious feminist scholarship on work makes us less equipped to intervene productively in public debates like the one that Slaughter, Sandberg, Nooryi, and others have recently ignited.

Yet feminist compositionists have established a substantial tradition of examining and critiquing the gendering, and subsequent devaluing, of the teaching of rhetoric and composition. Scholars like Susan Miller, Eileen Schell, and Donna Strickland have examined such labor-related issues as the rise of contingent faculty within the English Department and the disproportionate impact of the historical marginalization of composition studies on women faculty. Rhetoric and composition scholars looking beyond the purview of our profession might undertake similar investigations of the gendering of other workplaces, work tasks, and work arrangements—historical and contemporary.

After all, as the contemporary debate over “having it all” demonstrates, women’s work is more than just a venue for individual women’s rhetoric. Workplaces, work tasks, and work arrangements are also sites where gender and work themselves are rhetorically contested and constructed. Rhetorical scholarship in this area must therefore start from the understanding that careers, workspaces, and work tasks are differently gendered in different times and places. As feminist historian Linda Kerber intones, “The point is not only that the marketplace is segregated by gender; it is also that the segregation has been constantly under negotiation and constantly reaffirmed” (28). The erasure and invisibility of much of women’s work is an enduring problem, and rhetorical studies of women’s work can help reveal the ideological and rhetorical maneuvers that gender all work and render some women’s work natural, invisible, or inconsequential.

In this article we suggest that “work-related rhetorics” might offer feminist rhetoricians a robust, sustained area of inquiry, spanning both historical and contemporary research. Unearthing “work” as a historically situated, rhetorically constructed, materially contingent concept is an important project, as workplaces and professions are often key axes in the maintenance or disruption of gendered, raced, classed, and ability-based differences. Our retrospective understanding of the famous “separate spheres” of the nineteenth century, for example, is largely a rhetorical accomplishment that simultaneously renders invisible the work of women of all classes and establishes most paid jobs, from politics to plumbing, as “public” and therefore masculine. Similarly, the late twentieth-century image of the supposedly non-working “welfare queen” functions rhetorically to mask prejudice against black mothers—to demonize welfare rather than poverty by divorcing welfare recipients from socially valued forms of work. Although feminist rhetoricians have long

undertaken projects that tacitly challenge such blind spots, this essay suggests that we might do so more deliberately, with an eye not only to uncovering the particularities in each case but also to identifying common threads and strategies in the ongoing rhetorical co-construction of gender and work.

A self-conscious feminist consideration of work-related rhetorics offers a two-pronged appeal. First, it extends our efforts to locate and describe the rhetorical activities of women rhetors, past and present. Recovering the rhetoric of particular women workers helps to complicate problematic culturally dominant narratives about women's historical absence from professional spaces and practices as well as their gradual but steady linear progression toward full participation in civic and professional life. Additionally, work-related rhetorical investigations also support recent moves away from the individual speaking subject towards examinations of larger histories of gender. In addition to asking how women negotiated professional spaces and practices that were gendered masculine, scholars must explore how workspaces, professions, and tasks become gendered or regendered as masculine or feminine in different times and places. Thus, work-related rhetorics offer an important venue within which to undertake what Jordynn Jack has described as a "rhetorical history of gender": a history mapping the intersections of bodies, space, dress, and time in specific historical settings, a methodology particularly suited for explicating "the persistence of... gendered division[s] of labor" (299). Physical workspaces, temporal arrangements of work, work-related discourses, and preparatory training for work, after all, have worked consistently and powerfully to naturalize gender difference and grant masculine privilege as well as to deepen class-based and racial divides among women.<sup>2</sup> An explicit focus on work-related rhetorics will help to unmask the rhetorical mechanisms by which such privilege is granted and such alliances forestalled.

In this essay, we consider possible avenues for future scholarship in this important area of study. Although the boundaries of "work-related" feminist scholarship must be fluid and expansive to accommodate the rhetoricity of "work" itself, we suggest that such efforts might consider the following questions: to what extent is "work" itself a historically situated, rhetorically inflected concept? How do shifting commonplaces about "work" and "home" reflect relations overlapping with, but also exceeding, the public/private divide on which scholars have so often focused their attention? More specifically, scholars might attend to fluctuations in the value—including compensation—accorded to different types of work performed by women, in order to identify the rhetorical means by which women's work choices continue to be scrutinized in ways that men's are not. And perhaps most importantly, by what means—spatial, temporal, embodied, material, discursive—do constructs of gendered labor change over time, and to what ends do they change? Such questions

help to historicize the complex, always unstable relationship between gender and work and, in doing so, to expose a key node by which gender differences are and have been sustained, complicated, and upset.

In addition to offering some guiding questions and rationales for this work, we suggest three recurring threads, or *topoi*, in the gendering of work since the Industrial Revolution. These *topoi*—duty, education, and technology—are meant to help direct scholars to specific times and places where the rhetoric and lived practices of gendered work are likely to be in flux, offering new possibilities and vistas but also new articulations of power and dominance. Although there are countless possibilities for such scholarship, we argue that these *topoi* have consistently worked to naturalize, disturb, or otherwise resituate what constitutes “women’s work.”

Drawing from both Aristotle’s conception of *topoi* as “lines of argument” a rhetor might employ in appealing to a particular audience and more recent conceptions of *topoi* (see, for instance, Crowley or Lindquist) that emphasize the cultural origins of these lines, we suggest that duty, education, and technology have functioned since the Industrial Revolution as consistent lines of appeal in discussions of both men’s and women’s labor. Whether through nationalism or patriotism, identification with racial or class-based “uplift,” or the perceived need to embody the virtues of one’s group, the *topos* of duty shapes women’s working lives: influencing the range of professional choices available to them, the reception they receive in their work, and the cultural and financial value accorded their work. Through factors as varied as institutional or curriculum design, mentoring initiatives, and (re)distribution of material resources or access, the *topos* of education similarly influences what constitutes work suitable for women and the perceived significance of their achievements. Lastly, through the *topos* of technology, both the physical and rhetorical situating of new technological objects and changed material networks impact women’s access to and perceived expertise at work. Each of these *topoi* implicates space, time, bodies, and objects in the production of gender norms and gendered work. Each has been, and continues to be, implicated in debates about the nature, value, and proper trajectory of women’s work, and each thus offers fruitful study for feminist rhetoricians—both in considering historical accounts of gender and in developing effective contemporary interventions in the gendering of work.

In what follows, we first elaborate further on the rhetoricity and historicity of “work” as a concept deserving feminist rhetorical scholars’ sustained attention. We draw on diverse interdisciplinary scholarship to suggest how this subject addresses specific priorities and exigencies in feminist rhetoric, before considering how a rhetorical perspective can contribute to that scholarship. Next, we outline the three *topoi* we see as particularly productive in exploring

the inter-connectedness of rhetorical constructions of gender and work. For each topos, we offer two contrasting examples to illustrate how the trope is bound up with those constructions. In closing, we consider the role of these topoi in the contemporary debates with which we began this essay, demonstrating how each topos complicates the “rhetoric of choice” that currently defines these debates. While this essay cannot provide an exhaustive account of the benefits and possibilities of more attention to work-related rhetorics, we hope it successfully indicates a relative absence in historical and contemporary accounts of the rhetoric of gender.

### **Why Add Work to Rhetorical Histories of Gender?**

Scholars from a dizzying range of disciplines study questions related to women’s work. Beyond composition studies, labor historians, economists, anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, business scholars and numerous others investigate the contexts of women’s work and strive to recover the contributions of historical women. Thus, by attending to rhetorical constructions of work in their own scholarship, feminist rhetoricians can draw on and contribute to both intra- and interdisciplinary conversations. For instance, these scholars problematize constructions of male industrial laborers as “active” resisters and organizers and women domestic and farm laborers as “passive.” They examine the mechanisms by which women’s work becomes deskilled and devalued as well as those by which their agency for selecting work is constrained as compared to their male counterparts. Often, their efforts tacitly locate rhetoric at the center of their investigations. As anthropologist Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo noted back in 1980, “woman’s place in human social life is not in any direct sense a product of the things that she does (or even less a function of what, biologically, she is) but of the meaning her activities acquire through concrete social interactions” (400). More recently, feminist geographers Mona Domosh and Joni Seager have identified eleven strategies central to the “energetic ideological maneuvering” that has helped to “disappear” or minimize women’s work, among which are strategies depicting work in the home as done for love, women’s waged work as temporary, and women as naturally suited for certain jobs (40-42). Nearly all these strategies are rhetorical positionings of women’s work, and feminist rhetoricians are well-situated to extend this conversation and others like it, introducing helpful terms and methodologies for revealing the contingency and artificiality of commonplace assumptions about how work ought to be structured, valued, and compensated—as well as by whom it ought to be performed.

As part of this initiative, we ought to parse how discourse shapes our ideas about particular sorts of work, including the level of skill it requires, the sorts of working conditions it necessitates, and the relative value it merits. For

example, we might help to destabilize the rhetorical construction of the “masculine work norm” (Kobayashi xv). As historian Carole Turbin explains, this construct establishes as standard an uninterrupted workday and career and misrepresents women’s work as atypical: temporary or erratic, compromised by domestic and parenting obligations, and set in contrast to the supposedly steady and constant labor of male workers (48-49). Such characterizations distort the complexities of both women’s and men’s work and render invisible certain kinds of labor undertaken by many already marginalized workers, such as farm workers and workers who complete wage labor at home while caring for children. Whereas Turbin and others have focused primarily on the effects of the masculine work norm, rhetoricians might consider the discursive and material means by which this norm was produced, became stabilized, and remains subject to change. Whether it uncovers the emergence of masculine work norms within particular disciplines, through legal arguments, or within material or spatio-temporal contexts, this sort of project not only facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration, but also responds productively to feminist rhetoricians’ calls for examinations of what Jessica Enoch terms “the rhetorical process of gendering” (Octalog 115)—the rhetorical means by which gender differences are historically produced and naturalized.

In addition to expanding a broad scholarly conversation about women and work, however, a self-conscious feminist focus on work-related rhetorics also offers our field an important self-corrective methodological benefit: it will introduce labor as a useful alternative to political citizenship as the primary lens for understanding women’s rights and rhetoric. Though feminist rhetorical scholars’ efforts to recover women’s civic participation in historical and contemporary contexts have yielded important results, such work does not encompass the whole of women’s rhetorical activity. Similarly, the significant body of scholarship on rhetorical education primarily approaches this education as directed towards the civic sphere, largely neglecting rhetorical education in and for the workplace. In both these areas, a too-narrow focus on national citizenship and civic participation—one that makes suffrage or civic engagement its end goal, for instance—tends to leave unexamined the shortcomings of civic participation as a guarantor of political agency and visibility. That is, it leaves us prey to overlooking the ways that civic processes can themselves participate in the exclusion, domination, and persecution of women, racial and religious minorities, immigrants, and other marginalized groups.

By undertaking studies of work-related rhetorics, then, we shift our focus and make visible a different set of priorities: what historian Alice Kessler-Harris describes as women’s fight for “economic citizenship,” defined as “the possession and exercise of the privileges and opportunities necessary for men and women to achieve economic and social autonomy and independence”

(159). In other words, we unearth woman's struggle to choose her occupation and all that that entails: educational access, non-discriminatory hiring policies, adequate wages, a supportive social environment, reliable and safe transportation, and the ability to participate fully in her profession. Such an approach troubles artificial divisions between the economic and the political and, in the process, attends more critically to the tacit assumption that political engagement, in itself, necessarily affords the tools to acquire economic independence. Additionally, this approach exposes the paradox of economics, as it stands in relation to the rhetorical construction of public and private: though nineteenth-century norms positioned the home as the refuge from the market, the earlier model of oikos/polis suggested that the home (oikos) was the realm of need and thus of economics and that the polis, the arena of rhetoric and public deliberation, was separate from this feminine, economic sphere. In general, this scholarship considers the means by which women have been ideologically distanced from the capitalist marketplace, yet simultaneously and continually tasked with supplying bodily needs. It considers how this configuration might have emerged differently, and it offers indications of how we might yet influence its ongoing development.

Perhaps most importantly, rhetoricians should remember that most traditional rhetorical venues—the platform, the pulpit, the classroom, the press—are also workspaces. Thus, one compelling reason to include gendered work within rhetorical studies is that, insofar as men and women write, speak, or teach professionally, it is already there. Moreover, just as rhetorical venues are often workspaces, work, workspaces, and work training are extremely important dimensions of the rhetorical life of women. It is striking to think how much attention we pay to women's schooling and club activity, as though their working lives are not part of their rhetorical lives. This imbalance of attention might thus contribute to an unintentional, but crucial, classed blind spot in our histories of women's rhetoric. In short, then, a feminist rhetorical consideration of work-related rhetorics is an important project—one that will both facilitate our efforts to contribute to an ongoing interdisciplinary conversation and help us strengthen our own understanding of what constitutes and facilitates full political and economic citizenship.

### **work+gender+duty**

The first topos, duty, speaks to the social and rhetorical components of work—duty addresses how individuals understand and explain why they do the work they do, how their work informs their individual and group identities, and what contributions that work offers individuals, families, and communities. As such, understandings of duty—or, in its more contemporary guise, “service”—shape and influence choices, goals, ambition, careers deemed

desirable or available, views of paid employment versus other uses of time and energy, and self-constructions at the intersection of labor and identity. In addition, duty typically implies a responsibility to or for other people. While one might argue that it is one's duty to pursue self-actualization through vocation, this is not the dominant construction of work-duty. Rather, work-duty tends to be described as duty to others, whether specific others (family, local community) or larger publics (the nation, the poor, the unconverted, one's race or class, and so on). While duty (like material need or privilege) shapes the working choices of both men and women, duty often manifests in gendered terms.

Duty, then, operates differently in relation to men's and women's work. While most Western societies assume that men capable of working will do so, this assumption has not (at least since the nineteenth century) applied as universally to women (Domosh and Seager 36). More accurately, since women have always worked, it has not been assumed that most women will pursue paid work recognized as a career or profession. Because men's paid employment needs less justification, the rhetoric of duty operates for men primarily as a rationale for pursuing one form of work over another and only rarely as a reason for eschewing paid employment altogether. For women, on the other hand, duty is still often invoked to explain the decision to work for pay (or outside the home) or not.

Historically, understandings of women's duty have centered on "reproductive labor," including subsistence work (cooking, cleaning, sewing) and moral and spiritual care (childcare, early education, religious training).<sup>3</sup> While women's work for the family was expected, women's waged work has been consistently framed as temporary or as a response to national or family crisis, tropes that confirm the sense of women's work outside the home as unnatural and unusual (Domosh and Seager 40). In addition, research shows that contemporary working women—whether married, unmarried, divorced, or cohabiting—live closer to their workplaces than men, suggesting that women's historical relationship to the home still persists and influences their working lives in meaningful ways (Hanson and Pratt 153). Further, a 2011 study by the Working Mother Research Institute found that working and at-home mothers both experience high levels of guilt relating to their decisions about work and family: 51% of working mothers feel guilty about not having enough time with their kids, 55% of at-home mothers worry they aren't contributing enough to family finances, and both experience guilt about the appearance or cleanliness of their homes (44% of at-home and 55% of working mothers). Women are also disproportionately affected by cultural attitudes about working and raising children, such as the 2014 Pew Research Center finding that 60% of Americans believe that children are better off with a parent at home full time

(Cohn et al). Moreover, the call of duty informs and shapes not only women's "choice" of a career but also their responsibilities and evaluation within a career, where women are expected to do more "service" to others at work but are also more readily perceived as "distracted" by family duties.<sup>4</sup>

A work-related rhetorical analysis of duty, then, might investigate the discursive justifications and interpretations of women's work (paid or unpaid) alongside the material context and contributions of this work. A duty is different from a need—while a need might be empirically present, a duty is an obligation to others, an obligation constructed rhetorically as well as a materially. A family may need a member to contribute economically, but a mother's decision about when and how paid work justifies leaving her children (and in whose care) is constructed through her negotiation of these competing duties. A nation at war is an empirical fact, but whether it is one's duty to enlist in the armed forces, train and volunteer as a nurse, or work on the "home front" is a question of (gendered) duty. A work-related analysis of duty might ask: Where is work justified through economic—as opposed to moral, vocational, patriotic, or religious—duty? How is paid work elevated or marginalized in relation to family duties? What duties or service roles do men and women complete within particular professions? By examining moments when rhetorics of duty invite men and women into new work spaces and practices or when duty limits men's or women's work, rhetoricians can help denaturalize the rhetorical construction of work and gendered identity. Two specific examples illustrate several predominant forms of work-duty for women: family duty and patriotic duty.

The case of women in the shoemaking industry in the mid-nineteenth century illustrates the formidable adaptability of constructions of family duty, even in the face of unprecedented change to nearly all aspects of men's and women's work. Traditionally, shoemaking was a family business in which women played a vital but subservient, often invisible role. While male family members worked in the shoemaker's shop, women were taught to sew only the top piece of the shoe, a menial task completed alongside household chores. Historian Mary H. Blewett relates that these women were not considered apprentices or taught the full trade, but rather a source of "free" unskilled labor for their brothers, fathers, and husbands (37). Their familial duty called them to support the family business without taking ownership or credit for their work, illustrating that the economic contributions of women's home work often included unacknowledged market-directed labor, their contributions masked by the rhetoric of duty embedded in the hierarchy of the family business. As the century progressed, shoemaking moved from the home to small stores, where bosses hired women to do piecework or "outwork" from home (Blewett 39). Eventually, with the advent of the factory system, women

remained in the shoemaking industry as wage workers in factories. Factory work offered new opportunities: for the first time, women could work full-time outside the home with a community of peers and earn, on average, three times the pay for sewing shoes as outwork (Blewett 41).

A cursory glance might see factory work as liberating women from repressive family duties, but a feminist rhetorical project could reveal the role that duty—as commonplace or ideograph—played in maintaining women’s ties to family and home, even as they entered the factory. Most shoemaking factory girls lived at home and submitted their wages to their parents, just as they did any cash earned doing outwork for neighbors or local businesses (Blewett 44). Factory work was temporary, a way to help the family before marriage—the start of a new family. A rhetorical analysis might build on Blewett’s important historical work by considering a variety of rhetorical artifacts: written accounts of family shoemaking businesses; women’s journals, letters, and diaries; advertisements for factory jobs; physical designs, rules, and guidebooks for factories, and so on. Such a project might ask: How were women invited out of their unacknowledged home work and into the factory system? What benefits were these positions meant to offer women or their families? And, most importantly, how did the rhetoric of family duty shift to accommodate the need for female workers in factories? Indeed, the rhetoric of family duty was appropriated by factories in an attempt to domesticate factory spaces and relationships, assuring the girls and their families that these women workers were not being “unfit” for their future roles as wives and mothers (Weiner 5).<sup>5</sup> Bosses were framed as substitute parents, fellow workers as “sisters.” Factory work unable to maintain this homelike veneer, mill jobs in particular, became the domain of immigrant, black, and poor women already excluded from pure womanhood (Weiner 14-18). Though women’s familial duty is often tied to constructions of the home, in this case family duty maintains its rhetorical efficacy even as women leave the home for the factory. In the case of shoemaking, women workers were persistently constructed as wives, sisters, and mothers first—and workers second, in service to that primary role, and all to the benefit of the new capitalist system.

A second example considers another common construction of work duty for both men and women—patriotic duty. From revolutionary-era Republican mothers to Clara Barton and the Red Cross, women supported many historical war efforts, long before Rosie the Riveter. Men, of course, are also called to serve the nation in such times, but the sharp divide between wartime patriotic duty for men and women is undeniable. A male figure on Rosie’s famous “We Can Do It” poster would be an icon of shame, not of strength, a sign of an unmanly unwillingness to go to war. Just as men might be ostracized for inhabiting the feminine models of patriotism popularized in public memory, women

have faced direct opposition to engaging in combat. Historically relegated to clerical and mechanical roles in the armed forces, women have enjoyed the same enlistment qualifications as men since 1979. Still, women were prohibited from direct combat until January 24, 2013, when Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta revoked the 1994 ban on women in combat, acknowledging that, for over a decade, American women have been fighting and dying in wars where the front lines are not clearly defined (Panetta).

While striking down the ban on women in combat removed one of the last sanctioned barriers to women's equal right to work, the new face of women's patriotic duty will depend on the ban's implementation. Besides Panetta's statement lifting the ban, key documents to consider in a rhetorical study of this case might include previous court cases about women in the military, any requested or granted exceptions to the new rule (permitting particular branches to maintain gender segregation in certain instances), documentation of the new gender-neutral qualifications and procedures being developed to test women's combat abilities; personal testimony and memoirs of soldiers; and discourse opposing women in combat (from the Center for Military Readiness, for example). A rhetorical examination of the issue might ask: What motivations other than national duty inform men and women's decisions to join the military? How will the new "gender neutral" qualifications for combat positions frame men's and women's patriotic duty and physical abilities? How might masculine constructions of patriotism and war be complicated by women's enlistment with the Selective Service System (the draft)? Already, the United States Marine Corps is developing new procedures for training and testing women that will necessarily involve interpretations of gender difference in women's and men's bodies.

Importantly, arguments opposing women in combat also highlight the starkly masculinized rhetoric of war and combat. These arguments position women as an abstract goal men fight for (either a specific woman back home, or the generic "women and children" needing protection), a motivating force allegedly undermined by the presence of actual women in combat. Predictions that male soldiers will experience instinctual and insurmountable urges to protect women soldiers (even at the cost of the mission) disregard the historical sexual abuse of civilian women in warzones and the recent visibility of sexual assault within the United States military itself. In this light, such a study might convincingly unpack the gendering of masculine patriotic duty, brought into sharp relief by the prospect of women in combat.

Besides demonstrating the scope and range of studies of gender, work, and duty, these two examples also highlight methods for identifying likely research topics. The shoemaking example addressed a moment of rapid change in working conditions during the Industrial Revolution. Such times of

workforce upheaval will often demand new constructions of duty, gender, and work, as groups of women or men are deemed necessary or superfluous in particular roles and industries. The second example considered an archetype of duty-based work—the patriotic soldier—and questioned the stubborn masculinity of that role. This example proposes that scholars seek out inconsistencies—places where a particular form of duty calls women or men into a line of work or into certain roles within a profession, but also sites where duty is trumped by or helps to maintain persistent gendered boundaries.

### **work+gender+education**

In popular understandings, education is both a barrier to and a conveyer of the “economic citizenship” that historian Alice Kessler-Harris argues is only fully realized when one is able to select work on the basis of her skills and preferences, rather than basic needs (her own or her family’s). To be certain, “getting an education,” as we often put it, dramatically expands one’s agency as a worker, primarily by increasing access to different career paths and offering more options among which a worker may “choose.” Doing so improves one’s capacity to obtain rewarding, well-compensated work, to influence decisions and strategies in the workplace, and to move up the work hierarchy beyond the so-called “entry level.” The relationship between education and these possibilities is commonplace—we encourage our children to pursue education because we assume a tight, natural link between education and opportunity.

Yet education—in form, duration, intensity, and relevance—is only as powerful as the rhetorical forces that authorize it as a primary marker of a worker’s skill and value. As educational access is constrained or expanded, the values attached to particular sorts of work change, as well; education functions as a means of narrowing the field of practitioners and accepted methods and practices. In 1850, for instance, neither surgeons nor engineers nor lawyers required any particular sort of education; by 1950, each required its own highly standardized form of schooling and credentialing, rigorously monitored by national professional organizations. Similar shifts occurred in numerous fields, in some cases reversing educational and economic gains made by women at the turn of the twentieth century; the 1906 Flexnor report, for example, promoted a laboratory-based medical school curriculum in line with the principles of modern scientific medicine, but also discredited and eliminated many fledgling medical schools for women (Wells 6). A rhetorical project investigating the inter-animation of gender, work, and education might scrutinize these shifts in access, following such excellent models as Applegarth (anthropology) or Wells (medicine).

However, a primary focus on access to education in some ways reinforces the notion that education itself, once attained, is a neutral or universally

empowering experience for the initiate. The continuing gender pay gap between college-educated men and women (when controlled for other variables) is reason enough to doubt that educational access can resolve work-related gender inequality. As women continue to earn less than men, they also have more difficulty paying for that education, struggling with disproportionately burdensome student loan debt. And some speculate that women will remain reluctant to take on high-stress, high-power positions, knowing that they'll earn less than men in those roles (Bloch). A different sort of rhetorical project might interrogate this singular emphasis on educational access by examining how rhetorical aspects of an educational setting—topics, readings, pedagogies, course offerings, interactions among teachers and students, assignments, and evaluation procedures—also value and devalue particular forms of work. Such a project might examine the links between formal educational settings and the workplaces to which they theoretically lead, surveying a broad range of sites: general and explicitly professional, formal and informal, elite and accessible.

One example of a historical project investigating a particular educational site in relation to work and gender might involve the domestic and industrial training schools for young African American men and women during the early twentieth century. Alongside a regular high school curriculum, such schools provided employable skills ranging from agriculture to dressmaking to domestic service and often tasked students with the ongoing project of "racial uplift." One such school, The National Training School for Women and Girls, opened in Washington, DC, in 1909 under the direction of Nannie Helen Burroughs, a 31-year-old civil rights activist and religious leader from the local black community. Unlike other training schools funded primarily by white foundations, Burroughs' school was funded mostly by black supporters, and Burroughs not only populated her Board of Trustees with black women but also offered an adult summer school for women focused on social service and community organizing (Wolcott 96).

As historian Victoria Wolcott has argued, then, Burroughs' school was a remarkable place, despite its explicit curricular focus on domestic skills and "the three Bs"—Bible, bath, and broom. It is easy to understand its role in providing students with both employable skills and tools for building community, even as one critiques the limitations of those skills. Yet a rhetorical project might investigate how those skills have been framed as requiring formal education in the first place. Burroughs indicated that women's preparation for domestic work "ranks next in importance to preparation of their souls for the world to come" (Wolcott); how did the high value she placed on this education impact the employment prospects for those who did not attend, but who sought work as domestics? What sorts of longstanding domestic practices were lost or devalued as the result of focus on providing "relevant" skills, and what were emphasized

anew? How did these shifts in the value accorded—and the procedures attached—to different work tasks affect women, and how did women respond to these shifts?

Additionally, such a project might consider the ways that Burroughs balanced the school's two, somewhat contradictory missions: to prepare students for domestic work and to empower them through public service and community projects. How did Burroughs relate the high value she placed on domestic education alongside her commitment to training students for uncompensated community work related to racial uplift? How did her valuing of both forms of work overlap with, complicate, or contradict dominant cultural valuations of work undertaken by particular raced, classed, and gendered bodies? Such questions might be asked alongside inquiry into students' trajectories as they entered the working world, with scholars investigating the sorts of paid work graduates obtained and the role of their uncompensated community projects in their working lives. In general, a rhetorical project along these lines might usefully extend work by historians of rhetoric and composition, such as Susan Jarratt and David Gold, to include not only historically black colleges as sites for civic preparation, but also training schools as sites for employment-related rhetorical instruction.

In contrast to an educational initiative seeking to credentialize and standardize a previously accessible task, rhetoricians might also investigate sites that seek explicitly to diversify the range of workers within particular fields. For instance, a feminist project might examine the recent push to offer coding and web development classes to youth and adults from underrepresented groups—an initiative stemming in part from a larger cultural initiative to encourage women to enter STEM fields. Non-profit organizations such as CODE, Girl Develop IT, and Black Girls Code all seek to create supportive environments for women and girls to learn web development, a job skill much in demand even in an economy with high unemployment. These organizations combine technical offerings with instruction in public speaking, resume building, and other career-related skills that, while available elsewhere, are politicized in this context by their explicit purpose to empower women. The non-profit Girl Develop IT, for instance, includes an international network of meet-ups in major cities, from Sidney to Pittsburgh; interested women can join meet-ups for free and enroll in low-cost classes meeting in the evenings and on weekends. Scholarships, sponsored by partner organizations from the IT industry, are available for those who cannot afford the courses. Nevertheless, the organization strives to remain informal; classes are non-degree or certificate oriented and students simply enroll in classes offering skills they feel would benefit their work or recreation (Girl Develop IT).

A feminist rhetorical project investigating Girl Develop IT might consider how education is framed in relation to employment, asking: to what extent

are the organization's classes offered as a means of career advancement, and to what extent are they framed as providing a more general form of empowerment? What sort of education is a tacit prerequisite for the Girl Develop IT courses, even as the organization promotes accessibility? To what extent are these courses recognized by employers as legitimate credentials in themselves? Additionally, a project investigating Girl Develop IT or similar initiatives might consider how gender is framed in the organization's promotional materials, fundraising efforts, curriculum, and pedagogy: what images of women are featured in promotional materials for Girl Develop IT, and to what ends? How does the curriculum differ from and overlap with similar courses not catered specifically to women? In general, what sort of worker does Girl Develop IT produce, and where does this worker fit into larger workplaces and social institutions?

Of course, considering the rhetorical implications of various types of schooling is hardly a new project for feminist rhetoricians, who have long sought to unearth the contributions of women and the development of rhetorical pedagogies. However, we might make it an explicit priority to expand our considerations of both formal and informal schooling beyond the project of historicizing rhetorical education toward the study of how a wide range of educational sites help to produce, challenge, and complicate gender norms. Sites of education are powerful loci within which students develop an intellectual and physical habitus, and thus often serve to naturalize gendered, classed, and raced relations. Additionally, education is inseparable from workplaces, in the sense that the nature of one's education shapes and continues throughout one's work life, for better or for worse. Although it is problematic to see educational sites strictly as "windows of opportunity," they are certainly mediators between home and work and are thus worthy of consideration within a larger project concerning the valuing of different sorts of work.

## **work+gender+technology**

A third and final topos—that of technology—addresses the means by which new technologies are often understood to "naturally" redistribute the values, spaces, temporal arrangements, activities, and bodily performances attached to work. Working conditions are inextricably attached to technological objects, from the cotton gin to the clock to the word processor. These objects influence every aspect of labor, from necessary skills and training to desired outcomes and bodily dispositions. Through technological change, skills that were once highly valued because they were so labor intensive may become automatic—the work of barely skilled technicians. Conversely, tasks that could be done by hand, in the home, may become consolidated and standardized—or vice versa. Through technological change, workers' autonomy

waxes and wanes; their ability to organize, their capacity for innovation, and their relationships to home, family, and community shift. And, in turn, dominant constructions of gender—the terms by which gender difference is articulated—shift. If, as sociologist Judy Wajcman has argued, gender and technology are mutually constructed, work is strongly implicated in that construction.

Yet this mutual construction of work, gender, and technology is not accomplished strictly through material means, but through rhetorical interventions that strengthen certain material arrangements and weaken others, that succeed when they approximate a “natural” way of things, and that are difficult to dislodge because of the habitus they produce in workers. Technologies themselves, as objects introduced into complex social environments, do not alone produce “necessary” or “inevitable” or even entirely welcome changes. Rather, the particular uses to which objects are put are authorized over time through the deliberate rhetorical action of various stakeholders and widespread commonplaces about the benefits, inevitability, and linearity of technological change. For example, the link between these objects and greater efficiency, the shared cultural sense that technological innovation is a crucial element of market dominance and a “competitive edge,” and the value accorded to the production of highly-standardized (or recognizably unique) products or processes are all arguments consistently deployed in conjunction with material technological change. Such commonplace arguments make visible certain priorities while necessarily obscuring others. For instance, the perceived need for greater efficiency—exemplified by Henry Ford’s assembly line and the principles of Taylorism—drove technological change during the early twentieth century, marginalizing concerns about the dehumanization of workers or the loss of artisanal skills. The link between certain technologies and efficiency authorized a particular order of things that could have been otherwise.

In general, while new technological objects are often implicated in the redistribution of labor and wages and in shaping other economic and social concerns of importance to workers, they are not singlehandedly responsible for these changes, which are actually accomplished in part through rhetorical maneuverings. By examining discourses surrounding or emerging from technological changes that impact workplaces, feminist rhetoricians might help to complicate commonplaces that situate particular (gendered) power relationships as natural or inevitable. More specifically, a rhetorical project that examines women’s work in relation to technology might consider a particular moment of significant change, exploring how women workers were repositioned spatially, temporally, or hierarchically by that change and/or how they intervened productively in its instantiation.

The invention of the telegraph in the late 1840s offers one powerful example of the ways in which women’s work with technology becomes valued

and devalued through rhetorical means, often to the benefit of employers and investors. Though within twenty years the new device would play a crucial role in developing the still-nascent railroad and revolutionize Americans' ability to communicate across space and time, in its early years the telegraph industry was, as historian Thomas Jepson notes, "perennially strapped for cash" (61), its ultimate social and economic impact uncertain. Early promoters were tasked with creating the vast, widely distributed network of telegraphers who would relay messages reliably across the country—an expensive enterprise without which the new machine could not demonstrate its utility to the American people. Telegraph companies needed highly literate, reliable workers willing to live and work in rural, mostly illiterate, often remote areas. John J. Speed of the Erie and Michigan Telegraph line proposed that his company hire women, whom they could pay less than men and who, he argued, were more qualified than "any boy, or man, that we can afford to pay in those places" (qtd. in Jepson 4). Hence, women for a brief period near the end of the nineteenth century gained access—albeit through wage discrimination—to a highly technical form of work that required them not only to display their literacy skills and to learn Morse code, but to have some knowledge of electricity, to work alongside men through all hours and under intense pressure (as one mistake could result in a train accident, in some cases), and to be extremely mobile and independent from their families.

On the surface this moment of expansion of women's work appears to emerge naturally alongside a new technology—a consequence of supply and demand and a match between skills needed and skills possessed. However, a robust rhetorical project might investigate how the early gendering of telegraphy was accomplished through discourse: advertisements for workers highlighting particular skills or offering particular benefits, instructional material at the many telegraphy schools that emerged in the late nineteenth century, company records documenting the monetary, spatial, or temporal structure of work offered to women, newspaper portraits or interviews with successful women telegraphers, or the like. Such a project might ask: on what grounds were women's lower wages justified? How were most women telegraphers gradually marginalized within the profession of telegraphy, as telegraphy became more established and as telegraphy offices developed complex workplace hierarchies? By the 1880s, in many city telegraphy offices, women telegraphers were often assigned to the "ladies department," tasked with delivering "personal records and local traffic," while their better paid male affiliates were given responsibility for larger news items (Jepson 21). To substantiate this shift, male telegraphers sometimes accused their female colleagues of "clipping," which Jepson describes as an "affected sending mannerism in which the proper duration was not given to each dot or dash" (24)—a complaint that women

contested. Through this sort of discourse, certain practices within telegraphy were gendered and rendered less desirable over time; labor divisions were rooted in (questionable) characterizations of feminine and masculine performance, proclivities, and availability. Examining this moment or a similar one—in which a technology upsets the gendered landscape of work, which then adjusts itself through largely rhetorical means—helps feminist rhetoricians to denaturalize the contours of men's and women's work.

A different rhetorical project might investigate the emergence of a contemporary technology still unfolding, with important potential labor implications for women. For example, the advent of virtual workspaces ought to be of particular interest to feminist rhetoricians, as a recent *Forbes* article predicts that by 2016, 63 million Americans will work in virtual environments—nearly double the number (34 million) who did so in 2010 (Meyer). Jobs ranging from pharmaceutical sales to software engineering and even elementary school teaching are moving partially or entirely online. Some companies are investing heavily in software and infrastructure that will enable not only cloud-based sharing of documents and video conferencing, but virtual offices featuring interactions among avatars controlled by workers situated around the world. Employers and promoters of this shift celebrate the virtual workplace's potential to reduce company overhead, increase workers' productivity and job satisfaction, and facilitate workers' need for both temporal and geographic flexibility. Opponents of virtual work, meanwhile, often lament the loss of accountability, mentorship, and collaboration that they suggest can emerge only through face-to-face interaction. Both the potential advantages and pitfalls of virtual work environments have material implications for women's career training, promotion, and salary, as well as for the gendering and valuing of particular kinds of work. At the same time, realistically, neither a utopian nor a dystopian view of the potential of virtual workspaces is likely an adequate descriptor for the changes a worker, woman or man, will experience as she or he makes the transition from a physical workspace to a virtual one.

A feminist rhetorical project that considers the development of virtual workspaces might investigate the mechanisms of this transition as it unfolds in one specific context. Recently, for example, a well-respected pharmaceutical testing company began to train its auditors using a virtual platform that allowed trainers to work from home in places scattered around the globe. For some, this platform offered great job flexibility; for others, it created stress by requiring new skillsets, such as the navigation of avatars on a virtual "campus." Long accustomed to working with new employees in a traditional classroom space, these workers were asked to adapt their interactions, pedagogies, and job tasks to a virtual platform in order to keep their jobs. A project that considers this company's transition could follow individual trainers and new workers

to identify how the shift impacted their work lives. The project would attend to the sorts of technology training and skills valued in the new space, the advantages and disadvantages of a “flexible” time schedule, and the ways the shift enabled or constrained workers’ ability to “choose” their career trajectory. A researcher could evaluate, over time, how the relative value of different positions—from IT support, to trainer, to receptionist—evolved in the new work environment, as well as how avatars made use of or discarded gendered rhetorical resources. Establishing a variety of rhetorically based, site-specific feminist interventions into the evolving contemporary workplace would not only enrich our own scholarship; it would provide an important practical access point for informed public intervention into a contemporary shift already underway.

Whether it involves inquiry into the present or past, investigating the complex relations among technology, gender, and work is a potentially fruitful project for feminist scholars of rhetoric. Doing so will allow us to consider more fully one powerful means by which work—whether it involves technical skills, customer service, or manual labor—becomes radically devalued, affirmed, or regendered with and through technology. In an era in which technological development and innovation are revered for their perceived influence and importance, such projects could provide important insights for feminists seeking both to accommodate and capitalize on the technology bandwagon and to critique a technology for what it leaves behind.

## Conclusion

Since the 2013 publication of *Lean In*, Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg has enjoyed high public visibility—authoring a follow up text intended for young professionals, *Lean In for Graduates*, and launching Lean In, a non-profit organization for women’s advancement that features a network of “lean In circles”—small groups of women in communities around the country who, according to the organization’s website, meet to “enjoy the power of peer support” and “learn and grow together” ([leanincircles.org](http://leanincircles.org)). Despite the popularity of these initiatives, however, commentators from bell hooks to Maureen Dowd have regularly criticized Sandberg for her insistence that individual women ought to take responsibility for their own professional success or failure—that they ought to “lean in” to their work in order to advance, rather than focusing on the larger institutional structures that make these advances difficult.

As we suggested in the introduction to this article, Sandberg’s approach exemplifies the pervasive rhetoric of choice in the current landscape of women’s work. This rhetoric of choice individualizes women’s decisions, tending to distract from the larger, systemic factors shaping, even controlling the options from among which women can choose. For example, many women in

low-paying positions find that full-time child care would cost more than their salaries. Ironically, many such professions are in the “caring” industries dominated by women—teaching, social work, counseling, elder care, and so on. In this context, a decision to stay home and care for children rather than work at a financial loss is a choice, but by no means a free choice based on whether a woman would prefer to stay home or go to work—even less an expression of that woman’s identity as a stay-at-home or a working mother. And both Slaughter and Sandberg hint at a second consequence of the rhetoric of choice: that the tug-of-war between work and family is seen as just that—a finite trade-off, as if there is no way to harmonize these competing realms, no perspective (other than an economic perspective) in which cherishing one’s work is good for one’s family, or vice versa. The very notion that women must “balance” work and family implies an opposition between the two realms, as we rarely speak of “balancing” mutually enriching aspects of our lives.

Throughout the debate over whether women can “have it all” and the rhetoric of choice implying that having it all is impossible, the three topoi introduced in this article continue to do important rhetorical work. Duty, for example, takes center stage in the much-publicized “mommy wars” between working and stay at home mothers. The phenomenon itself implies that, culturally, women’s (or at least mothers’) primary duty is to the family, not to her work. The central question, here, is whether a woman can be a good mother while working—not whether she can succeed professionally while being a mother. Education also remains central to women’s working lives, though success in the classroom or the academy doesn’t always transfer to successful, happy careers. Increased educational access ideally expands the possible choices for women’s work; however, as in the case of STEM, educational sites themselves are sometimes complicit in discouraging women from pursuing particular career paths. Technology is perhaps the topos most often implicated in promises that women can have it all, enabling professionals to work from home more easily (or stay in touch with family while working—permitting that much-desired “balance”). Yet such flexible policies (including flex days and other deviations from the typical workday or workweek) can limit networking and professional advancement—one rationale behind Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer’s unpopular decision to ban telecommuting. Again, women’s “choices” to take advantage of these opportunities are choices, but they are also highly constrained, and the rhetoric of choice obscures as much as it reveals.

The broad applicability of these three topoi—duty, education, and technology—to contemporary as well as historical situations highlights the relevance of feminist rhetorical considerations of work-related rhetorics. The topoi represent a set of questions at the core of work-related feminist rhetorical scholarship: to what factors do we owe women’s position with regard to

different kinds of work? Have institutional forces thwarted women's efforts to advance professionally to the highest levels of influence, or should women be self-reliant, finding individual strategies for "leaning in" within those systems in order to change them? Can the rhetoric and reality of women's paid work ever change significantly without a concomitant shift in understandings or arrangements of men's role in unpaid, reproductive labor?

This article—and the body of work for which it calls—offers one approach to addressing these questions so as to historicize women's relationship to different areas of work, to complicate the easy dichotomy of "having it all" versus failing to do so, and to upset the implied linearity of women's progress that often characterizes the contemporary debate. By focusing not on dichotomies, such as the zero sum game of "having it all" or the "do we blame ourselves or the system?" question, but on particular moments of change in their historical context, we can see how women's professional and personal lives, as well as the boundaries between them, are shaped by many different forces—personal, historical, professional, and material—that perhaps make "having it all" a self-defeating question. We can honor but also contextualize the sorts of interventions that Sandberg offers in her advice to "lean in"—essentially, to accept the masculine work norm in order to change that norm from within—while at the same time addressing the institutional or structural obstacles Slaughter describes. Perhaps most importantly, we can texture the larger conversation about women and work, attending to those who are rendered invisible by the terms of this debate: the vast majority of women workers for whom nearing "the top" of business, law, or government is not even a possibility, much less a "choice" to balance alongside family life.

At the same time as attention to work-related rhetorics offers a corrective to contemporary dichotomies, this project provides an important opportunity for scholars in rhetoric and composition to complicate our longstanding focus on rhetoric as a tool for political and civic engagement. It offers a lens that makes visible a vibrant, but understudied, arena for women's rhetorical activity—workplaces. Moreover, it encourages us to consciously expand our attention not only to the rhetorical lives of professional women, but also to workers, more broadly, whose energies might have been focused not on civic life, but on negotiating issues of more immediate personal concern: wages, access to and compensation for specific skills, and the role of work in constructions of personal identity and broader social interventions.

Additionally, work-related rhetorics enrich scholarly efforts to explore "rhetorics of gendering" as a feminist rhetorical project. As Jessica Enoch and Jordynn Jack have asserted, gendering occurs through rhetorical-material means: not only in texts, but also in particular physical spaces, in temporal arrangements, and in specific arrangements of objects. A work-related rhetorical

project might engage with any or all of these elements, yet it also considers gendering as nearly inextricable from conceptions of work, a slippery but powerful rhetorical construct.

By tracing the complex rhetorical life of various forms of work, we gain a more precise understanding not only of how gender difference is maintained, but how it is transformed. The topoi of duty, education, and technology, we argue, serve as recurring nodes in the revaluing and redistribution of work, with reverberating impacts on all aspects of the material world, from workspaces to time schedules to compensation. Still, we must emphasize that duty, education, and technology are hardly an exhaustive list of work-related topoi; we are confident that many other threads weave their way through particular justifications, resistances, and tensions within work-related rhetorics. Nevertheless, these three topoi help to naturalize gender performances, and they can also be enlisted to produce change, inside and outside the workplace. Like work and gender, each is a rhetorical construct; in conjunction with work and gender, each produces a particular range of rhetorical and material conditions for women's labor that is all too often disguised within a "rhetoric of choice:" the illusion that an individual may choose her destiny unfettered by gender norms.

## Notes

- 1 Two notable exceptions are Jordynn Jack's "Acts of Institution: Embodying Feminist Rhetorical Methodologies in Space and Time," which appeared in *Rhetoric Review* 28.3, and Jessica Enoch's "A Woman's Place Is in the School: Rhetorics of Gendered Space in Nineteenth-Century America," in *College English* 70.3.
- 2 By "naturalize," we refer to the processes by which rhetorical or socially constructed phenomena are made to seem unproblematically biological (or "natural") in origin. For instance, the complex means by which women are channeled into caring-related fields often "naturalize" the commonplace that women are biologically or intellectually suited to those careers. In this way, gender differences are made to seem "natural," unavoidable, or inevitable.
- 3 Sociologists of work use the term "reproductive labor" or "social reproduction" to describe women's unpaid work in the home, an effort to increase the visibility and status of this mental, manual, and emotional labor (see Brenner and Laslett).
- 4 For instance, a recent study by Heilman and Chen found that women get less credit than men for engaging in altruistic behaviors (like staying late to help a colleague) at work, but are penalized more harshly if they

do not “go the extra mile.” Other studies illustrate the different ways that parenthood affects one’s work, operating through what sociologist Michelle Budig calls the “fatherhood bonus” and “motherhood penalty.”

- 5 Jack has traced similar attempts to relate factory work to domestic work during World War II (“Acts” 294).

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## A Community of Beloved Femmes: The Cultivation of Radical Self-Love in *Femme Shark Communique #1*

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In 2008, collaborators and close friends, Zuleikha Mahmood and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, declared “WE’RE A FUCKING MIRACLE” in their handmade, hand-circulated zine, *Femme Shark Communique #1: All Our Holes Are Hungry: Hungry for Justice and Fucking*<sup>1</sup> (8). The zine features the “Femme Shark Manifesto,” which had previously been posted and shared online, as well as an instruction manual for potential femme sharks, lists of historical and possible femme sharks and femme-shark-themed movies, DIY recipes for crafts and drinks, and hand-drawn sharks with eyelashes (Fig. 1). Within the pages of the zine, which was circulated in progressive and queer spaces in the San Francisco Bay area, Mahmood and Piepzna-Samarasinha reject the subjugation of queer femme women of color in the public sphere and mainstream feminist and queer communities. Instead, Mahmood and Piepzna-Samarasinha, two queer women of color, celebrate themselves and their community in an attempt to reclaim the femme identity through radical self-love. Although *Femme Shark Communique #1* is no longer distributed offline, it maintains a powerful influence in queer women activist communities through online references to, and reproductions of, the zine. Even today, numerous Twitter and Tumblr users identify as Femme Sharks in their profiles, signifying the lasting influence of the now defunct zine. The reason for the cultural impact of this briefly published local zine can be found within its pages: *Femme Shark Communique #1* delivers a call to queer women of color and their allies to define themselves on their own terms and to celebrate their bodies, experiential knowledge, and relationships with one another. In a world where women are often told they must subscribe to a specific ideal to earn praise or love—thin, white, blonde, passive, codependent—the Femme Shark rejection of outside validation and celebration of self-worth is indeed defiant. But radical self-love cultivated in the zine is not only about the individual; rather, the rhetorical crafting of radical self-love in *Femme Shark Communique #1* establishes a collective identity of resistance centered on praxis, wherein a radical self-love transforms individual outcasts into an empowered and active community.

In this essay, I argue that Piepzna-Samarasinha and Mahmood<sup>2</sup> call forth a new community through their rhetorical enactment of radical self-love. In this essay, I define radical self-love as the individual and communal practice

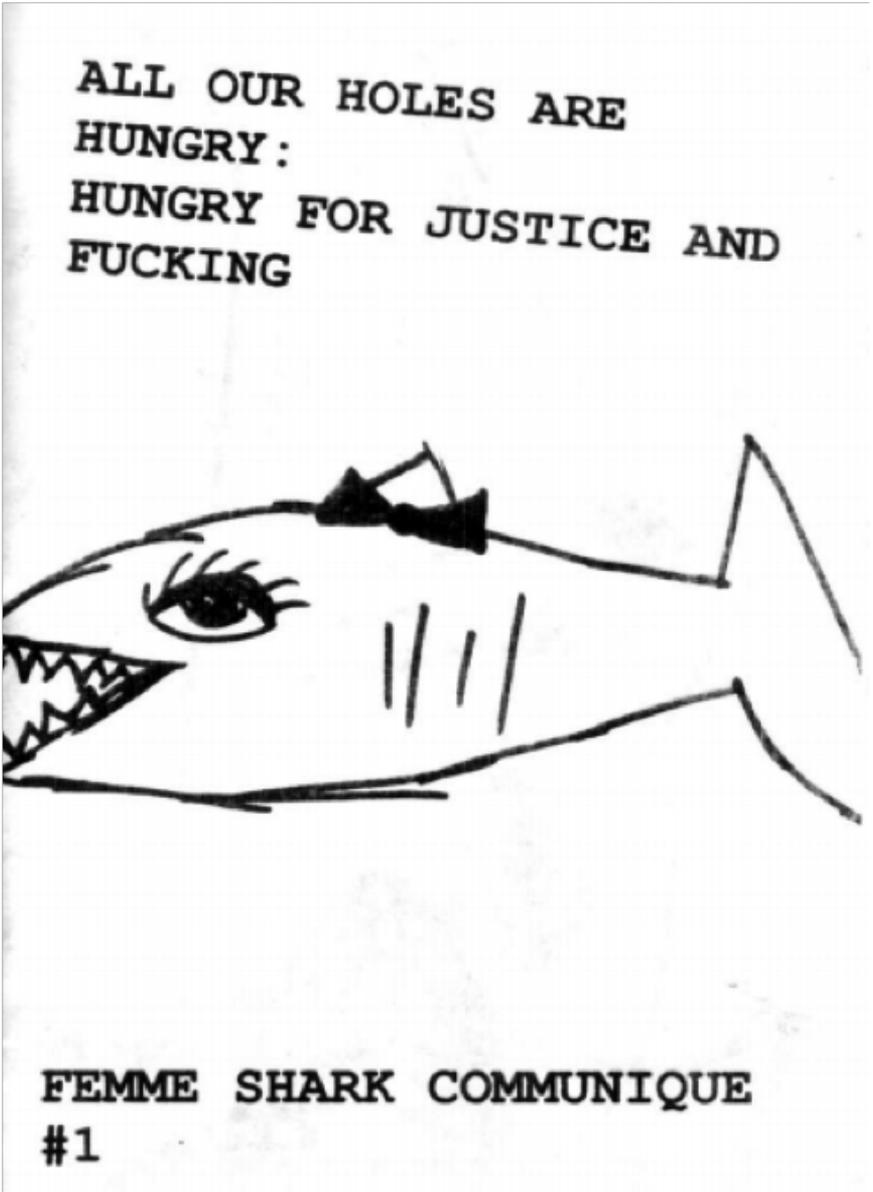


Figure 1: Cover of *Femme Shark Communique* #1.

**FEMME SHARKS AREN'T JUST DIMEPIECES AND TROPHY WIVES  
FUCK THAT!  
WE MIGHT BE YOUR GIRL,  
BUT WE'RE OUR OWN FEMMES.  
WE RECOGNIZE THAT FEMMES ARE LEADERS OF OUR COMMUNITIES.  
WE HOLD IT DOWN, CALM YOUR TEARS, ORGANIZE THE RALLY, VISIT YOU IN JAIL, GET CHILDCARE HOOKED UP, LOAN YOU TWENTY DOLLARS.  
FEMMES ARE WELDERS, AFTERSCHOOL TEACHERS, ABORTION CLINIC WORKERS, STRIPPERS, WRITERS, FACTORY WORKERS, MOMS, REVOLUTIONARIES DEDICATED TO TAKING THE SYSTEM THE HELL DOWN SO WE CAN BE FREE!**

Figure 2: An excerpt of “The Femme Shark Manifesto” as published in *Femme Shark Communique #1*

of reclaiming marginalized identities as worthy of love, care, and celebration. By addressing both self-identified and potential Femme Sharks, Piepzn-Samarasinha and Mahmood fulfill their stated objective to create “sleeper cells of Femme Sharks spreading the fierceness everywhere” (12). To make this claim, I focus on several short written pieces, including “Femme Shark Manifesto” and “How to Be a Shark,” which are all published in their first zine, *Femme Shark Communique #1: All Our Holes Are Hungry: Hungry for Justice and Fucking*. Then, I outline five rhetorical moves that foster radical self-love within the zine. These moves are not to be mistaken as a linear process, for they are recursive, often overlapping and building upon each other to construct a rhetoric of radical self-love.

First, radical self-love cultivates exigence: the Femme Sharks describe the catalyst that prompts their invention—hateful rhetoric and violence against queer women of color—and articulate the urgent need for self-love as a remedy. Second, radical self-love self-defines: the Femme Sharks respond by defining themselves as empowered agents worthy of love. Third, radical self-love breaks the rules: Femme Sharks counter the narrative of internalized hatred by rebelling against normative/appropriate language, sexuality, and emotional expression. Fourth, radical self-love unites: the rhetorical performance of radical self-love is constitutive, constructing a new community that is united through the shared experience of radical self-love. Fifth, radical self-love mobilizes: the Femme Shark community is moved to community engagement by the collective practice of radical self-love. These moves are critical in defining a shared ethos of self-empowerment and self-love in the face of hate, violence, and marginalization. By studying texts like the *Femme Shark Communique #1* and other collaboratively crafted activist texts, feminist rhetorical scholars can observe the rhetorical strategies counterpublics use to resist, unite, organize, and love, prompting new definitions and new approaches to the question of how groups manifest rhetorical power. Before analyzing the Femme Sharks in this way, I first situate my research within feminist rhetorical scholarship;

specifically, I locate the Femme Sharks within a tradition of feminist and queer activism and rhetoric that celebrates the love ethic and actively pushes against submission and silence through outlaw emotions.

## The Practice and Rhetoric of Radical Self-love

Very little work on radical self-love exists within the academy; thus, I sketch a framework for thinking about radical self-love by incorporating theories of self-love from Erich Fromm and revolutionary love from bell hooks before turning to the richest source of writing on radical self-love: grassroots activists. Erich Fromm provides an overview of the practice of love in his influential book, *The Art of Loving*, in which he offers a theory of the value of self-love. Fromm defends the practice and art of self-love by distinguishing loving oneself from narcissism. For Fromm, the ability to love others stems from the ability to love oneself: “an attitude of love toward themselves will be found in all those who are capable of loving others” (59). He defines love as “care, respect, responsibility, and knowledge,” and one who can project those qualities onto themselves can project outwards to other individuals, their community, and humanity at large (59-60). Fromm thus provides a broad definition of both love and self-love by outlining the behaviors and actions that manifest from love. While Fromm’s work is critical in tracing a theory of self-love, he does not address the political potential of *radical self-love*.

Exhibiting love for oneself can be a radical act, especially for marginalized peoples who told they are not worthy of care or respect through state violence, exclusions from school curriculums, disparaging dominant narratives in popular culture, and other manifestations of racism, sexism, ableism, and homophobia. For this reason, love has been a core concept in many womanist, black feminist, and disability rights writing and activism. Perhaps the most prolific feminist writers on love is bell hooks, who often demonstrates the connection between love and justice in her theoretical and critical works. In *All About Love*, she writes, “when I travel around the nation giving lectures about ending racism and sexism, audiences, especially young listeners, become agitated when I speak about the place of love in any movement for social justice. Indeed, all the great movements for social justice in our society have strongly emphasized a love ethic” (xix). In a later essay, hooks attributes Martin Luther King’s rhetorical effectiveness to his commitment to a love ethic: “King’s insistence on love had provided folk an enduring message of hope” (*Writing Beyond Race* 96). She notes, however, that King never had the opportunity to deepen his approach to love ethics to include the power of self-love (96). While hooks discusses radical love and Fromm discusses self-love, neither thoroughly address radical self-love. For the most pointed and poignant writing on radical self-love as a transformational and resistant act, I move to activist spaces outside of the academy.

Abundant online writing about radical self-love has led to community organizing both offline and online. In addition to the *Femme Sharks*, the website *The Body Is Not an Apology*, founded by spoken word poet Sonya Renee Taylor, facilitates community identity formation and organizing through self-love. In 2011, Taylor digitally shared a picture of herself, a plus sized black woman in a corset, and quickly realized the significance of this seemingly simple act: "I was clear that my big brown body was not supposed to be seen or sexy but I posted it anyway. This terribly frightening act was birthed from the outlandishly simple idea that I and no other humans should be ashamed of their bodies" (Taylor n. pag.). Motivated by the response she received from the picture, both overwhelmingly positive and negative, she then started an online community that connects people and "fosters global, radical, unapologetic self love which translates to radical human action in service toward a more just and compassionate world." Within two months, the project raised over \$40,000 from more than 700 supporters ("WhenWeSayYes"). The extent of grassroots support for this one project demonstrates the appreciation of radical self-love in activist communities.

Negative responses to Taylor's self-love for her "big brown body" illustrates the taboo nature of radical self-love for marginalized peoples and bodies. Transgressive feelings that reject dominant narratives of shame and self-hatred have a long tradition within feminist and queer writings. Gloria Anzaldúa, Audre Lorde, Nomy Lamm, and bell hooks have long embraced and channeled what Alison Jaggar calls outlaw emotions as a source of strength and power. Jaggar defines outlaw emotions as "conventionally unacceptable" emotions which are most often experienced by "subordinated individuals who pay a disproportionately high price for maintaining the status quo" (160). Jaggar reflects that "conventionally inexplicable emotions, particularly, though not exclusively, experienced by women, may lead us to make subversive observations that challenge dominant conceptions of the status quo" (161). Because of their oppositional power, outlaw emotions are often policed through various means, such as emotional literacy education in school (Stenberg 353), threats of physical violence, and the public demonstration of hatred—as seen by the negative responses to Taylor's celebratory tribute to her body. By expressing outlaw emotions, women and queer rhetors subject themselves to criticism, silencing, and even violence. And yet, it is the risks, the danger of outlaw emotions that give emotions like radical self-love such transformational power. As Jaggar notes, tapping into outlaw emotions in the face of oppression can be a source for invention for women, a strategy to discover the causes and costs of injustice (161).

To theorize radical self-love, I have pulled from theoretical work on love, activist writing on radical self-love, and the feminist tradition of embracing

outlaw emotions. Now, I turn to analyzing the rhetorical moves marginalized communities can deploy to celebrate and cultivate a culture of care, respect, responsibility, and knowledge for themselves as individuals and as a community. Through the five rhetorical moves of radical self-love, the Femme Sharks leverage radical self-love to speak out against oppression based on sexism, racism, homophobia, and ableism.

## **Move 1: Radical Self-Love Cultivates Exigence**

Throughout the zine, the Femme Sharks describe the rhetorical situation that prompts their intervention and demonstrate the urgent need for radical self-love as a rhetorical, activist, and therapeutic practice. As queer women of color, the Femme Sharks are subjected to both the hateful rhetoric toward queer communities and the hateful rhetoric toward women of color. Hatred teaches marginalized communities to stay quiet, stay submissive, and stay humble, and this crushing hatred is perpetuated both explicitly and implicitly. One example is the infamous hate rhetoric from the Westboro Baptist Church, known for disturbing military funerals with signs that declare “GOD HATES FAGS.” The Westboro Baptist Church taps into religious authority to demonstrate hatred as the normative emotional response to queer people. In an analysis of the rhetoric of religious hate, Michael Cobb explains that “it is important to realize that this expression of God’s hate, this expression of rancor toward those participating in unlawful sexual practices, comes not only from the fringe.... This hatred is mainstream” (3). This mainstream hatred is instructional, a strategy to teach LGBT individuals how to feel about themselves, and furthermore, how to continually deny their identities for their own emotional and physical safety. As not simply queer but also women of color, the women of the Femme Sharks have historically been targeted by varied and intersecting public demonstrations of hate. Thus, the Femme Sharks present remembrance and resistance informed by self-love as a conscious and powerful response to hateful acts and rhetoric.

The Femme Sharks candidly depict the rhetorical situation that prompted the zine’s intervention: hate crimes and hateful microaggressions. Throughout the text, Femme Sharks remind their audience that the stakes are high:

WE REMEMBER OUR DEAD- SAKIA GUNN, GWEN ARAJUO, AND MANY OTHER QUEER AND TRANS POC WHO DIED BECAUSE OF RACIST, HOMO/TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE/NOT AS A POLITICAL STATEMENT/ BUT AS WOMEN WE LOVED IN REAL LIFE/WOMEN WHO COULDN’VE BEEN US OR OUR LOVES. (7)

Here, the Femme Sharks name victims of hate crimes, which are recognized by legislation and the courts as violent crimes that are motivated by bias

against a protected class (“Hate Crime—Overview”). In the 1993 Supreme Court case *Wisconsin v. Mitchell*, Chief Justice William Rehnquist justified the harsher prosecution of hate crimes because they “are more likely to provoke retaliatory crimes, inflict distinct emotional harms on their victims, and incite community unrest.” In other words, hate crimes are intended to both physically and emotionally harm the victim and the community to which the victim belongs. A hate crime is a rhetorical act, a violent argument that a specific community should be silenced, removed, and reviled by society. The Femme Sharks respond to hate crimes by refusing to forget the victims and survivors, and further, by articulating their worthiness of self-love in the face of overwhelming hate. Through this remembrance and celebration, the Femme Sharks resist the argument conveyed through hate crimes; rather than remaining silent and submissive, they draw attention to the injustice of hate crimes and name self-love as an internal remedy. This move displays both knowledge of and responsibility for their community, practices central to Fromm’s framework of self-love.

When the Femme Sharks remember victims of hate crimes, they identify with brutalized queer women of color, both as possible victims themselves and as imaginary lovers. This articulation of grievances highlights the exigence of the text itself and its response of radical self-love: as Lloyd Bitzer makes clear, “any exigence is an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be” (6). In the case of the Femme Sharks, the exigence, the “thing which is other than it should be,” is the systematic hatred and abuse of queer women of color—not a singular event but a pattern of events over time. The tone is urgent because the situation is; they are not talking about just one murdered queer woman of color but many. The hate crimes perpetrated toward LGBT women Gwen Araujo and Sakia Gunn<sup>3</sup> could also be perpetrated toward any of the Femme Sharks, a vivid reminder that any queer woman of color could be next. The normativity of hatred means life or death for the Femme Sharks, making their public demonstration of radical self-love a matter of survival.

In addition to hate crimes, the Femme Sharks are also responding to daily microaggressions in their pursuit of a rhetoric of radical self-love. Microaggressions that target the intersecting identities of the Femme Sharks attempt to push Femme Sharks away from self-love and toward self-doubt. Derald Sue defines microaggressions as

brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group. (5)

Previously referred to as “racial microaggression,” Sue updates the term to reflect intersectionality, expanding the definition to include a variety of biases. As queer women of color, the Femme Sharks experience bias intersectionally: in other words, their queer, gendered, and raced bodies are subjected to a myriad of microaggressions. To counter both hate crimes and microaggressions, Femme Sharks argue for stance of self-defense against physical, verbal, and imperialist attacks:

WE BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE A RIGHT TO DEFEND/ OURSELVES  
AND OUR COMMUNITIES/ AGAINST ANY KIND OF ATTACK-/FROM  
ASSHOLES ON THE STREET/TO RACIST WHITE CLUB OWNERS WHO  
WANT THREE/ PIECES OF ID/ TO FOLKS WHO INSIST THAT WE'RE  
STRAIGHT/TO PEOPLE WHO TAKE OUR LAND. (7)

In this passage, the Femme Sharks perform the first move of a rhetoric of radical self-love by unapologetically naming examples of attacks based on gender, race, sexuality, and nationality.

Highlighting the role of difference in systematic oppression echoes many feminist writers of the past, including Audre Lorde, who describes her own position and persecution based on several overlapping identities: “As a forty-nine-year-old Black lesbian feminist socialist mother of two, including one boy, and a member of an interracial couple, I usually find myself part of some group defined as other, deviant, inferior, or just plain wrong” (114). Similar to Lorde, as queer women of color, the Femme Sharks’ are marked in multiple ways. However, the Femme Sharks resist intersectional oppression and the public demonstration of hatred by calling for self-defense as an appropriate response. In advocating for self-defense, the Femme Sharks acknowledge that they are not deserving of the treatment white supremacist patriarchy claims they are. Fromm writes, “love is the active concern for the life and the growth of that which we love” (26). By resisting the hateful rhetoric of hate crimes and vowing to defend themselves and their communities, the Femme Sharks are demonstrating concern for their lives and wellbeing, a refusal to give into the forces that want to extinguish their light.

## **Move 2: Radical Self-Love Self-Defines**

In a world where multiple aspects of their embodied selves are hated, the Femme Sharks employ radical self-love as a strategy to define themselves on their own terms. After all, self-definition is a rhetorical act; by naming oneself, a rhetor “finds the means to represent themselves rather than to be represented by others” (Ritchie and Ronald xxv).<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the Femme Sharks similarly employ politicized self-definitions that directly speak back to the disempowering, silencing, dominant definitions of queer women of color and provide

alternative means of identifying and embodying subjectivity for queer women of color. Furthermore, by defining themselves as a people to love and to be loved, the Femme Sharks reverse the mainstream hate projected onto queer women of color.

The Femme Sharks express exhaustion and frustration toward inaccurate and harmful stereotypes from both mainstream society and queer communities. In the prologue of *Femme Shark Communiqué #1*, the Femme Sharks describe their invention: “it [Femme Sharks] was everything I’d felt about femme not just being about blonde girls wearing pink, but about the big deal about being fierce women of color or down white girls who are hot strong girls who are political who see the connection between everything in our lives” (4). The Femme Sharks are rebelling against stereotypes of femme being weak, passive, and white. For them, femme is more than appearance or dress; they draw power from their identities as femme, enhancing their ability to analyze difference, oppression, and politics in their daily lives.

In the manifesto, the Femme Sharks explain that the narrow expectations of femme identity come from within the white-centered, masculinist queer communities:

WE’RE OVER WHITE FEMMES AND BUTCHES WHO THINK/THAT FEMME ONLY COMES IN THE COLOR OF BARBIE./ WE’RE OVER BUTCHES AND BOYS AND OTHER FEMMES/TELLING US WHAT WE NEED TO DO, WEAR OR BE IN/ORDER TO BE ‘REALLY FEMME.’ (6)

Even within queer communities, the Femme Sharks are told what they are, and this definition attempts to coerce them into certain behaviors and appearance. Furthermore, by denying that the Femme Sharks are indeed femme, white butch (masculine) and femme (feminine) queer folks are denying the Femme Sharks the agency to define themselves. Indeed, the Femme Sharks are aware of the power of definition, and early in the zine declare self-definition as their mission: “FEMME SHARKS WILL RECLAIM THE POWER AND/DIGNITY OF FEMALENESS BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY./ WE’RE GIRLS BLOWN UP, TURNED INSIDE OUT AND/REMIXED” (5). Although “femaleness” typically refers to biological sex, the frequent invitation of transgender women into the Femme Shark community reveals a more inclusive concept of femaleness. Part of their reclamation is redefining “femaleness” and “femme” as a political identity, one available to cisgender women (women who are assigned the female sex at birth) and transgender women. Femaleness is not about biological sex, but about the consciousness and embodiment of a politicized gender.

The authority to name and define oneself is a basic human dignity, and one that is often denied to marginalized groups. Thus, self-definition is at the core of the rhetoric of radical self-love. Furthermore, as knowledge is

key to Fromm's conception of self-love, someone must know herself before she can love herself: he writes, "Only if I know a human being objectively, can I know him in his ultimate essence, in the act of love" (31). Through the act of naming and defining, the Femme Sharks illustrate their knowledge of themselves, and thus, their ability to love themselves fully. The directives and definitions stemming from the zine embody self-love and a refusal to sit on the periphery. But knowing oneself can be a challenge when negative stereotypes circulate in the public sphere. In the zine's ten-step instruction manual titled "How to Be a Shark," the Femme Shark ethos and subjectivity is defined clearly; in the eighth step, the Femme Sharks instruct readers to "CENTER WOMEN OF COLOR, DISABLED WOMEN, WOMEN WITH NO MONEY, TRANS AND INTERSEX FOLKS, ETC. WE ARE NOT THE GODDAMN MINORITY REPORT, WE ARE A CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE" (14). The last sentence simultaneously rejects a commonly held perception of Femme Sharks and embraces a new definition. The Femme Sharks are more than tokens or a collection of statistics; rather than existing only on the periphery, they are, in fact, "a center of the universe." In this passage, the Femme Sharks redefine themselves in contrast to dominant perceptions of "minority women," perceptions that exist both in the larger public sphere and mainstream feminist and queer movements.

Within the power of self-definition, we see the relationship between knowledge and emotion. When the Femme Sharks define themselves on their own terms, they cultivate a sense of radical self-love. Through that rhetorical enactment, they know themselves as integral, valuable, and powerful. Jaggar notes the cyclical relationship between knowledge and emotion, asserting that

The new emotions evoked by feminist insights are likely in turn to stimulate further feminist observations and insights, and these may generate new directions in both theory and political practice. The feedback loop between our emotional constitution and our theorizing is continuous; each modifies the other, in principle inseparable from it. (163)

The knowledge of themselves as more than tokens on the periphery enables the Femme Sharks to rhetorically construct radical self-love, and this performance of rhetorical self-love perpetuates a new, empowering self-definition that defies pejorative or dismissive notions of queer women of color. The power of this knowledge and definition is clear by the public response to the zine after publication. In a series of interviews with femme-identified women on the *SF Weekly* blog, the final question is "If you could make up your own category to describe your appearance/gender presentation, it would be: \_\_\_ and why?"

A woman named July responds, "I'm a femmeshark! I don't have to make up a category, because I am fortunate enough to have read and embody the *Femme Shark Manifesto*" (Pulley). This interview was printed in 2012, four years after the creation and publication of the zine, illustrating the power and sustainability of the *Femme Sharks* project of self-definition.

### **Move 3: Radical Self-Love Breaks the Rules**

Radical self-love is rooted in defiance, and throughout the text, the *Femme Sharks* find power in their transgression against cultural norms. Here, the genre of the zine helps the *Femme Sharks* to demonstrate the outlaw nature of radical self-love. Not beholden to copy-editors or peer-reviewers, the *Femme Sharks*, as creators, publishers, and distributors, demonstrate their radical self-love with aggression, desperation, and pride. Language that would not be permitted or condoned within corporate magazines or mainstream queer publications is used to emphasize the radical nature of their self-love: "FEMME SHARKS AREN'T JUST DIMEPIECES AND TROPHY WIVES/FUCK THAT! WE MIGHT BE YOUR GIRL,/BUT WE'RE OUR OWN FEMMES" (6). In this passage, radical self-love is enacted by the rejection of pejorative tropes with "fuck that!" followed by a pronouncement of self-ownership. Furthermore, the assertiveness of the claim and its language conveys the respect they have for themselves and their cause; self-respect, and thus self-love, are prioritized over social decorum. The aggression of the "fuck that" is intensified by the use of capital letters in the manifesto portion of the zine, which defies stylistic norms and demands the attention of the reader (Fig. 2). The capital letters refuse to be ignored or silenced; they visually demand attention at the same time they convey the urgency of the *Femme Sharks*' tone.

Just as radical self-love is an outlaw emotion, "fuck" is certainly an outlaw word, regulated through both policy and social norms. Context matters, though, so the power and appropriateness of the word "fuck" depends on the writer, the audience, and the purpose. The use of such language is risky: some audiences may have an affective response to the deployment of outlaw language and dismiss the argument entirely, but others may respond to the authenticity of unfiltered, uncensored language—especially used by marginalized rhetors fueled by justified anger. Jaggar asserts that oppressed people are better able to see injustices and thus better able to imagine a just world. She asserts, "for this reason, the emotional responses of oppressed people in general, and often of women in particular, are more likely to be appropriate than the emotional responses of the dominant class" (162). Thus, the frequent use of aggressive language to combat demeaning tropes should not be dismissed but understood as an authentic response to oppression and marginalization. By rejecting negative images of their community through outlaw language, the

Femme Sharks draw attention to the radical nature of their self-love, demonstrating how the very pronouncement of inherent worth and value is a transgression against cultural norms.

Another rule breaking tactic of the Femme Sharks is what Adela Licona calls “reverso.” Licona coins the term *reverso* to illustrate how zinesters of color reconfigure, reframe, and redefine the body in resistance to patriarchy, racism, and homophobia: “zines are taking on the politics of the body, to include desire and pleasure, through conscious practices of a reversed critical gaze” (71). Similar to Jaggar’s outlaw emotions, *reverso* flips the expectations of the dominant class by exercising rhetorical resistance. The Femme Sharks deploy *reverso* as a rhetorical tool to describe queer sex as a source of empowerment, and thus, self-love. Queer sex acts are described candidly and reframed: “WHEN WE TAKE OUR LOVERS FIST ALL THE WAY INSIDE/ASK FOR WHAT WE WANT/BE THE BEST DIRTY GIRL/OR MAKE OUR LOVERS FLIP/ WE’RE A FUCKING MIRACLE” (8). In this passage, a queer sex act is used to queer concepts of passivity in a way that disrupts heteronormative ideas of penetration. Within a patriarchal, heteronormative society, to penetrate is seen as active—the “top” of a sexual act—and to be penetrated is passive—the “bottom.” Women’s traditional association with penetration has been perceived as “natural receptivity,” and thus, used to justify sexual violence against women (Sullivan 129). However, the Femme Sharks subvert the active/passive dichotomy. “We” is the subject of the sentence, and rather than fisting being something done to them, fisting is something they *do*: “when we take our lovers fist all the way inside.” To be fisted is an active act, and this expression and practice of queer sexuality is linked to the public declaration of radical self-love and confidence: after the listing of various queer sex acts, the Femme Sharks conclude with “We’re a fucking miracle.” In this act of *reverso*, formerly passive sexual acts are reframed as queer femme practices of power, desire, and pleasure. Thus, queer sexuality and penetration are not sources of shame, but rather, radical self-love.

In their celebration of their bodies and sexuality, the Femme Sharks are also rebelling against a common rhetorical trope subscribed to women: humility *topos*. The valorization of feminine modesty is alive and well today. British boy band One Direction’s song “What Makes You Beautiful” has sold over five million copies, with the repeating chorus declaring “you don’t know you’re beautiful/ that’s what makes you beautiful.” A rhetoric of radical self-love rejects feminine humility and modesty, replacing it with a loud, confrontational celebration of the self. Rather than quiet submission, the Femme Sharks instruct potential femme sharks to “BE A LOUD AND VISIBLE PRESENCE: at demos, at the club, on the street. This can be done by rocking ridiculously slutty outfits and hot pink satin fins, chanting loudly, travelling in a pack” (13).

Femme Sharks advocate for a loud, assertive, flamboyant, and confident ethos, one communicated by revealing clothing, raucous interruptions, and collective movement. The Femme Sharks do not ask permission to speak in public spaces, and when they speak, they do not apologize or hide their bodies in shame. Their rhetorical power comes from the rejection of humility and modesty in favor of a public declaration of disruption and confidence—a rhetoric of radical self-love.

### **Move 4: Radical Self-Love Unites**

A feeling of radical self-love can transform the individual by encouraging her to reject racist and sexist norms of beauty and worth, redefining herself on her own terms, and discovering unlikely sources of empowerment. But a rhetoric of radical self-love can also go beyond shaping the individual; it can move individuals to gather and constitute a new community based on the shared experience of emotion. In her work on the rhetoric of emotions, Laura Micciche highlights the social aspect of emotions, writing that they emerge “relationally, in encounters between people, so that emotion takes form *between* bodies rather than residing *in* them” [emphasis in original] (13). Through the shared experience of emotion, people make meaning together, and further, this process provides an opportunity for unity. Martha C. Nussbaum observes community is often situationally created by the shared experience of grief or laughter prompted by art and symbol: “Poetry, music, and art are great unifiers: they take people out of themselves and forge a shared community” (388). These situations are often mediated through discourse, a rhetorical situation that prompts the shared emotional experience and the momentary solidarity among patrons and performers of art.

The Femme Sharks are interested in more than a temporary shared experience. Rather, they envision a community sustained by radical self-love through declarations of the group’s worthiness of love and self-celebration. The Femme Sharks state that their intention is to construct an imagined community; they do so through a rhetoric of radical self-love. In the prologue of their instruction manual, the Femme Sharks outline their vision for a femme shark community: “We’re all about the people rising up autonomously, and we were like, huh, how can we have it be like The Women’s Army in Born In Flames? Underground cells, sleeper cells of Femme Sharks spreading the fierceness everywhere” (12). They envision their zine as a constitutive rhetoric, one that creates a community through discourse and the shared experience of love. This move has a rich tradition in protest rhetoric. In Richard B. Gregg’s work on the ego-function, he notes that protest rhetoric helps protestors identify and nourish self-hood in opposition to an adversary. He observes how black power groups enumerated an ethos of self-pride and self-love through

the “Black is beautiful” theme, and this sense of group unity and love became “easily transposed to a feeling of individual ego-satisfaction” (84). Similarly, the Femme Sharks are a radical community that celebrates group identity in the face of oppression, and their group self-hood also transforms into “individual ego-satisfaction”—or radical self-love.

The Femme Sharks enact a sense of group self-hood through the frequent use of “we” and the declaration of communal values in *Femme Shark Communiqué #1*. The manifesto portion speaks in the third person plural, a resounding “we” beginning almost every stanza. The continual usage of “we” heightens the collective voice of the zine and of the femme shark movement, and further, invites readers to identify as Femme Sharks. Brenda Helmbrecht and Meredith A. Love analyze ethos in popular, printed feminist zines, *Bitch* and *Bust*, writing that “the zines develop several different types of ethos, or ethe, which not only define them as feminist rhetorical texts but also define readers as either participants or outsiders to this newer manifestation of feminism” (152). Similar to *Bitch* and *Bust*, *Femme Shark Communiqué #1* demarcates the us/them line through the collective ethos conveyed through “we.” The first-person plural allows the readers to feel as Femme Sharks feel, to experience the shared emotions of the community. Further, it invites the reader to participate in the declaration of femme shark ethos; any reader reading the manifesto aloud automatically positions themselves as a part of the femme shark community. However, readers who do not identify with the Femme Sharks ethos may feel attacked by the “we,” noting their outsider status from the Femme Sharks community. But perhaps this isn’t a concern for the Femme Sharks. This zine, written, published, and circulated by two queer women of color to other queer women of color and their allies, is written for the “we.” The stated objective of the instruction manual is to create “sleeper cells” of Femme Sharks; hence, the intended audience is women who already identify as femme sharks or could identify as femme sharks.

The Femme Sharks aim to build an imagined community, one based less on physical proximity and more on a shared social identity (Anderson). Furthermore, their imagined community rallies not just in reaction to violence or discrimination, but also in celebration of their identities through the expression of radical self-love. Their imagined community defies hierarchies and boundaries, inviting all who see themselves as a femme shark to identify and participate as a femme shark. In “Potential Sharks,” the Femme Sharks list historical and familiar names: Gloria Anzaldúa, Michelle Obama, Sylvia Rivera, and Assatta Shakur are mentioned alongside “your mom, Theory, your best friend/you” (16). By listing “you” and “your mom,” the Femme Sharks elevate the reader and her family and friends to the status of well-known, celebrated women who defy gender stereotypes, and thus, potential hierarchies within

the community are prevented from the beginning. Furthermore, “you,” the reader, is invited to identify with the “we” ethos throughout the zine. Through discourse, the Femme Sharks evoke a community without hierarchies or borders, and readers are initiated into the community through reading, identifying, and embodying the values of the Femme Shark ethos.

The membership of the Femme Shark community reaches beyond just the reader and transcends spatial and temporal borders. By tracing a lineage beyond space and time, the Femme Sharks constitute a genealogy of other politically subversive femme women. A source of their radical self-love is then, perhaps, strengthened by a sense of pride and connection with queer women of color and poor queer women the past—and not just famous queer women, but women whose queerness existed in the shadows. In the manifesto portion of the zine, the Femme Sharks write,

FEMME SHARKS WERE THERE WHEN FRIDA KAHLO/ HOOKED UP WITH HER GIRLFRIENDS/ WHEN JOAN NESTLE, CHYRSTOS, JEWELLE GOMEZ,/ ALEXIS DE VEUX, SYLVIA RIVERA, DOROTHY ALLISON,/ MINNIE BRUCE PRATT AND AMBER HOLLIBAUGH/ MADE QUEER FEMME HISTORY/ WHEN ZAPATISTA WOMEN HOOKED UP /WHEN OUR COUSINS WERE MAKING OUT IN THE WOMEN'S SECTION OF THE MASJID/ WHEN OUR GRANDMAS AND QUEER AUNTIES SNUCK OUT/ AT NIGHT/ DIDN'T GET MARRIED TIL LATE-OR AT ALL/ HAS A BEST FRIEND/ AND STOOD UP FOR HER/ FEMME SHARKS WERE THERE. (9)

The Femme Sharks articulate their ancestry and express solidarity with Femme Sharks of the past. This list serves a definitional purpose, demonstrating the vast diversity of the Femme Sharks throughout space and time, once again providing many points of entry for readers interested in identifying in Femme Sharks.

Closeted spinsters are celebrated in the same stanza as Frida Kahlo and Dorothy Allison, and queer history is expanded past the Eurocentric narratives of queer liberation in the United States to include indigenous and Muslim women. Indeed, by constituting a community across space and time, a united front among queer women as famous as Frida Kahlo, as fierce as Zapatista militants, and as ordinary as grandmothers and aunties, the Femme Sharks “demarcate and identify its own terrain to establish a presence where one has not existed” (Ritchie & Ronald xviii). From absence and isolation, the Femme Sharks resurrect a community that is alive and connected. In addition to presenting the diversity of the community, the list carves out a historical narrative for the Femme Sharks, a legacy of empowered, strong women. By naming Femme Sharks erased from mainstream histories, they fight against the “absence [that] only reproduces invisibility, silence, and misrepresentation” (Ritchie & Ronald xix). This solidarity with and celebration of femme sharks

from the past provides the opportunity for current-day femme sharks to see themselves in a previously unseen history. This historical source of empowerment can lead to a fostering of radical self-love; a deeper appreciation of the self can emerge from a sense of belonging to community with roots that transcend space and time.

## Move 5: Radical Self-Love Mobilizes

The “we” of the zine offers more than a collective identity; the “we” of the Femme Sharks moves the community to direct action inspired by shared experience and emotion. To mobilize one’s community against oppression and toward liberation is a powerful manifestation of self-care. Gregg notes how the end game of the ego-function in protest rhetoric is always pragmatic; one method of realizing positive identities, he offers, is “to locate what one perceives as the persons, behaviors, actions, or conditions which cause or contribute to feelings of inadequacy, then to take a positive stand against them” (81). In other words, moving from self-hate to self-love can and should move activists to mobilize against the people and ideologies that construct hate as the norm. For the Femme Sharks, embracing positive identities for the self and the collective motivates community mobilization. In the final step in “Ten Things You Can Do To Be a Shark,” the Femme Sharks instruct their readers to

FUCK AND FIGHT AGAINST THE POWER, WHETHER ITS HRC,<sup>5</sup> YOU [sic] MOM, YOUR FUCKED-UP UNCLE, THE NON PROFIT, PRISON OR MILITARY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, ETC. RECLAIM THE POWER AND DIGNITY OF FEMALENESS—ESPECIALLY WOMEN OF COLOR, BROKE-ASS, DISABLED, OLD FAT AND OTHERWISE REVILED FORMS OF GIRLNESS. (14)

In this final instruction, the Femme Sharks connect direct action—“fuck and fight against the power”—with radical self-love and self-definition—“reclaim the power and dignity of femaleness.” Further, they link oppressive institutions to hatred, connecting “the power’s” attacks against their community to the source—“reviled forms of girlness.” Thus, the Femme Sharks enact a crucial step of radical self-love: locating an adversary and resisting its dominance through action, specifically, fucking and fighting against the power.

The move towards action and resistance in the face of hate and oppression depicts the radical nature of Femme Shark self-love. Radical self-love pushes the Femme Sharks to action, just as action can lead the Femme Sharks to radical self-love. Toward the end of the manifesto portion, a femme shark is defined as “ANY GIRL/WHO IS TOUGH, HUNGRY, FIGHTS FOR HERSELF AND HER FAMILY/AND IS WORKING ON BECOMING THE KIND OF GIRL/WHO FINDS GOD IN HERSELF/AND LOVES HER FIERCELY” (10). Here we see the connection

between self-love and action; fighting for oneself and one's loved ones is part of the process of discovering one's inner value and self-worth. Note the word choice and verb tense: the femme shark is *working on becoming*—a state of progressing, of being, and of becoming. Radical self-love is an ongoing journey, and no finalized state of self-love will be upheld as the ideal for the Femme Sharks. For simply the effort of moving towards a self-love is a radical act in itself. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, the fighting of a Femme Shark is linked to radical self-love; through individual and communal resilience and survival, a Femme Shark discovers god within and learns to love herself.

The Femme Sharks did indeed move readers to identify and love as Femme Sharks, and furthermore, to gather and mobilize in their communities. At the 2008 Gay Pride parade in San Francisco, a group of Femme Sharks marched to chants: "FEMME SHARKS WANT JUSTICE—AND WE WANNA GET BANGED!" (de Vries). The next year, a Femme Shark contingent showed up dressed in pink and shark fins to an anti-abortion Walk for Life rally in San Francisco. In an email to Femme Sharks and Femme Shark supporters (named Ally Sea Creatures), Zuleikha Mahmood describes their strategies to disrupt the pro-life event, including as much public nudity and sexual activity as legally allowed, because "even though most of us can't get our partners pregnant (certainly not due to lack of trying), somehow the christian right still hates it when we have sex" (LaMacha). The protest uses bodies as rhetorical texts to demonstrate self and group love—through nudity and sexual acts without shame—and combat the hate of their adversaries. Radical self-love is woven into the fabric of Femme Sharks' rhetoric and action, illustrating the critical importance of self-love to their identity and mobilization.

## Conclusion

Although their activity has slowed down as of late, most likely due to Piepzna-Samarasinha's building fame as a poet and activist, the Femme Sharks Facebook group boasts of 536 members from across the United States, who continue to post images, stories, and quotations of affirmation for queer women of color. The Femme Sharks are not the only group that promotes radical self-love in their writing and protests. Celebrations of radical self-love can be found throughout online activist communities. For example, throughout 2014, women of color and women with disabilities rejected constricting definitions of beauty and self-love by posting smiling pictures of themselves on Twitter under the hashtag #FeministSelfies. *Time Magazine* describes this trend as young women "turning symbols of narcissism into a new kind of empowerment" (Bennett). In addition to practicing self-love, women online are theorizing its power. In a widely circulated blog post by Mehreen Kasana, Kasana articulates the radical nature of self-love:

A woman of color's self-love is political and radical, and it is unsettling for the status quo because she is choosing bravely to dismantle the narratives of racist aesthetics against her... A non-white girl's self-love is revolutionary and anyone trying to water it down needs to back right off.

Here, Kasana powerfully and succinctly encapsulates my main claim throughout this article: that radical self-love moves marginalized women to reject dominant narratives, and thus threatens the status quo. The Femme Sharks and Mehreen Kasana join with voices from all corners of womanhood, women of color, queer women, disabled women, fat women, to declare a new world order, one that celebrates the worth and value of all women.

Marginalized communities, both on the streets and on modems, are constructing a grammar of outlaw emotions to argue for their self-worth and liberation. By dissecting the ways the Femme Sharks and other radical grassroots groups articulate outlaw emotions, rhetorical scholars can learn how marginalized groups respond to violence and oppression, how rhetors construct community through discourse and shared emotions, and how emotions move communities to action. The rhetoric of outlaw emotions is transformational; in the *Femme Shark Communiqué #1*, radical self-love transforms individuals from victims of systematic abuse into a community of survivors, fighters, and lovers. The Femme Sharks and countless other subversive communities tap into, leverage, and perform emotions such as self-love, joy, and queer desire. They can teach us how love, for ourselves and for our communities, can move counterpublics toward collective healing and action, and thus, toward embodied ways of knowing that inspire movement toward a more loving world.

## Notes

- 1 The prologue of the *Femme Shark Communiqué #1* presents the origin story for the Femme Sharks. After confronting racist microaggressions in her workplace, Mahmood began to deal with her frustration through aqua-aerobics. Her best friend, poet and community organizer, Piepzna-Samarasinha joked, "What are you, some kind of femme shark?" (3). This imagery launched a digital manifesto penned by Piepzna-Samarasinha and posted on her *LiveJournal*, which was quickly circulated among queer women of color groups in the East Bay. As momentum grew, Piepzna-Samarasinha and Mahmood organized Femme Shark gatherings in the San Francisco Bay Area. Later that year, Piepzna-Samarasinha—an experienced zinester—and Mahmood collaborated to craft the handmade, hand-circulated zine, *Femme Sharks Communiqué #1*. Although the zine is no longer in circulation, a digital copy is hosted on the Queer Zine Archive Project.

- 2 Although Zuleikha Mahmood and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha are named in the prologue and epilogue as the authors, individual pieces are not credited to a specific writer. *Femme Sharks Communique #1* appears as a collectively written text that speaks on behalf of an entire community. Therefore, from this point on, I shall refer to the authors of the zine as the Femme Sharks.
- 3 In 2002, seventeen year old Gwen Araujo was murdered after four men discovered she was a transgender woman. Her brutal murder drew national attention to the violence transgender people face. Although her attackers were sentenced to prison for second-degree murder and manslaughter, they were not charged with enhanced penalties for perpetrating a hate crime, largely due to the “panic defense.” Their lawyers argued that “the discovery of Araujo’s birth gender had threatened their sexualities and self-images,” a move that places the blame on the victim of the crime. In 2006, California passed the “Gwen Araujo Justice for Victims Act,” which prohibited jurors from considering their own anti-LGBT bias and defendants from employing the panic defense (Hemmelgarn and Laird). In 2003, fifteen year old Sakia Gunn was murdered at a bus stop in Newark, New Jersey; after two men made sexual advances, she responded she was a lesbian. Gunn was stabbed to death while her murderer yelled homophobic comments; he was eventually indicted for bias-related murder (Meenan). Gunn’s story was not nationally publicized. Although the criminalization of hate crimes is a contested topic within racial justice and queer communities, the detrimental effects of targeted violence is widely recognized as a core problem within queer communities of color.
- 4 For more information about the significance of self-definition for women of color, see Jessica Enoch’s “‘Para la Mujer’: Defining a Chicana Feminist Rhetoric at the Turn of the Century” in *College English* 67.1.
- 5 HRC refers to the Human Rights Campaign, which is a major LGBT advocacy non-profit organization. In 2007, the HRC supported a version of the federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) that did not include protections for transgender individuals, which prompted outrage from many queer communities (“HRC Finally Ready to Back Trans-Inclusive ENDA”). In *Femme Sharks Communique #1*, the Femme Sharks advertise a Femme Shark protest against HRC: “The Femme Sharks Say: HRC is BULLSHIT!.... An ENDA that leaves out trans and gender variant folks is bullshit, and so is a group of high-powered elite queers who don’t really give a damn about the rest of us as long as they can get married and get stock options” (11).

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## Book Reviews

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Clifford, Geraldine J. *Those Good Gertrudes: A Social History of Women Teachers in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins P, 2014. Print. 496 pages.

### Janelle Adsit

As of 2010, women were 84% of all U.S. teachers. To recount the circumstances that gave rise to this statistic is a formidable task, given the scope and complexity of this gendered history. In a long-anticipated collection, born of a quarter century of research, Geraldine Clifford offers a history of how instructional responsibilities have been placed in the hands of women teachers.

Clifford was the first woman to receive a Guggenheim Fellowship for research in education, and she is professor emerita at the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Berkeley. *Those Good Gertrudes* is a result of extensive research, drawing from personal testimonies of teachers and documentation from 628 collections. From a range of source materials and personal accounts, Clifford has written a "collective biography" of women teachers in the United States. National in its scope, the book also takes a comparative and international approach to changes in education policy and practice. The book offers no origin myth, showing how women have long been involved in teaching in households and religious spaces. The survey Clifford offers is capacious and full, yet, as Clifford notes on multiple occasions throughout the text, there is more beyond the book's margins. Indeed, much of her research was cut out of this 496-page book to make it suitable for publication. The book of course cannot achieve comprehensiveness, but it exhibits breadth and range in its portrait of the causes and ramifications of the shift to reliance on female educators. Clifford details the cultural shifts that moved from the view, expressed by St. Paul, that "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over a man, but to be silent" (1 Timothy 2:11-12, qtd. in Clifford) to a widespread favoring of the woman teacher.

Acknowledging the broad strokes that a collective biography is forced to draw, Clifford seeks to convey a range of answers to the question of "what it meant to be, at once, an American and a teacher and a woman" (xi). To approach this question, Clifford makes use of statistics, reporting, and anecdotes that provide windows into women's experiences. Her inclusive method also allows space for fictional accounts drawn from novels that feature teacher-protagonists, which Clifford presents as representative of historical thinking about

female educators. Clifford synthesizes this diverse corpus of source material to tell a thoughtful and engaging story of the social and economic circumstances of women teachers in the U.S.

This history of “good Gertrudes”—a term borrowed from G. Stanley Hall’s preface to Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi’s didactic novel *Leonard and Gertrude: A Book for the People* (1781), which highlights the role of the “good Gertrudes of all stations of life, the born educators of the race” in effecting social regeneration—can help to deepen analysis of the gendered situation of writing instruction in higher education today. What historically have women teachers been thought to be, and how is this history embedded in contemporary constructions of the teacher’s role? What material conditions of classroom work have remained pervasive across time? Clifford shows how women’s widespread entrance into the classroom was contemporaneous with an ideology in which “child nurture and instruction was becoming a mother’s most exalted work—a ‘God-given’ activity. By the nineteenth century, reformers argued that females were the most desirable schoolteachers because...[teaching was] modeled upon the mother’s nurturing and instructive activities” (6). The affective labor economy of instruction is still shaped by such historically-contingent assumptions, and—as has been noted by Sivagami Subbaraman, Eileen Schell, and others—these constructions of the women teacher as motivated by a “selfless love” sustain disenfranchising labor conditions and justify under-compensation. If her work is motivated entirely by a selfless love for her students, then compensation becomes immaterial, in both senses of the word.

Conditioned by such assumptions, the female teacher has historically been a less expensive hire. Clifford recounts common justifications of the wage gap proffered at the turn of the twentieth century: “It was often repeated that women could live well on less money; that male-female wage equity was unsupportable...and that only inept men could be hired at women’s wages” (49). This history is still with us, pervading in assumptions and expectations that influence today’s hiring practices. Women are 10-15% more likely to be in contingent positions, earning 27% less than male counterparts while there (Gappa, Austin & Trice, 2007). These circumstances should be read against a long history of hiring practices in educational spheres, a history which Clifford provides. *Those Good Gertrudes* includes detailed analysis of teacher earnings, contextualized in the macrosocial and material conditions that kept women in positions of unequal pay. Knowing the situations in which previous teachers worked helps us to understand our own labor conditions and the legacies that are embedded in hiring practices. Clifford’s social and institutional analyses remind us that “an occupational choice is seldom freely made” (338), and we should continue to identify the forces at work upon those who find themselves in the teaching profession.

While focused on primary and secondary education, *Those Good Gertrudes* is also a history of college teaching. Clifford insists on not separating college history

from school history, as they are intertwined. The expectation that teachers become university educated gave women increasing access to postsecondary education. In turn, women at this time “made the education field the largest program of study in American higher education, subsidizing its geographic and curricular spread” (xiii). The growth of a female teacher pipeline also meant the growth of higher education, as it was also “pivotal in extending formal school from elites to the populace and, recently, in facilitating the ‘knowledge economy’” (xiv).

As a university teacher herself, Clifford makes explicit reference to her own positionality within this history and the personal motivations that brought her to this project. Seeking “to place in history’s fickle spotlight the taken-for-granted woman teacher” (viii), Clifford dedicates the book in appreciation to the teachers of her youth, “from Miss Marjorie M. Curtis to Miss Mary Jane O’Rourke” who took Clifford as a high-schooler to a meeting of the Future Teachers of America, even as she was “determined then not to become a teacher” (xx). In such a project, personal in nature, there is a risk of heroicizing—a risk that Clifford identifies in the introduction to the book. We should guard against painting over the fraught history of education. Educators have been imbricated in exclusionary and colonizing pedagogical practices that reinforce social hierarchies. To look back upon centuries of education is to see the devastating and violent realities of residential schools, segregation, and prejudice. While Clifford’s book does acknowledge these realities, the text does sometimes slip into an easy lauding of the teaching profession, associating teaching with a “relatively uncorrupted ethical base” (345). Because Clifford’s interest is in women’s progressive overthrow of specific patriarchal constraints, the book downplays the ways in which women teachers, as part of an education system, have reinforced hegemonies. Instead, the focus of the book is primarily directed toward women’s presence in classrooms as serving to disrupt the status quo. Clifford’s book shows that “intentionally or not, the omnipresent schoolma’am was also a self-generative subversive force against patriarchy” (ix). Teaching provided women “psychological and economic independence” that in turn shaped gender politics, enabling women to access spheres that were previously closed to them.

Providing this history, *Those Good Gertrudes* is, “[a]s it must be, ...a feminist history” (xi), or a history of feminism—of the pursuit of equal opportunity at large, enacted within the sphere of education. It is as such a useful resource for historians of the teaching profession and for any of us who wish to reshape labor practices in the academy, who wish to rethink our professional identities, who wish to acknowledge the significant history and work of the educator.

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Carolyn Skinner. *Women Physicians & Professional Ethos in Nineteenth-Century America. Studies in Rhetorics and Feminism.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014. 240 pages.

Jessica R. Houf

In the middle of the 1800s, Dr. Anna M. Longshore-Potts became one of the most successful medical speakers in the United States after completing her medical degree in 1852 at the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania. She was part of a significant shift in the medical profession, which predominantly associated *woman* with the role of patient. Despite exclusion from male dominated sites of medical research, women physicians found a niche in public health education, writing and speaking to lay audiences in need of accurate health and wellness information. As Angela Ray argued, these public forums of lecture, or lyceums, were a “culture-making rhetorical practice” (23), and Longshore-Potts with others used this and other genres for sharing medical information to craft their own professional ethos as physicians. Skinner argues that these kinds of practices of women physicians were called for by the very publics they served. As Longshore-Potts states, “there have been earnest entreaties from the large number of listeners, and from hundreds of grateful patients...for a book to read, from which could be gained a similar course of instruction to that which they had listened in the public and private lectures, and to this general call I have yielded” (Skinner, 72). In Carolyn Skinner’s new book, *Women Physicians & Professional Ethos in Nineteenth-Century America*, the rhetoric of nineteenth-century women physicians, such as Longshore-Potts, finds focus through fascinating characters who cross regions, religions, class, and race.

Skinner’s vast archive of writers and speakers represent the contestation surrounding creating, maintaining, and altering what it meant to be a woman in the profession of medicine, as well as recognizing the significance of the contexts in which these rhetors worked. Skinner writes, “Because women begin to speak and write from a different starting point than most men do and because they confront fundamental obstacles to being accepted as rhetors, women’s rhetoric often entails the development of alternative communicative strategies” (171). This book uncovers and highlights particular strategies toward a feminist ethos without assuming an all encompassing diagram of a universal feminist ethos. Additionally, Skinner clearly finds it productive to explore the “betweens” occupied by women physicians at the intersection of

various identities: woman, professional, physician, white, and middle class. It is through negotiating these “betweens” in the practice of crafting their ethē that each rhetor constitutes their feminist ethos. In this book, Skinner explores the ethos utilized by women already enmeshed within the physician profession. This is not a book about tracing arguments for gaining access to the medical profession; it is about rhetorical strategies to maintain representation from within.

Women physicians in nineteenth-century America had to overcome a perceived disconnect between being a medical professional and being a woman. These two ways of being in the world were understood as incompatible. During this time, as women physicians were arguing for their place in the profession, the field of medicine was undergoing its own transformation into the science-based institution familiar today. The turbulence in the profession allowed women physicians a space to insert themselves in the debates. Skinner’s collection of chapters unravel the complex ways that women physicians were able to intervene in both public and medical arguments.<sup>1</sup> In the first chapter, “Debating the Character of the Woman Physician” we are introduced to the complicated role women physicians play in the profession and in the public, which lays the contextual foundation for the chapters that follow. Skinner argues, “In fact, women physicians’ ethos based in simultaneous ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ status allowed them to critique the existing profession and to maintain that women would correct some of medicine’s faults and were therefore necessary for the public’s, and particularly women’s, welfare” (10). The three chapters that follow function to examine how women physicians negotiated with a public audience to argue in favor of issues significant to them as professionals.

In Chapter Two, “Prescribing for Society,” we learn about such 19<sup>th</sup> century physicians as Rebecca J. Cole (the second African American woman to earn a medical degree) as they work to utilize their professional medical rhetoric over feminine rhetoric (such as morality and maternity) to garner authority within public domains. The key strategy for these women physicians was to recognize reciprocity between the speaker/writer and audience – or to think about a reorganizing of public values to garner support. For example, Cole argued against racist assumptions about disease by using medical epistemology to focus the discussion on poor living conditions in urban areas. Cole advised, “These are the things [health education and the reduction of overcrowding] that we can do to attack vice, disease and crime in their strongholds, for they have no complexion and they always yield to such and to no other treatment” (62). In this way, Cole draws from her professional status to make arguments for social reform that would not have been possible without her understanding of medical epistemology.

In the third chapter, Skinner demonstrates that women physicians took their role in conveying popular health advice to the general public very seriously. She states, "For these women, the work of the physician – particularly a woman physician – involved rhetoric and education as much as it involved medicine and surgery" (69). Utilizing the genre of health information and advice, women physicians were able to carve out an identity as feminine professionals. The advice genre, with its built-in expertise and instructive emphasis, allowed women physicians to counter the negative perceptions that were circulating by their opponents; they were able to take advantage of the need for public health education, specifically for women. For example, Prudence Saur wrote in her preface to *Maternity: A Book for Every Wife and Mother*, "The greatest need of the age is a better understanding of the laws of our being; it is a point upon which the future of our race depends" (qtd. in Skinner 74). Additionally, Saur argued that ignorance of anatomy and physiology and a lack of scientific principles organizing women's practices and behaviors was the cause of their perceived weakness. Skinner argues, "Relying on a genre and a related ethos that highlighted the writers' expertise and their authority to advise the public, nineteenth-century American women physicians interrupted the conventional male-to-female flow of medical advice," and women physician's health information made possible better care for female bodies but also led to practices of withholding medical information from women (96).

In her fourth chapter, "Teaching Women to Talk about Sex," Skinner describes how women physicians were able to model "tactful, maternal, scientific ethos" that provided a way for nonprofessional women to discuss sexuality without being labeled as inappropriate (103). A key strategy used by women physicians was to revise the discourse of sexuality and reproduction away from individual pleasure to a discourse of social importance. Mary Wood-Allen exemplifies this strategy in her book *What a Young Woman Ought to Know* when she states,

Young women may feel their individual violation of the laws of health is of no importance, but when they realize that the girls of to-day are the mothers of the future, and that physical strength or weakness of each individual girl affects the average health of the nation, not only now, but it may be through her posterity for centuries, we can see that each girl's health is a matter of national and racial importance (102).

This move to social importance over individual pleasure may be a part of the "ambiguous discourse" that current scholar Robin Jensen explores within sex education during the Progressive era; an era marked by the reconciliation of moral reform and scientific authority (33). Again the "in between" occupied by

women physicians provided them with an opportunity to model an acceptable discussion of sexuality and reproduction, but the delicacy of the topic at hand maintained a need for silence of specific kinds of evidence that were protected by the patient physician relationship (120).

The following two chapters discuss the influence women physicians had on discourses within the profession of medicine. Skinner describes how a collective professional ethos was constituted through their shared research within the *Women's Medical Journal* and in medical journals dominated by men. These professional practices provided an opportunity to model the rhetorical activities of researchers and contributors to the field of medicine (via conference presentations, journal publications, and editorials). Additionally, in Chapter Six Skinner explores the ways in which women physicians influenced the methods of practicing and writing medical research. This played out in both efforts to improve the representation of women in medical research as well as advocating for the avoidance of sensational cases that were unrepresentative of the broader population. The impacts of women's inclusion into a scientific medical profession may have created greater rhetorical authority for women physicians, but, as Skinner states, "just as women physicians' ethē was enhanced indirectly through alterations of medical research methods, discourse conventions, and perceptions of women's health, the ethē of patients as autonomous determiners of their conditions and treatments was indirectly limited by the increasing authority of physician's scientific professionalism" (170).

In her conclusion, Skinner argues that a feminist ethos is one that develops, not by demonstrating "the virtues most valued by the audience," but instead through situated practices that work collaboratively and sometimes in contention with heterogeneous audiences that may or may not share the speakers values (173). The contingent aspect of feminist ethos is a recognition of a rhetorical working and reworking within particular contexts and with particular audiences. The rhetorical situations explored in this book are synthesized through five elements of feminist ethos, which, as Skinner warns, are not meant to be all inclusive. Instead, they function to open up more spaces for future research and a contingent understanding of feminist ethos for rhetorical scholars. The five elements pulled from her analysis are quoted below (173 - 180):

A rhetor's ethos is shaped by the material resources available to her and the popular beliefs about those of her social position.

Ethos often is not crafted in response to a coherent and identifiable set of audience values but instead is composed in a dynamic context that includes multiple competing ideas about the "best" virtues;

consequently ethos formation frequently involves value negotiations as well as reciprocity between rhetor and audience identity constructs.

Ethos and genre are intertwined as a location within and among genres.

The ethos choices an individual rhetor makes influence not only his or her immediate communicative situation but also the broader context and the persuasive options available to other potential speakers and writers.

Ethos can be collectively developed and deployed; consequently, a rhetor can develop her ethos indirectly, by shaping her audience's perception of the groups to which she belongs.

Our understanding of ethos has been predominantly focused on masculine communication and many times on a single rhetor. Skinner's book is a methodological contribution to rhetorical studies of ethos that utilizes a vast archive of materials from a variety of women physicians, and creates depth through her contextualization of these materials. This methodological approach made her theoretical contributions to developing a contingent feminist ethos possible. It would have been very helpful to have a fuller understanding of the kinds of knowledge that were lost through this process of professionalization, specifically in regards to privileging the "scientific" in regards to health. But, given how detailed and well-contextualized this work is, this may be a minor concern. Overall, *Women Physicians & Professional Ethos in Nineteenth-Century America* is a productive and engaging contribution to women's rhetorical history, as well as to scholars interested in the intersection of science/medicine in the women's movement or in public discourse, practices of professionalization, or the histories of women in the field of medicine.

## Notes

- 1 The book's organization within the body chapters breaks down into two domains: public and medical. Chapters Two through Four focus on public interventions and Chapters Five and Six medical/professional interventions of women physicians.

## Works Cited

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## **About the Author**

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Vander Lei, Elizabeth, Thomas Amorose, Beth Daniell, and Anne Ruggles Gere, eds. *Renovating Rhetoric in Christian Tradition*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014. 232 pages.

## G Patterson

Few things evoke suspicion in higher education more than the topic of religion, and as a scholar who studies the intersection of sexuality, gender identity, and Christianity, I can understand why. In and outside of the classroom, Christian mores (or secularized versions thereof) operate as a socially dominant narrative, one which is often deployed as a prophylactic against considering minoritized perspectives. An abundance of scholarship in our field attests to this frustrating phenomenon. And yet, no matter how frustrating this phenomenon may be, academics from a range of subfields within rhetoric and composition--myself included--implore their colleagues to consider the important ways that Christianity continues to shape public life, even (and especially) when we don't recognize its immediate influence. Elizabeth Vander Lei, Thomas Amorose, Beth Daniell, and Anne Ruggles Gere's *Renovating Rhetoric in Christian Tradition* continues this work.

Beginning with a modest grant from the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities, the editors of this collection accomplish more than an interesting manuscript. Early in the writing process, their genuine passion for exploring the multiple meanings of concepts like "religion" and "Christianity" resulted in the creation of a special interest group (SIG) at the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Drawing from this robust academic conversation, Vander Lei, Amorose, Daniell, and Ruggles Gere offer readers a series of essays that illuminate a dynamic, rather than rigid, relationship between rhetoric and Christianity--essays that challenge readers to rethink their aversion to religious rhetorics. Like similar collections, the editors claim that our field's favoring of secular discourse communities over religious ones comes at the cost of losing out on a trove of resources for rethinking the rhetorical tradition.

Turning readers' attention toward these resources, the editors have cleverly organized their book around a central theme of rhetorical "renovation." Throughout its chapters, authors illustrate how rhetors--across times of historical and contemporary rupture--have worked within and against Christian tradition to articulate themselves as social agents and effect change within their discourse communities (ix). *Renovating Rhetoric* includes four sections, each reviewing a different point of tension within Christian tradition.

Section One, "The Rise of Christian Sects" examines how religious outsiders--Mormons and Seventh Day Adventists, respectively--challenged socially dominant perspectives about the validity of their religious beliefs and their place within the United States. Anne Ruggles Gere's "Constructing Devout Feminists" illustrates how Mormon women, at the turn of the nineteenth century, renovated the literacy practices of women's literary clubs in order to successfully combat prevailing misperceptions about their (lack of) feminist agency (4-13). In the process, Gere argues, these women were able to accomplish the daunting task of articulating Mormonism as thoroughly American, during a crucial time when Utah made its bid for statehood (14). Highlighting a different struggle against dominant forms of Christianity in the U.S., Elizabeth Rand's "A Rhetoric of Opposition" provides a compelling history of the origins of Sunday worship and the ways in which Seventh-Day Adventists (SDAs) were demonized for flouting this mandate (18-20). Bucking the assumption that SDAs are merely oppositional, Rand draws from theorist John Schilb to demonstrate how these types of "rhetorical refusals . . . serve to illuminate the dynamics of power" (27). Taken together, these essays shed light not only on the rhetorical moves employed by religious minorities but, more importantly, on how normative Christian groups have often colluded with the state to enshrine a white heteropatriarchy as divinely ordained. Moreover, these essays invite us to explore that which is "queer" within minority religious discourse communities, urging us to reconsider dominant conceptions of what is normal, healthy, and good.

While the contribution of women rhetors cuts across the previous section, this takes center stage in Section Two, "The Rise of Female Rhetors." Here, authors illustrate how women have "sometimes respect[ed] and sometimes challenge[d] the orthodox practices and beliefs of their discourse communities" in order to carve out a space for women's leadership--something that is no small feat in male-dominated Christian traditions (xi). The first essay, "Preaching from the Pulpit Steps," by Vicki Tolar Burton, examines Mary Bosanquet as a case study of how blending spiritual discourses gained Methodist women rhetorical leverage, which in turn slowly challenged their community's prohibition against female preachers. In "With the Tongue of [Wo]men and Angels," Aesha Adams-Roberts, Rosalyn Collings Evers, and Liz Rohan present a comparative analysis of how three female rhetors--across racial, class, and sectarian lines--employ apostolic rhetoric to garner authority within their religious communities. The authors close their essay by imploring feminist rhetoricians to "centralize matters of faith and spirituality" so that they will have a more complete sense of the women's available means of persuasion (58). The third and final essay of this collection, Karen Seat's "Rhetorical Strategies in Protestant Women's Missions," demonstrates how Protestant women

renovated discourses of domesticity and abolitionism to justify their work in “foreign” ministries, a move the author argues ultimately liberalized mainline Protestant communities. While these narratives certainly highlight the need to examine the female rhetorician in all of her (spiritual and religious) specificity, they also highlight religious women rhetors as simultaneously poised against and complicit in various forms of oppression--thus offering readers a nuanced model for thinking about the consequences of articulating rhetorical agency.

Taking a somewhat jarring contemporary turn, Section Three, “The Rise of Concern about American Christian Fundamentalism” offers strategies for helping students “make sense of the relationship between their religious identity and their academic work” through rhetorics of renovation (xv). Priscilla Perkins’s “Attentive, Intelligent, Reasonable, and Responsible,” for example, offers a sympathetic case study of Tina, whose anxiety about her Evangelical Christian identity prevented her from demonstrating self-reflexive writing practices. Throughout, Perkins shares with readers a refreshing way of thinking about rhetoric beyond mere persuasion to considering how one’s arguments might affect others. In “Ain’t We Got Fun?” Elizabeth Vander Lei reflects on her interactions with her student Marty, a Christian Fundamentalist, in order to consider how teachers can be more hospitable to students whose ideas they find “disagreeable” (90). Cautioning teachers from painting all religious students with a broad brush, she advocates instead creating opportunities that help students locate their religious narratives as part of a larger discourse community (97). Perhaps the crowning piece of this section is Beth Daniell’s “A Question of Truth.” Through historicizing biblical canonization, reading practices, and conceptions of truth, Daniell presents strategies for responding to religious students in such a way that they don’t have to choose between their faith and their education. All told, these essays offer teachers valuable theoretical and practical tips for engaging in difficult dialogues.

Finally, Section Four, “Rhetoric in Christian Tradition,” examines what the collection’s editors describe as “the troubled relationship of rhetoric and the Christian tradition” (xv). But because the editors have presented us with such a great metaphor like “renovation,” I’d risk describing this final section as an acknowledgement of the cracks in the foundation of Christian discourse. For instance, in “The Jewish Context of Paul’s Rhetoric,” Bruce Herzberg notes that while his Greco-Roman rhetorical training may be acknowledged, Paul’s rabbinic training in rhetoric is denied by New Testament scholars and Christian rhetorologists alike--a silence Herzberg rightly notes as “suspect” (132). As a corrective, he calls on scholars to acknowledge Jewish rhetoric’s contributions to the Christian rhetorical tradition. The collection closes with Thomas Amorose’s essay, “Resistance to Rhetoric in the Christian Tradition.” Herein, Amorose examines three ways in which Christian discourse communities stifle

the free exercise of rhetoric: denying agency to the rhetor, limiting hermeneutic freedoms, and upholding the status quo. He argues that Christianity's reticence toward rhetoric results in a stale discourse community and a stagnation of faith (145). In contrast, Amarose argues that embracing rhetoric's full potential can help Christian discourse communities remain meaningful in contemporary times. Together, these essays direct readers' attention to the future--what remains to be said in the field of Christian rhetorics.

On the whole, this collection inspires with the possibilities of renovating both Christian rhetorical tradition and the rhetorical tradition in general. A strength of this collection is that it welcomes other scholars into the conversation, regardless of whether or not their primary research interests include Christian rhetorics. For instance, those who consider themselves feminist rhetoricians might find the first two sections of this collection quite useful, particularly those with an interest in excavating new means of persuasion from feminist archives. Moreover, those who study deliberative rhetoric, along with those who'd like to brush up on negotiating difficult dialogues, would certainly benefit from the latter half of the collection. And, of course, it goes without saying that *Renovating Rhetoric* is a must-read for those interested in religious rhetorics--especially those interested in pulpit rhetorics and the literacy practices of Christian students.

Renovation is *such* a smart metaphor for the collection, precisely because it has the potential for encouraging us to think about the worlds we build through discourse. It can also give us an opportunity to consider everything from the leaky roofs to the cracks in our discursive foundations. While there are places where I see the collection attempt to seize these opportunities, I do wish the authors had tempered their enthusiasm for Christian rhetorical agency by acknowledging that Christianity also happens to be a dominant social discourse that has, at times, been responsible for denying the agency of others. Taking into consideration how difficult it is for editors to make any collection cohere, I was also left wanting more renovating voices that might knock down discursive walls to make room for a more socially just vision of Christianity. All that said, perhaps a hallmark of a well-thought collection is that it "fires the curiosity of . . . readers" and reminds them of the work yet to be done (xvi).

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## About the Author

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Robbins, Sarah R., Sabine H. Smith, and Federica Santini, eds. *Bridging Cultures: International Women Faculty Transforming the US Academy*. Lanham: UP of America, 2011. Print. 230 pages.

Jennifer Sano-Franchini

*Bridging Cultures* centers on the timely and under-investigated topic of international women faculty and their experiences in the US Academy. This topic is particularly relevant as it coincides with the 2012 publication of *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (reviewed by Hui Wu in Peitho 15.2), which, while not centered specifically on international women faculty, does the work of considering how cultural identities that may at times be based on nationalisms impact the work of women of color in the Academy. These texts further coincide with news reports of Wang Ping and Lulu Sun, international scholars who brought lawsuits against their respective institutions—Macalester College and the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth—on the basis of discrimination in the promotion process. More recently, Nicholas Close Subtirelu published “She does have an accent but...” which explores how multilingual teachers from Asia may receive lower scores in clarity and helpfulness on RateMyProfessors.com, raising concerns about bias in institutional evaluations. These culminating events illustrate how different forms of bias can and do materially affect international women scholars in the US, who “face the double jeopardy of both their ‘foreign’ status and their gender” (xii). *Bridging Cultures* further speaks to the timeliness of this work on international women faculty in the US, citing a growth in numbers—“International faculty members are steadily becoming a more visible presence at US universities, both private and public” (xi)—alongside some of the challenges international faculty and women faculty face, including adaptation to a new US academic culture, students’ expectations of forms of instruction that are based on US norms, institutional bureaucracy, and salary inequity (xii-xiii).

The book raises awareness about the fact that the topic of international women faculty in the US academy is also under-investigated. While it is easy to find information (such as country of origin) about international students, the opposite seems to be true regarding international faculty. The most detailed data set, cited in the Preface by Robbins, is the number of male and female “non-resident aliens,” as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (xi). The details of these groups, including ethnicity and country of origin, are either not tracked or not publicly available. This lack of access to such

information indicates a lack of attention to the complex needs and concerns of international faculty in the US. Furthermore, the editors argue that “the internationalization of higher education is...inadequately critiqued” (xxvi), and that there is a “shortage of interdisciplinary scholarship directly addressing international faculty women’s place in the academy” (xxvii).

Intended for faculty and administrators interested in “faculty development and institutional change” (xv), the purpose of *Bridging Cultures* is to “imagine how the university, as a site of public culture-making, can benefit from [...] personal and communal exchanges among international women faculty and, by extension, additional under-represented social groups” (xxii). The contributors work toward this goal through feminist and standpoint theories, relying on “autobiographical writing as a meaning-making vehicle,” and as a “feminist-oriented practice of life-narrating” (xxiv), alongside Sandra Harding’s framework for “standpoint projects,” where one starts research “from the lives of structurally exploited groups, identifying conceptual practices of power, developing group consciousness” (xxiii). Such an approach is concerned with lived experience as a way of knowing, with “the potential to help move positions of resistance into social transformation ones,” acknowledging both “the contingent nature of their findings...and the epistemological values their stories have for this particular topic” (xxiii).

To this end, *Bridging Cultures* is arranged in three sections: I. Memoirs on Bridging Cultures, II. Responses, and III. Building Aspirational Cultures. Working from disciplines like Psychology, Sociology, English, Foreign Languages, and Teacher Education, and coming from regions in Europe, South America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia, the collection’s twenty contributors enter a dialogue within and across the text that is both visible and invisible: one of the more compelling aspects of the collection is described as its “invisible dialogue,” a collaborative writing approach contingent on reflection and communal revision. The editors explain, “the authors of this volume’s essays embarked on an intellectual journey that, ironically, required a patient stillness—giving themselves over to a sustained period of individual and shared reflection, supported by writing, then refined by collaborative re-writing, additional reflection, and extended communal revision” (xxi). Authors seem to have appreciated and individually benefitted from this approach, and the dialogue is described in the introduction, organized through the memoir and response sections, and followed up with a focus group in which authors discussed the writing process and the content of the essays. Such an approach has the potential to fruitfully yield more complex and multi-perspectival understandings of cultural positioning within an academic context. At the same time, such an approach may also risk imposing a unity where unity doesn’t exist, reducing

some of the complexities, tensions, and structural inequalities that come with a culturally diverse group.

Section 1, "Memoirs on Bridging Cultures," consists of six personal narratives intended to employ "locality and specificity" as a starting point for larger recurring issues (xxxii). Chapter 1, "Professing in a Foreign Tongue: A Central European Perspective on English Studies," by Katarina Gephardt, may be of interest to those in rhetoric and writing as Gephardt describes how her "own struggle with academic writing in the Anglo-American academic context alerted [her] to the peculiar organizational structures and rhetorical 'moves' that were culture-based rather than logical or natural, which is the way that they are often presented in composition instruction" (14). Drawing on the work of Ulla Connor and contrastive rhetoric, Gephardt explains how the "phenomenon of the thesis required an explanation that accounted not only for cultural difference, but also for the peculiarity of academic culture," highlighting the importance of understanding language as always embedded in a cultural context.

Chapter 2, "East Meets West: An Asian Woman Teacher Educator's Journey Enacting Global Pedagogy in the American South," by Guichun Zong, describes the author's upbringing during China's Cultural Revolution and her movement from a position of relative privilege in China to that of a minority in the US. Zong also describes teaching strategies meant to facilitate global and cross-cultural learning, including a trip to Super H-Mart, a Korean-owned grocery chain. From this trip, "students not only experienced Korean culture, but also learned about the intricacies of globalization" (32). Of note is how one African American student "observed that the people working in this Korean store were either Asians or Latinos," and "asked the store manager why there were not many black people employed there" (32-33). This moment with the African American student seems important and the experiential learning activities seem worthwhile, but it is not clear how the trip was scaffolded, how the student's observation was unpacked, what students learned from the trip, or what aspects of Korean culture the students experienced. Teachers interested in trying an activity like this in their own classes might consider including elements that may help veer away from a cultural tourism approach to learning about Others. Teachers should consider Edward Bruner's work on the subject, and encourage students to reflect on the limitations of what they might be able to know based on their experiences, the rhetoricity of a grocery shopping experience, and how power and privilege might operate within such a situation, particularly in relation to the "tourist's gaze."

"Perfectly Ambivalent: How German Am I?" by Sabine H. Smith is perhaps the most genuinely reflective among the essays, as Smith examines, contextualizes, and problematizes her own subject position within a variety of

contexts—as a daughter who grew up in post-WWII Germany, as the first academic in her family, as a formally educated speaker in a male-dominated conversational environment. At one point, while describing her fraught relationship with her father, who was a WWII veteran on the German side, she explains how she wrote all of her graduate papers on the Third Reich in English, in part so that her father would be unable to read them. Intriguingly, she says, “I can speak more easily in English about difficult and emotional topics. Arguably, English and my ‘American’ voice have afforded me emotional distance and freedom to express myself” (47). Smith’s essay points to the ways in which efforts to develop intercultural competencies will be hindered if we don’t also manage the inevitable ambivalences in our personal and professional lives.

Chapter 4, “The Stranger in the Classroom: The Professional Acculturation of Three Romanian Scholars,” by Darina Lepadatu, Cristina Gheorghiu-Stephens, and Gilbert Lepadatu, describes how the authors navigated the transition between “the old-world elitist Romanian system of higher education faced with modernization challenges and the American system of mass higher education designed for critical thinking and a commercial approach to teaching and learning” (61). The authors draw on Georg Simmel’s work on “the stranger,” explaining, “Simmel argues that strangeness is a positive attribute in human interactions and should not be rejected as an alienating condition. The stranger as a social type has the benefits of mobility, free thinking, objectivity, non-stereotypical thinking, and non-conformism” (64, emphasis original). It is to be noted, however, that these qualities have come into question post-modernity, and that such a lens risks treating the complex experiences of international scholars and teachers in a way that is ultimately reductive.

Chapter 5, “Disclosure, Dialogue, and Coming of Age in the Academy,” by Gertrude Tinker Sachs, Pier Angeli Junor Clarke, Wanjira Kinuthia, Ewa McGrail, and Geeta Verma, is a collaborative memoir by authors who spent their formative years in the Bahamas, Guyana, India, Kenya, and Poland. Four of the authors identify as women of color, and three represent the African Diaspora. Of note is how the chapter works to “problematize the use of the multicultural framework to theorize [the authors’] collective experiences,” emphasizing how their “experiences are much more complex than being a member of an ethnic group” (83). The authors grapple with the process of coming to understand themselves as Other—as “minority,” “diverse,” “junior,” and “new”—in their transition to the US Academy. An interesting tension occurs when the authors touch on how hegemonic discourses on race have negative implications for white international women faculty as well: the one Caucasian collaborator “considers herself an international faculty member but is considered a part of majority culture by her academic institution. Some of her struggles come from not being able to tap into institutional programs and benefits typically offered

to faculty members belonging to minority groups" (93, emphasis original). As a reader, I understand that there are shared challenges among international faculty across race; however, I wonder how the reality of white privilege is taken into account within such statements. Even though the Caucasian faculty member may not have access to "benefits" geared toward "minority" faculty groups, and though this is a real problem that should be addressed, there is also a risk of covering over the advantages afforded by white privilege.

Chapter 6, "Language is the House of Being," by Federica Santini, continues to explore pedagogical differences between educational institutions across national boundaries, focusing on the author's experiences in Italy, the Netherlands and the US. The chapter is primarily a "series of notes [...] aimed to define at least some points of [the author's] journey between two worlds and two languages" (104). Using continental theory on language via the works of Heidegger, Marx, de Saussure, Derrida, Lacan, and Freud, alongside female poet Rossetti and Cixous, Santini discusses how her conceptualization of language has shaped her work in translation. While the author states that she hopes that the chapter may be a "source of further reflection on the part of [her] readers" (104), the chapter would have benefitted from more explicit connections to the purpose of the collection or the concerns of its audience.

The second section, "Responses," consists of shorter response essays by a male international scholar, a male Asian American scholar who teaches in Japan, a female Austrian doctoral candidate who studies globalization in academic culture, a male US provost, and a female international administrator from Brazil. The first essay, by Satya P. Mohanty, is the strongest of the responses, particularly as he provides a more nuanced view of nationalisms as they mobilize in and out of the Academy, and in relation to other identity categories. Specifically, Mohanty suggests that we

unpack the notion "international faculty" by looking at it through the lens of social identity. [...] we don't exist in relation to just the academy; we are also members of this society. Whether or not we like it, we are defined socially by our class, our gender, our sexuality. And there is probably no place in the United States where we international faculty would not also be defined by what is called 'race.' The daily experiences of a dark-skinned Malaysian-American professor are likely going to be much less pleasant than those of a light-skinned Ukrainian faculty member, and that has nothing to do with the talents and capabilities of the two individuals in question. The fact that they are both 'international faculty' says very little in many contexts, and it is only by looking at the way they respond to their racialized social identities, as residents of the United States, that we will write a fuller story of what

happens to international faculty on our campuses and in our society. My own experiences as a naturalized American of Indian origin tell me that of all the cultural factors that we immigrants are taught—and even urged—to deny, the most salient one is race—the color line. Denial of race brings rewards in this society; acknowledgement of race can be costly [...] To live in the United States is to be racialized, no matter what the color of our skin is. Once we fully acknowledge the implications of this basic social fact [...] we begin a journey that is sometimes painful but also immensely fulfilling. (120-121)

This point about the urge to deny race as a contributing factor in one's experiences gives cause to re-think some of the perspectives presented in previous chapters that do not always attend to international faculty's racialized experiences. For instance, one author surmises, "I also feel that I am credited with a higher level of objectivity [because of my strangeness, or foreign-status] when we discuss 9/11, the war in Iraq, racial and ethnic discrimination, and even topics such as universal health care," without considering how it might not be just her foreign-ness, but also her whiteness that helps people to entrust her with this "higher level of objectivity" (65).

The third and final section of the collection, "Building an Aspirational Culture," consists of a reflective epilogue and set of questions that invites readers to consider their own experiences in relation to previous chapters for the purpose of "Reflection, Discussion, and Cultural Change." In so doing, the authors end the volume with a non-ending, allowing for continued engagement and conversation about the issues raised within the collection. They even explicitly invite readers to "participate in ongoing conversations" by emailing the collection editors and sharing thoughts about "how the book can be useful in a range of academic settings and/or with comments on how the essays have been most helpful to their own professional development" (174).

The work of *Bridging Cultures* is valuable because it brings attention to a complex group that makes important contributions to the US Academy, but one that has not been paid enough attention in research and scholarship. At the same time, I suggest that readers encounter this text with a few caveats in mind. The biggest, for me, is the ways in which the collection does not sufficiently account for issues of race and representation. Among the issues I find troubling with the text, include the diversity (or lack thereof) of contributors, nearly half of whom—nine out of twenty contributors—migrated from Europe. Of the six memoirs, four centralize on European perspectives, one is written from an Asian perspective, and one presents an intercultural but primarily African diasporic perspective. All of the editors are tenured white women—two European, and one US-born with experience living overseas. Thus, while these essays may be useful for thinking about the diverse cultural backgrounds of

academics of European ancestry, my sense is that the backgrounds of contributors do not reflect the actual make up of international scholars in the US Academy. Rather, issues of race seem at times to be engaged as an afterthought, and are best attended to in the response by Satya P. Mohanty and in Chapter 5 by Tinker Sachs, et al. For example, Tinker Sachs, et al. make a key point when they say, "The multicultural framework appears to be just and equitable, but it positions the mainstream versus the marginalized as dichotomous and thus not only privileges the inherent Euro-centrism but also underlines the hegemonic philosophical and epistemological assumptions of universalism" (82). This point could have been more deeply considered in the introduction, but is instead partitioned off in a way that ironically reflects the very problem of "multicultural" approaches. While it may be said that the current arrangement is truer to the collaborative writing process and that it may be helpful to learn how actual international scholars perceive the US and their experiences here, there is also the risk of structurally reinforcing the idea that administrators—especially white, male, and/or US administrators—are needed to validate and critique the experiences and ideas of international women faculty in the U.S. or to teach them about issues of race. Instead, I believe there is an ethical imperative for editors to provide authors with an opportunity to attend to these kinds of perspectives themselves through substantive revision, and the editors could have done more to include such perspectives in the introduction.

Perhaps as result of this limited engagement with issues of race, the editors deploy terms like "privilege" and "other" in a context about systemic inequality in ways that are not in line with existing scholarship on systemic inequality. For instance, the editors ask, "What if, instead, the uncertain space of suspension could be used as a privileged setting from which to actively participate in the global world?" (xxv, emphasis mine) The Introduction goes on to state, "our core essays' authors have a kind of epistemic privilege—a special capacity, by virtue of their personal histories, for developing their own bicultural identities as resources for knowledge-making" (xxvi, emphasis mine). However, a unique insight as a result of oppression is not a privilege, at least if we understand privilege in terms of its use in conversations about systemic inequality. This "privilege" is further referred to as a "positive vision of hybrid identity" (xxvi), without nuance in terms of the implications of reframing "privilege" or even "hybrid identity" in this way. As such, it seems that "privilege" is used as synonymous with "advantage," and this use may contribute to misunderstanding about what privilege via systemic inequality is and how it operates. This use of "privilege" may have also led to a lack of reflection within the memoirs with regards to the authors' actual privilege as academics, or as tenured professors, or as white women (or men), and how these privileges may have shaped their narratives.

As can be seen in the quotes above, the editors' seem to be primarily concerned with re-envisioning international women faculty, casting them in a more productive and positive light—as having the potential to yield unique and valuable cross-cultural perspectives. They consider:

Like the pianist, migrants and ex-pats are often represented as permanently suspended between worlds, getting entangled in a net of regrets. What if, instead, the uncertain space of suspension could be used as a privileged setting from which to actively participate in the global world, to create interactive networks across space, by making connections or engaging with generative oppositions (core/periphery, inside/outside, high/low, East/West and/or North/South, patriarchal/feminist, white/non-white)? [...] Suspension, with its possibilities for ongoing reflection, can therefore be a source of strength. (xxv)

This attempt to reframe the oppressed positions of international women faculty in a more positive light—to re-see oppression as a source of strength and privilege—may send the message that a viable solution for better integrating internationalization efforts at postsecondary institutions is to simply re-see international women faculty as the valuable resources that they are. A critique is to be made, however, that this “solution” may serve as a way of side-stepping actual systemic problems integrated within university structures; in other words, when we are primarily concerned with transforming the ways in which we ourselves see “the Other,” we may never get to thinking about how transformations to specific institutional policies, resources, spaces, and other structural elements might better address the needs and concerns of international women faculty in the US. While it is important to critically rethink how we see others, it is also important to talk about how university administrators should be held responsible for actively creating space for the perspectives of international women faculty, attending to their needs and concerns, and supporting their valuable intellectual contributions.

As a reader, I was left wanting for more specificity in terms of how precisely international women faculty transform the US Academy, beyond having unique perspectives that bridge cultures. This lack of specificity in terms of the implications of this work might have been due in part to a framing that does not adequately account for its specific context. For instance, one area that the editors could have pushed in an interesting way is the relation of place to some of the ideas presented. Readers may notice that a large number of the contributors—sixteen out of twenty—have been employed by postsecondary institutions in Georgia, and ten are or were affiliated with Kennesaw State University specifically. This pattern may not have been an issue had there been a more explicit connection between Georgia institutions and the wider US academy in the collection's framing pieces. After all, student body and institutional culture can vary substantially depending

on a variety of factors, including location. Are some of the conclusions that can be drawn from these memoirs actually more specific to Georgia or the South? This collection may have had a different sort of depth had the memoirs been discussed in relation to place and Georgia specifically, perhaps in relation to the New South.

Finally, I am wary of the ways in which international women faculty are at times described as resources to be mined. For instance, "imagine how the university, as a site of public culture-making, can benefit from such personal and communal exchanges among international women faculty and, by extension, additional under-represented social groups" (xxii, emphasis mine), or, "Such a strategy banks on diversity as a powerful cultural capital rather than viewing 'difference' as a problem to be overcome" (xxvi, emphasis mine). Later, respondent and Provost of Arcadia University Steve O. Michael makes some effort to persuade readers that international faculty tend to be talented individuals with much to contribute, while also referring to them as "institutional international assets" and "assets awaiting discovery" (139-141). I wonder, rather than viewing our colleagues as "assets" to be mined, what would it look like to view them as human beings who are part of an intellectual community, and who have intellectual contributions that do not exist just for our benefit?

*Bridging Cultures* contributes to the discussion on international women faculty in the US, and brings with it a unique approach to interdisciplinary collaborative writing. At the same time, issues relevant to international women faculty have not been entirely missing from the scholarly literature, and *Bridging Cultures* would have benefited from better attention to the scholarship on transnational, postcolonial, and third world feminisms, including the works of Gloria Anzaldúa, Lisa Lowe, Ien Ang, Gayatri Spivak, Chandra Mohanty and Rey Chow, amongst others, which would have led to a more nuanced view of power and culture in an institutional setting. It may have been especially fruitful had contributors, in their collaboration, read and discussed some of this work together, prior to, or as they were writing their memoirs. While the text does suggest a transformation of the institution of higher education, at times it seems like the primary goal is to re-think diversity as good, rather than to substantially alter the system at large.

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