

# Recoveries and Reconsiderations

## Selvedge Rhetorics and Material Memory

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**Abstract:** This essay briefly explains importance of an accretive approach to analyzing material research objects, focusing on the ways that fabric selvedges, as material-rhetorical practices, advance our ability to affectively think-with objects as a way to engage with material feminism in service of social justice work.

**Keywords:** fabric, industrialization, material rhetoric, rhetorical accretion, textiles

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*Donna Haraway and Sharon Traweek teach us that when we tell stories these are performative...there is no important difference between stories and materials. Or, to put it a little differently: stories, effective stories, perform themselves into the material world—yes, in the form of social relations, but also in the form of machines, architectural arrangements, bodies, and all the rest.” -  
John Law, “On the Subject of the Object”*

### Introduction

*Peitho* readers who work with fabric materials are likely aware of the “selvedge,” the final edge of a bolt of fabric that is both warp and weft that keeps it from fraying. Selvedges, coming from “self-edge,” represent a moment in material making in fabric production that is finite and

finished. It is true that most often selvages are thrown away, the edge of a bolt of fabric that is not like the rest. It provides information like manufacturers' names, dye runs from light to dark known as color registrations (or more colloquially "traffic lights," as that is what they resemble), or particular pattern numbers or designers' names. Yet each of these, I argue here, also functions accretively as a textual addition to the fabric itself. These throwaway pieces have been used contemporarily by fabric workers of all sorts as a way to repurpose and make use of scraps and often take contemporary forms as rag rugs, quilts, handbags, pillows, placemats. Rather than focus on selvedge repurposing, however, instead I focus on the ways that selvages can reveal a particular life to the material that allows materials themselves to point a researcher towards interesting questions, histories, connections, and recoveries. Selvages, as material-rhetorical practices, advance our ability to affectively think-with objects as a way to engage with material feminism in service of social justice work.

## Material Practices and Accretive Methods: Theoretical Framing

The notion that the material is central to the life of feminist recovery work is not new. Indeed, to "read" fabric as I do in this short piece brings together insights put forward by feminist scholars, rhetorical scholars, new material and posthuman scholars, decolonial scholars, and scholars doing work at the forefront of crafting and maker communities. In her Key Concept Statement, "Material," published in *Peitho* in 2015, Elizabeth Fleitz details the centrality of material practices, bodies, material conditions, objects, and spaces to women's rhetorics. Since Fleitz' statement was published, an abundance of work has pointed attention to this emergent commonplace. This is evidenced by scholarship that has examined material-rhetorical rendering of the vibrant networks that surround both objects and identity politics.

Such examples of this scholarship abound: Sarah Hallenbeck's work on bicycles as "active creators and shapers of new arguments" surrounding women's bodies in the nineteenth century (198); Minahan and Cox's examination of cyberfeminist roots of the "reclaiming of feminine craft" through Stitch'nBitch clubs (Minahan and Cox 10); and Kirtz's reconsideration of collaborative fiber arts movements that examine textiles as data storage are all models of the intertwining between feminism and the material. Working with textiles in particular offers up a re-materialization of making, considering that contemporary mass industrial sewing practices dematerialize those who labor to create them—primarily women and girls working in the textile industry (see in particular Propen; Cloud). To that end, it is my aim to join not only in ongoing conversations around fabric and textile-oriented scholarship that engages making (see, for example, Shivers-McNair), quilting (see Arellano), and feminist material objects (see Goggin,

Sohan), but also to join scholars like Iris Ruiz and Sonia Arellano in participating in productive calls to engage with tactile and haptic rhetorics to contribute to alternate ways of knowing that might better “facilitate knowledge production in positive ways for marginalized people” (151). As they assert, and as Arellano extends with her conception of feminist-materialist Quilting as Method (QAM), quilting in particular materially joins intellectual and creative labor, resulting in different kinds of knowledge production (Ruiz and Arellano 158). Peripheral materials such as selvedges, literally marginal to quilting, can contribute in small but significant ways to thinking about feminist material-rhetorical practices and the histories they invoke. I aim to showcase here how one example of textile making can engage in processes of reclamation—not of the histories of migrant laborers, as Ruiz and Arellano do—but of women and girls who disappear in recounting traditional history of the textile industry in contemporary documents, such as those that appear on websites and in marketing materials.

This turn to craft as revealing important intersections between material, agency, power, and ethics is captured by Leigh *Gruwell’s Making Matters: Craft, Ethics, and New Materialism*, in which she turns to craftivism in particular to demonstrate the relationships between material, women, and political life. Craft, she argues—and more specifically, the agency that craft exerts on makers, technologies, artifacts, and relationships—serves to “illuminate the interdependence of materiality, power, and rhetorical action” (6). Thus, to engage seriously with scholars working in areas of both decolonial and new material theory, revisiting our methods and widening our approach to materials can be a careful extension of this line of thinking.

I have argued elsewhere that examining an artifact not just as part of a system of things or a mediator of knowledge allows for “tactics for invention which emphasize networks over discrete discursive elements” (Clary-Lemon, “Museums”). Such a framework allows for an examination of the depth of textual circulation and emergent contexts, both present and past. I have also argued that materials themselves—like finding aids in archives—play a major agentive part in shaping our research questions and methods (Clary-Lemon, “Archival”). In other words, to borrow from Law’s epigraph, I’ve found it central in these cases to examine how stories perform themselves into the material world. In both cases I have found Vicki Tolar Burton’s notion of rhetorical accretion, adapted into a research method, particularly useful.

Burton defines rhetorical accretion as “the process of layering additional texts over and around the original text” (547). Much as an oyster builds up accreted layers of nacre over an irritant to create a pearl, or the way layers of light gather around a black hole to create a luminous disk, allowing us to infer its existence, examining discursive-material artifacts like

fabric selvages in this way give us both a starting place and a methodological grounding to our analyses. We might read accreted layers around an object, like a fabric selvedge, that are myriad: material (in the makeup of cotton, dye, and shuttle loom machinery), tactile (in the making and touching of a fabric project), affective (in our feelings as we engage in making or engage in research recovery), discursive (in the layers of new text, meaning, or context we discover), cultural and historical (in situating materials in a particular place and time), and social and embodied (in recognition of the relationships which make up the making and examination of the project). A scholar performing a material analysis might take any one of these layers as a way into feminist recovery work. In the remainder of this piece, I forward an accretive analysis of one particular selvedge in a single quilt square.

### Affective and Embodied Domains: Selvedge Meaning-Making

To situate this discussion, I turn to the social, embodied, tactile, and affective domains of a selvedge project, and later turn to its historical and cultural traces. It begins with a 12-selvedge quilted square that was pieced and sewn by my mother, Ramona Mattix (see Figure 1). The amalgamated quilt square is made of twelve individual selvages. While this short article examines only one selvedge in the square, it should be noted that there are countless ways that a researcher might examine such an artifact:



"Cranston Print Works  
Co. Printed in the U.S.A."

Figure 1: 7x7 Quilted Selvedge Square Made from 12 Fabric Selvages. Image description: a square of fabric selvedge strips. The strips are neutral colors (white, tan, beige, black) on top, with a colorful print toward the middle containing a line of 14 hearts, each in a color from the print, and more neutral selvedge strips in the bottom half in animal print. The lines of text on the selvages read (from top to bottom) "Edwards of NORTHCOTT www.northcott.com," "Timeless Treasures © For Hi-Fashion Fabric," "© All Rights Reserved PATT # WILD-C 2047,"

*and "Cranston Print Works Co. Printed in the U.S.A. www.cranstonvillage." The rest of the URL is cut in order to fit the square*

As I looked closely at each selvedge and used these pieces as an impetus for research, additional layers of rhetorical meaning emerged: company names and websites ("northcott.com"); copyrights and registered trademarks (©, ®); pattern numbers ("PATT # WILD-C 2047"); designers' names (Judy & Judel Niemeyer"); and color registrations showing the numerical order in which the dye was applied to the fabric ("traffic lights" and rainbow hearts). While it is true that any number of these discursive details might be found, for example, in print documents—online advertisements, sewing or pattern booklets—my point here is to focus attention on the material itself. *These are our finding tools of fabric archives*, and a testament to material-discursive arguments.

Any number of these clues might be taken up to "read" fabric in particular ways to understand the textual amalgamation and accreted rhetorical layers that make up this one, re-pieced square, yet it's also important to note the research value of affectual proximity—what Solberg defines as "the intellectual and emotional investments and orientations that drive a researcher's choice of topic" (67)—or what Sara Ahmed more eloquently describes in her article "Happy Objects," as how we are "touched by what we are near" (30). Fabric—and those who work with it, bring it close, create with it and give it as gifts of love and labor—constructs a particular affectual proximity. I am close to this 7×7 inch square of fabric because I am close to my mother, and those proximities have relationally and affectively shaped my choice of research design. It affects why I sit writing this piece today, why I'm connecting it citationally to others the way that I am, and exerts a kind of "craft agency" (Gruwell 7) on me that both points me toward its most discursive bits, and allows for historical analysis to come. As a rhetorician, I am drawn to the most discursive selvedge in the square, the bottom strip which reads "Cranston Print Works Co.," which points me to a textile manufacturer located in Cranston, Rhode Island, and to a particular small piece of recovery work, which the next few pages reveal.

## Historical and Cultural Traces: Fabric as Archive

Scholars doing work in the area of women's labor history and early industrialization, particularly in New England, will be somewhat familiar with the role that the "Lowell Mills" of Massachusetts played in the American Industrial revolution. It gave rise to the "mill girls," rural women who would move to cities to work in textile mills but had to spend most of their income on boardinghouse fees. These histories gave rise to some of the first female workers' unions in the United States in the late 1840s. However, before the Waltham-Lowell power loom methods were adopted in Massachusetts, placing the entire process of textile manufacturing under one

roof, there was an industrial precursor. That precursor existed in Rhode Island with the emigration of Samuel Slater from England in 1789. Slater, known as “Slater the traitor” in the UK for developing new spinning and carding techniques stolen from Richard Arkwright in England, owned many small mills (known later as “Slater Mills”) all over Rhode Island, one of which, the Old Green Mill, later became the Cranston Print Works Company (“Our History”).

We collectively know that textile manufacturing has long been a feminized workplace of questionable safety. The Rhode Island Slater mills, like the Cranston Print Works Company, show us a similarly problematic historic backbone to our love for warp and weft. Gail Fowler Mohanty notes that “the introduction of spinning, roving, and carding mechanisms in the late 18th century served as a catalyst for changes in workshop management” (5) and used spinning frames, namely the Arkwright model that Slater imported, with which to do so. The Rhode Island mills often relied on “hand-spun cotton, woolen, or linen warp” (6), and thus different parts of the carding, spinning, and weaving processes would take place in different locations, unlike large-scale manufacturing offered by the power loom. These two models manifested a long-seated rivalry between the Rhode Island and Massachusetts systems: the industrial water-powered mills in Massachusetts which had the capacity to run the power looms by women under one roof, and the smaller, dispersed cottage system of the Rhode Island mills. Thus in order to employ factory labor to run the various new machines in the Rhode Island system, Slater’s brainchild was to employ child labor, particularly children living in poverty between the ages of 7 and 12 working 12-16 hours a day, six days a week with a forced “Sunday School” on the 7th day (Tucker 22).

The Slater Mills, and in particular the Cranston Print Works’ historical evolution from them, draws our attention from the common narrative of women working in large textile factories and instead toward rural poor children given room and board in lieu of wages and forced to attend religious school. Although histories of the industrial revolution suggest farm children were raised on hard work (see Simonds, Stearns), they were not in any way raised for exploitation. Like other histories of trauma and abuse that become paved over and sanitized in favor of master narrative of progress—Slater has been called the “father of the Industrial Revolution”—histories of capitalism and industrialization tend to tout the revolutionary nature of the power loom in manufacturing without actually touching a story of sending a seven-year-old child to work, often through the night, operating dangerous machinery.

Of course, this system became untenable as families complained about the lack of wages and the treatment of their children, which included whipping and other corporeal punishment. Thus,

Slater turned to what is now deemed the “family system” of labor, a deeply patriarchal system dependent on the notion of a male householder who “owns” familial women and children. Under the village, or “Rhode Island System,” a rather sanguine “Early Industrialization in the Northeast” open-access U.S. History text has this to say:

...families were hired. The father was placed in charge of the family unit, and he directed the labor of his wife and children. Instead of being paid in cash, [often] the father was given “credit” equal to the extent of his family’s labor that could be redeemed in the form of rent (of company-owned housing) or goods from the company-owned store.

Such compensation in the family system is represented by Figure 2, taken from Edith Abbot’s “A Study of the Early History of Child Labor in America,” which she culled from an 1815 manufacturing memorandum book from *Poignaud and Plant Papers*.

Himself .....	\$5.00
His son Robert Rier, 10 years of age .....	0.83
Daughter Mary, 12 years of age .....	1.25
Son William, 13 years of age .....	1.50
Son Michael, 16 years of age .....	2.00
	10.58
 His sister, Abigail Smith .....	 2.33
Her daughter Sally, 8 years of age .....	0.75
Son Samuel, 13 years of age .....	1.50
	4.58

Figure 2: Compensation from the Family System (Abbot 28) Image description: a written table of salaries for each member of a family. One section of the table is a list of salaries of a man and his children. The family members’ names, ages, and relations are written on the left side of each line, and a series of dots separates the person from the salary amount. The top section reads: Himself \$5.00, His son Robert Rier, 10 years of age 0.83, Daughter Mary, 12 years of age 1.25, Son William, 13 years of age 1.50, Son Michael, 16 years of age 2.00. Underneath Michael’s salary is a line and the total for the family, 10.58. The bottom section reads: His sister, Abigail Smith 2.33, Her daughter Sally, 8 years of age 0.75, Son Samuel, 13 years of age 1.50. Underneath Samuel’s salary is a line and the total for Abigail and her children: 4.58.

While men were valued the most highly, they did not work alongside their children, but rather, negotiated terms of their employment and collected their wages (Tucker 22). In supplanting manufacturers' discipline for fathers' and husbands', as Tucker notes, the Slater system "sought to strengthen patriarchy, not challenge it" (22). In 1817, ten years after what is now the Cranston Print Works Company opened, the *Niles Register* (a weekly national magazine of some import) noted that "the work of manufacture[r]s does not demand able-bodied men...but 'is now better done by little girls from six to twelve years old' (qtd. In Abbott 24). Because of the Slater village system, Rhode Island led the nation in child labor throughout the 19th century.<sup>i</sup> It should be noted, too, that before child labor laws were introduced, these children were whipped and slapped for failure to perform or for falling asleep in their 12-14 hour workday (which was often followed by household chores and evening school), often worked without access to bathrooms, and were not allowed to sit down while working (Tucker 23; Abbott 33)<sup>1</sup>.

## Layers of Fabric, Layers of Meaning: A Conclusion

So what impact does such a discursive-material rhetorical reading have on feminist rhetorical work? In part, it is central to recover the difficult histories of labor and who is affected by those untold stories that rest in materials in order to work against simple narratives of progress. The Cranston Print Works Company has a history, as all industrial textile mills do, that is obscured today. Its current company website lauds Slater's life and work, highlighting words like "expansion" and "innovation;" yet a different story is made available by a particular kind of affective proximity to the material and an accretive research process. It also helps us recover specific directions for reconsideration of women's histories and marginalized communities that add to our already existing rhetorical histories of labor mills and women's work (see Propen; Cloud). Although many are familiar with contemporary and historical connections between the poor conditions of textile work and the living conditions of women (at least in the late 18th century and early 19th century) women had far more comparative agency than those who remain the most invisible and vulnerable in the histories of textile work: children, particularly those living in poverty, or, by the 1840s, immigrant children. What working with textiles and materials in the form of selvages may allow us is a tactile entryway into a history of an industrial colonization of families and an extension and solidification of a dominating patriarchal

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<sup>1</sup> An 1831 Friends of Industry report chronicled that of 4,691 children working in cotton factories in New England, 3,472 of them were from Rhode Island (Abbott 30).

system that preyed on the defenseless: children raised to be both obedient and deferent to those they trusted.

My point is not to suggest that an examination of every selvedge, or every scrap, or every craft might necessarily lead to such recovery work. Still, the possibility of material agency's exertion on rhetorical work—even in the smallest of artifacts—is nonetheless one worth reconsidering. When we research such traces, such object-stories, we are brought closer to suffering, to outrage, to deep sadness. As Ahmed suggests, we are “moved by things” (33). What material-rhetorical research allows is an account of such movement; an account of how we might generate a small window into connecting present and past in the spirit of feminist recovery and reconsideration. It urges us to consider differently the layering together of subject and object, to ask complex questions of our research processes. For example, how might we use contemporary or historic selvedge fabrics as starting points to trace not only the histories of child labor in a patriarchal system, but the emergence and decline of textile manufacture as they responded to women's rising power in production? How might we imagine selvedge and other fabric research as part of what might bring us closer to other recovered histories: of cotton dust into lungs, the affects of chemical carcinogens in dyes, of bodies maimed by roving frames? How might we use material to pay closer attention to bodies, material conditions, spaces, and women's rhetorics? And how might this kind of research help us understand that *there is no important difference between stories and materials*? It is central to recover in these fabric archives the bodies who have labored to produce them.

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## Yogmaya Neupane: The Unknown Rhetorician and the Known Rebel

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**Abstract:** Yogmaya Neupane is a female rhetorician of Nepal who contributed to the eradication of the Sati system from the country in 1920. However, current studies of Yogmaya limit her as a feminist, rebel and literary figure, failing to recognize her rhetorical skills. This paper resurrects, and thereby calls for further studies of Yogmaya as a rhetorician. While doing this, this paper appropriates the western feminist methodologies of community listening, strategic contemplation, and critical questioning, ultimately showcasing how these methodologies blend and intersect in the project of reconsidering a transnational feminist as a rhetorician.

**Keywords:**

community listening, critical questioning, feminist historiography, Nepal, Sati, strategic contemplation, transnational feminisms, transnational rhetorics, Yogmaya Neupane

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Yogmaya Neupane (1860-1941) was a feminist, activist, rebel, and political and social thinker in Nepal. As a thinker and an activist, she organized people and initiated awareness against stereotypes, superstitious religious practices, the caste system, child marriage, discriminatory treatments of women, corruption, and unequal distribution of wealth, among other issues. During the early 1900s, Nepal was ruled by Ranas, whose regimes are considered to be the dark period in the history of Nepal; their rigid adherence to Hindu systemic discrimination

had perpetuated superstitious religious practices such as *Sati*<sup>2</sup>—the practice of immolating the wife into the pyre of the husband after the husband dies. Yogmaya established *Nari Samiti*, the first women’s coalition in Nepal, around 1906 to fight against the injustices and discriminations against women, such as the practice of *Sati* (Aziz, Hutt, Yadav). *Nari Samiti* became a viable medium to officially pressure the governmental system which was exerting autocratic power. Through political activism and social awareness approaches, she forced the then government to eradicate the system of *Sati* from the country.

But a system of *Sati* was not the only trial of Nepalese women during that period. Women and girls in Nepal during the 1900s were considered second-class citizens: they were secluded from political and legal rights and subject to polygamous marriage and widow discriminations. In addition, child marriages were prevalent practices, which were legally and morally sanctioned under the Hindu legal system (*Muluki Ain* 1854). Yogmaya fought for “alms for righteous governance”—a system of government based on justice and truth, in her words (Aziz 59). After spending more than thirty decades on activism and revolution, when she discovered that Ranas’ systems of autocracy were adamant about secluding women and other marginalized castes, she decided to sacrifice her life to threaten the government. Because murdering a Brahmin or forcing a Brahmin to take her life was considered a sin in Hindu philosophy and was also punishable by the Nepali civil code (*Muluki Ain* 1854), she used the threat of ending her life as a resistance technique to shake the government. Being from a so-called pious Brahmin family, whose harm was considered as harm to God, she used her embodiment to threaten the government and political system. She arranged self-immolation by fire in 1938 along with 204 followers, but she was instead arrested and put in prison. After spending more than three months in prison, she again marched for self-immolation, this time in the water. On July 5, 1941, she threw herself into the river Arun, where she died. Sixty-seven of her followers also followed her path and jumped into the Arun.

Before dying, Yogmaya had composed *Sarvartha Yogbani*, which includes her teachings and philosophies. Even after her death, most of her living followers regarded her book as their fundamental tenet. In the *Yogbani*, she denounced the caste system, subordination of women, economic disenfranchisement of working-class people and appeals for establishing justice. It is an enriching resource for social activists, philosophers, and writers. However, the book was

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<sup>2</sup> In Nepali language, *Sati* is referred as both noun and verb. While using it as a noun, usually, during the time of *Sati* system, a woman would become *Sati* after their husband died. In that case, like widow, women would be referred as *Sati*. *Sati* is also used by referring to a practice, a verb. While, in both of these usages, “S” is capitalized.

banned in Nepal until 2000. Not only were her activities considered blasphemous by misogynist patriarchal values, but she was also vilified as a prostitute, wayward, mad, and crazy by the patriarchal norms. As a result, official Nepalese history did not account for the name of Yogmaya even after half of the century of her death. After the death of Yogmaya, Nepal went through great political reformations and enjoyed a vibrant period of democracy that was largely critical of the Rana regime, the legacy of the eradication of the *Sati* system from Nepal remained credited to Rana rulers, and the erasure of Yogmaya was perpetuated. This is to say, regardless of the political system that was in power, females have continued to be politically marginalized while Yogmaya's contributions have failed to be realized in official history. While there were records of Yogmaya's existence, nonetheless, the records of her contributions were "burned for fuel on some chilly winter nights" (Aziz 68).

## Remembering Yogmaya

As a young girl growing up in Nepal, I heard about the system of *Sati* before I "heard" about Yogmaya, who had forced the government to ban it. I first learned about the system of *Sati* in the Nepali<sup>3</sup> Literature class around seventh grade. When my Nepali literature teacher, a bold and vocal woman, talked about the custom of burning women in the pyre of their husbands. Goosebumps came all over my body. For the first time in my childhood years, I became afraid of being female. I became afraid of being female before I realized I am a female. Even scarier was to think about my grandmother, my mother's sister, and other women whom I had seen without husbands throughout my life. How did they escape that fate after their husbands died? That day after school, I went straight to my mother's sister's home, who used to live a couple of houses away from my parent's home. I asked my mother's sister, who was born in the early 1900s, was married at the age of seven and became a widow at the age of nine, "हजुर चै सति किन नजानुभको ?" translated in English as "why did you not go *Sati*?" Her response was, "They did not ask me to". Who did not "ask" her? Who would have had the power to force her to *Sati* and, in contrast, who emancipated her? Did she know

Like Yogmaya, my mother's sister was married at the age of seven to a boy who was nine. She was allowed to live in her parents' home until she reached the age when she could do errands herself. But when she was nine, her husband, along with most of his family members, died due to the cholera epidemic. She became a widow at the age of nine for a husband she

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<sup>3</sup> I prefer to use the word Nepali (नेपाली) to Nepalese while referring to the people from Nepal. Nepali is directly derived from Nepali language, where it is called. In contrast, Nepalese is a word refer to people from Nepal usually by the British.

barely knew. Although my mother's sister did not have to go *Sati*, she sacrificed her whole life for the husband who died when she was only nine. She never wore colorful clothes, never went to public places without accompanying the male family members and lived a secluded life. The reply that I got from her, "They did not ask me to", becomes meaningful only now as I am strategically contemplating the life she lived alongside the life and contributions of Yogmaya. I realize that my mother's sister was not forced to go to *Sati* only because of Yogmaya's contributions. Did she know that she and many like her were fortunately absolved from duty of *Sati* because of Yogmaya? Most probably not!

My mother's sister wanted to believe, like my schoolteacher, that she was absolved from her duty of *Sati* by Prime Minister Chandra Shamsheer Rana (1901-1929), on 8th July 1920. Her generation was raised to doubt that an average Nepali woman like herself could be courageous enough to challenge the patriarchal structure. And it was hard to imagine the ramifications of doing so. Since repressive erasure of Yogmaya's contributions past almost three generations and the oral history about her was limited to women in the Arun River Valley only, it was disconcerting for the women of my mother's generation to challenge official narrations (Connerton; Hamilton, and Shopes). It took my entire school years and even prior years at the university to convince myself that what my schoolteacher told me was only a version of official history.

## Context for Feminist Rhetorical Recovery

Others have tried to research Yogmaya before me. Yogmaya Neupane has been extensively studied from anthropological, sociological, literary and historical perspectives. In anthropological and sociological study, Yogmaya and her works are considered rebellious and revolutionary, aiming to bring social change (Aziz; Hutt). First among them is an ethnographic account produced by Barbara Nimri Aziz, whose work is iconic in studying and recovering the story of Yogmaya as a rebel. Aziz's work is revolutionary also because she compiled the collections of her poems in her book *Heir to silent Song Two Rebel Women of Nepal*, which would otherwise be banned by the government. Yogmaya is also portrayed alongside the Hindu mythic figures and her works have largely been analyzed from a Hindu Vedic perspective (Neupane, Bhandari, Shrestha). In addition, feminist and historians like to date her social movement practices as some of the first feminist movements in Nepal representing her as a first feminist (Yadav, Lama, Karki, Shrestha). Similarly, in most of the literary references to her, such as in works by home-grown writers such as Uttam Prasad Panta and Lekhnath Bhandari, she is highlighted as a literary figure and her poems as radical. As Michael Hutt opines in his critical

analysis of the “forcible forgetting” of the history of Yogmaya in “nationalist and teleological history” (Hutt 383) and the recent narrativist revival of her in ahistorical accounts and studies, literary studies of Yogmaya were a prominent factor for her recent revival in Nepal. Referring to Uttam Prasad Panta’s article on the literary contributions of Yogmaya, at one point, he recognizes that literary identification of her was the safest way of seeking public recognition – “an initiative that enriched the literary pedigree of the national language and identified new icons to enhance the kingdom’s Hindu identity that? would not be frowned upon” (Hutt 349). However, even critical research such as this represents her as a female ascetic, political revolutionary, feminist, and literary artist only. Although historical, sociological, anthropological, feminist and literary methodology have immensely contributed in establishing and recovering her works and contributions, which would have been erased, lost, forgotten and repressed. But looking at the past and reconstructing it in a crude academic fashion may not be enough for recuperating feminist rhetorical practices, let alone rewriting the feminist contributions in the history. In the case of Yogmaya, her recovery efforts have largely been concentrated in recovering *her* rather than recovering her practices—consequently, erasing the revolutionary practices of her along with a large number of her followers whose contributions were equally important. In addition, recuperating efforts may require us to theorize her practices; in another words, redesigning her practices as what decolonial feminists want to call “praxis” (hooks)

### **A Transnational Feminist Rhetorical Practice for Recovering Yogmaya**

I want to add one more historiographical account along this line: Yogmaya is the first female rhetorician of Nepal. Reading anthropological and historical research on Yogmaya, while providing greater possibilities, was still generally reductive, reading more like a fairytale for women of the democratic era to believe that a woman could jump into the river for a greater good, let alone burning into the pyre of a husband following the traditions. Based on the description of her in the first half of the essay, I want to reiterate 1) the initiative that she took for female liberation, 2) her teachings and philosophies in *Sarvartha Yogbani*, and, finally 3) her embodied resistance through the practice of *Jal Samadhi* (mass immolation in water) expounds her rhetorical skills and strategies. For me, these feminist principles rest on how I envision my locality through the feminist rhetorical perspective, for instance, imagining critically into questions such as what forced Yogmaya to jump into the river? Or what saved my mother’s sister from being *Sati*? In this case, imagining critically means to rhetorically envision local feminist efforts of Yogmaya by examining the history lived by her and women like her, further pondering rhetorically into the reason she chose her rhetorical practices or the reason she chose a particular rhetorical practice. However, this is a complex endeavor given that it invites

more questions than answering one. For example, the question that made me numb was what am I to write about a woman who flowed herself into the thundering Arun River, never to return, for a cause which was then called fanatical? What am I to say, about a woman whose history was never talked about and even forbidden in my culture? Legacy is not a word that was made to suit her in *history*, she was ostracized, defamed, and vilified. Further, the history writers cleansed, dumped, forbade, and erased her. Opening her story is like excavating a memory that has now become a myth. Ashes were rare things, and an archive is impossible for her archaeology. In fact, the effort to recover the feminist rhetor in the culture where rhetoric is yet to be defined in western academic terminology is an innovative process for the reason that it helps in designing a new methodology or employ the foreign methodology in a new way.

To begin this recovery effort, I contacted Barbara Nimri Aziz, who pioneered Yogmaya among scholarly circles. I scheduled a couple of meetings with her, which she affirmed and appreciated with intellectual wit. In our first phone conversations, she recalled her 1980's visit to Nepal— where Yogmaya had lived, preached, and performed her resistance and protest in the 1900s. She had visited the place nearly forty years after the death of Yogmaya. In our extensive phone conversation, she shared that it was like finding her own foremothers' stories. Being a daughter of Arab immigrants, she found her affinities and shared values as soon as she discovered Yogmaya's contributions. In her book, *Heir to Silent Song: Two Rebel Women of Nepal*, she writes "I didn't imagine in Nepal I might find activists similar to Mother Jones and Sojourner Truth... How could a woman raised in America and England, even though she was of Arab origin, imagine she might find her true ancestors in Nepal?" (Aziz 28)

Barbara visited Nepal, she met Manamaya, the pupil of Yogmaya and a respondent in Barbara's research who is also, along with a number of other followers, used to reciting the verses from the book *Sarvartha Yogbani*. This recitation was private, and Barbara writes, "I noted how, when either Manamaya or Bhaktini Aama sang [them] for me, they did so in the privacy of their small dwellings, and at night" (Aziz 39). But those brave followers of Yogmaya wanted the message to be spread and the story to be heard by all the people. So, Manamaya invited Barbara into her small hut one night and handed the book which she had wrapped in a cloth-like "sepia brown booklet" and kept inside the bed mattress (Aziz 39-40). In my research process, when I was searching for the original book of Yogmaya and asked Barbara about it she wrote me, "The entire set of available *Yogbani* is included as an appendix to my book *Heir to Silent Song: Two Women Rebels of Nepal*. It represents the only written collection yet available of *Yogbani*. Such a treasure to be given to me in 1981 to share with all. These conversations between Barbara and me, two feminist researchers distanced by generation and nationality but

made closer by rhetorical ethos— the ethos of care and humility— helped me to engage in a compassionate argument, collaborative practice, and negotiation. At one of our conversations, she explicitly advised me that a Nepali woman should study and explore on Yogmaya. Perhaps, while saying this, Aziz listened to Patricia Sutherland who advises that the feminist methodology of primary research is garnered from women’s primary experiences. It encouraged me to commemorate my position as a researcher and to navigate my gendered and transnational experience.

This authentication of Yogmaya as a rhetorician was possible through juxtaposing my narrative, which explored and discloses attachment, about how the history of *Yogmaya* was deleted from the public narrative. For doing this, I have relied extensively on feminist rhetorical practices to weave my personal experience of Yogmaya and the women’s issues she advocated for with my recovery of her rhetorical work. The gap of nearly a half-century after her death (the anniversary of which elapsed without mentioning her name), wherein the country went from the autocratic system of Rana to democracy, and from a British system of the monarchy to a quasi-Chinese system of federalism, was possible to recuperate through decolonial feminist methodologies that debunk traditional objective methodological practice ( Bizzel’s ‘function of emotion,’ Royster’s “storytelling and telling history,” Kirsch and Royster “critical imagination, strategic contemplation, and social circulation,” Sutherland “primacy of gendered experience,” Enoch “local narrative,” Garcia’s “community listening”). Employing these methodologies was challenging because it helped in closely examining the research around her, requiring answers in regard to coherence in translations and interpretations. For example, in Aziz’s works one of her *bani* (verse) from *Sarvatha Yogbani* is translated as “Though I am the one who is despised by society, and discarded I have to prove my innocence” (Aziz XV). The original verse was “म भगवन हैन, म समाजले तिरषकार र धृणा गरेको नारी हु ।” (Aziz 57). The question that one can raise in the translated version is: did she really believe that she needs to “prove” her innocence? As feminist researcher in Nepal, Kumari Lama, notes,

Yogmaya develops immense rebellious feelings towards discriminatory Brahmanic social values since her young age. She executes her dissenting characteristics very gracefully in her life. She challenges Hindu religious authority eloping with a man she loves despite being a child-widow. Undoubtedly, her elopement exhibits her resistance as well as her strong punch against patriarchal authority that incarcerates women’s freedom. (Lama 18)

Reading the above translations (rather mistranslation) of her *bani* alongside the examination of her feminist practice gives the dual picture of her feminist efforts as someone who wants to “prove” her innocence to the social practices against which she had relentlessly fought. I find the translation problematic, an inaccurate version of how she was, in contrast to how she was interpreted. In fact, if this would have been translated by any Nepali feminist, they would translate it along the lines, “I am the one who is despised and discarded by society, God I am not”. Given that original translations if kept intact would seriously counter all her sacrifice and contributions, it is also important to examine the way an inaccuracy in translation represents another kind of erasure.

Secondly, examining her rhetorical practices helps in authenticating feminist praxis in Nepal within the larger spectrum of global feminist practice. Until now, answering the question in regard to feminist praxis in Nepal is hard since one has to either rely on western feminism or the feminism in the border. Even growing up outside of the West, I heard of Yogmaya long after I was introduced with Simone De Beauvoir, Helene Cixous, Betty Friedan – however, the feminist movement led by Yogmaya preceded them. In fact, Yogmaya’s contemporaries were suffragists in the United States. With a deep sense of humility, before writing this paper, I contemplated all those dormant periods of my academic life—periods when I used to feel that the feminist revolution is western conduct and periods when I lived in oblivion, with the assumption that the *Sati* system was eradicated by the Ranas in Nepal— When reading canonical scholarship in feminism and rhetoric, I would think of Beauvoirian ideas from the perspective of my mother’s sister, and sometimes even Spivak and hooks from the perspective of Yogmaya. Meanwhile, Indian feminists, close to home, even the one who decried the western feminist portrayal of “Indian Sutte” (Narayana) are as distant as any other western feminist given that Nepali feminist fought different battles and employed different resistance principles (Mohanty; Spivak). In *Yogbani*, Yogmaya criticizes the structure of patriarchy and systemic inequality. She diatribes against the caste system, corruption, Brahmin value, and huge economic disparity among people. In one of her *bani*, she declares her denouncement of caste by saying,

Before I owned a caste

Belonging to the Brahmin clan.

Now look, I have no caste.

Ho, I chucked it there in the hearth (Aziz 60)

In the above lines, Yogmaya declares the renouncement of her Brahmin caste. Symbolically, her practice of renouncing caste, is a denunciation of entire Brahminism which has played a vital role in exerting power politically, socially, and economically. Her rhetorical tool of anti-brahminism bespeaks about her feminist praxis which distinguish her from feminist across culture. Similarly, her relentless appeals to *dharmarajya* (Alms for righteous government) shows that her resistance praxis are borne locally. Below, she decries government corruption and appeals for restorations of justice. She says,

Kill the corrupt; behead the thief.

Judge with virtue, eliminate lies.

When our charioteer arrives, truth will reign.

And smash kings and courtiers too. (Aziz 68)

Finally, recovering and rewriting the rhetorical practice of feminism in the global south requires deep personal reflections alongside bringing the solidarity amongst the feminist across borders. As a Nepali woman, I grew up listening to the tale of my mother's sister. When I listened to Barbara and her ethnographic account, it overlaps with listening to my mother's sister along with my personal reflections to my own contemplative witness of her life that I saw as a kid. The collage of listening and mindful contemplation allowed me to think 'dialectically and dialogically, to use tension, conflict, balances, and counterbalances as critical opportunities' (Krisch and Royster 652). In another word, listening to Barbara layered and broadened with listening to my mother and her sister, which became more viable when I collaged what Romeo Garcia calls community listening. For me, community listening is listening to my mother's sister, whose experiences were relational if not akin to the subject in question, made me feel that these women have stories to tell which I can never find in the history books. Through the practice of collaging, merging, and juxtaposing of different methodologies into one, I find that in a uniquely transnational situation like this one, methodological experimentation and conflict necessitates and procures recoveries and reconsideration of feminist rhetoricians. In another word, in the course of this research, I often intersect Garcia's community listening and Sutherlands' advice for negotiation and collaboration, and subsequently look to these methods from Kirsch and Royster's idea of critical imagination and strategic contemplation; examining alone through one of these techniques deeply hinder (and sometimes limits) the possibility of reestablishing Yogmaya, whose rhetorical history lies under the teleological history of Nepal, the false lesson

that was “asked” to transfer to me through my school teacher, and perhaps in the anecdote of my mother’s sister.

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## SCUM Manifesto as a Rhetoric of Domination

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**Abstract:** This analysis considers the implications of positioning Solanas and SCUM Manifesto as representatives of feminist resistance in contemporary critical feminist discourse. Thus, it forwards that Valerie Solanas' SCUM Manifesto<sup>4</sup> presents ethical pitfalls for a rhetoric of feminist resistance. By enacting compliance, manipulation, rebellion, and withdrawal, the manifesto reproduces a rhetoric of domination that confirms, rather than challenges, the power of hegemony (Foss and Griffin). The current work suggests that in reconsidering SCUM at face-value, it functions as a model by which feminist rhetoricians may appraise the imbrication of patriarchy in a seemingly anti-patriarchal text. This practice is important for conscientious reproduction of rhetorical praxis and for determining how we construct a critical feminist lineage.

**Keywords:** accountability, failure, feminist resistance, feminist snap, manifesto, rage, rhetoric of domination

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*You are not going to destroy this imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy by creating your own version of it. -bell hooks*

Feminism has brought me language, liberation, and purpose. That's not to say it doesn't come with challenging questions and contradictions. Feminism continues to be a contentious ideology, within and beyond feminist discourse. If we are to understand and embody feminism as a politics of equity, I believe we need to sort out some baggage. This article responds to

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix A for a summary of the content in SCUM.

Sarah Ahmed's call to think about feminist futures by tending to legacies of feminist pasts. For rhetoricians, reflecting on historic texts from a contemporary feminist viewpoint can create the space to consider how rhetorical and communicative choices align with or contradict the values of an ongoing movement. In this analysis, I consider the implications of positioning Solanas and the *SCUM Manifesto*<sup>5</sup> as representatives of feminist resistance in contemporary critical feminist discourse. In what follows, I argue that this feminist rhetorical analysis of Valerie Solanas' *SCUM Manifesto* reveals ethical pitfalls for a rhetoric of feminist resistance. By enacting compliance, manipulation, rebellion, and withdrawal, the manifesto reproduces a rhetoric of domination that confirms, rather than challenges, the power of hegemony (Foss and Griffin). Solanas' attempt to transpose oppression and dominance on the gender binary does not actually change the conditions of the social apparatus. Rather, it maintains violence and sexism as key organizing functions of society. This attempt to subvert the status quo is undone by the maintenance of a rhetoric of domination—she entangles her feminine rage with the persuasive power of oppressive linguistic practices.

I come to *SCUM Manifesto* as a budding scholar interested in the space between feminism, femininity, and popular culture rhetorics. In contemporary mainstream media, Valerie Solanas has resurfaced as a feature and a historical reference in popular culture. Solanas was first immortalized in *I Killed Andy Warhol*, a film by Mary Harron first screened at the 1996 Cannes Film Festival and shown again at the 66th Berlin International Film Festival in February 2016. Lena Dunham played Solanas on an episode of Ryan Murphy's *American Horror Story: Cult* (2017), entitled "Valerie Solanas Died for Your Sins: Scumbag," where her character served as a plot device to expose the continued presence of feminist rage in the sociopolitical climate. Swedish author Sara Stridsberg published *Valerie: or, The Faculty of Dreams: Amendment to the Theory of Sexuality* (released in English in 2020), a historical fiction novel inspired by Solanas, preceded by a play entitled *Valerie Jean Solanas for President of America* (2006). Goodreads.com features *SCUM Manifesto* at number 81 in the list of top 100 "Best Feminist Books" among authors like Virginia Woolf, Adrienne Rich, Gloria Anzaldua, George Eliot, Audre Lorde, and Toni Morrison to name a few. Publishers continue to profit off of the manifesto with a celebratory tone. Avital Ronell's reconsideration of the text was published by Verso Books in 2004, bringing *SCUM* into conversation with Derrida's "The Ends of Man" (written in the same year) and Judith Butler's *Excitable Speech*. AK Press published a version introduced by Michelle

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix A for a summary of the content in *SCUM*.

Tea in 2013 as “classic is a call to action.” Despite the fifty-year time lapse, Solanas continues to surface as an icon in contemporary feminist resistance efforts.

As a result of her notoriety, *SCUM*<sup>6</sup> *Manifesto* has had a tumultuous rhetorical life, translated for global readership, heralded by some as and condemned by others. Valerie Solanas’ life was characterized by a series of extremes: She was abused by her parents and grandparents, became a truant, and had a child taken away by social services all before graduating high school (Latson; Ott). Carrying her traumas, she earned a psychology degree with honors from the University of Maryland and pursued some graduate school (Latson; Ott). Clearly, she was a person with intellect, ambition, and grit. If *SCUM* wasn’t complicated enough in its message, it was further complicated by Solanas’ attempted murder of Andy Warhol one year after its completion<sup>7</sup>. The attempt was informed in part by Solanas’ suspicion that Warhol was planning to plagiarize a screenplay she’d asked him to produce entitled *Up Your Ass* (Pruitt). Solanas’ message, tone, and her steadfast ownership of it had a polarizing effect on the Women’s Liberation movement and shaped the Radical Feminist Movement<sup>8</sup> (Fahs).

Radical feminism became a social movement that advocated for a radical reconstitution of society and the elimination of male supremacy in all socioeconomic contexts. According to Ellen Willis, a prominent radical feminist activist and theorist, radical feminists understood society as inherently patriarchal. The objectives of radical feminism were to abolish patriarchy by pressurizing 1) capitalism as an institution and 2) the sexual objectification of women as a social norm. Tactics to reach the objectives included raising public awareness about issues such as rape and violence against women and to challenging the concept of gender roles so that anatomical differences between human beings would no longer matter culturally (Willis). With this in mind, this article comes from a question of values: How do strategies of communication affect the alignment of the message with the shared values of a social movement? What happens when the message is distorted by rhetorical choices? I believe it is important to check in with historical figures and artifacts as society learns (and unlearns). This practice is important

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6 Solanas denied that *SCUM* was an acronym, rather that it refers to the hierarchical position women held in society (scum of the Earth). However, there has been speculation that it stood for the Society for Cutting Up Men.

<sup>7</sup> When I approached this project, I had a few assumptions regarding uptake, especially that Solanas’ reputation would have become a terministic screen for interpreting the possibilities in the manifesto (rhetorical and otherwise); the screen could come from an understanding of Solanas as a heroine who embodied her beliefs or as a murderous paranoid schizophrenic who needed medical help.

<sup>8</sup> Apparent in the staunch stance against males as oppressors; a desire for more idealistic, psychologistic, and utopian philosophy; and stance against sex work.

for conscientious reproduction of rhetorical praxis and for determining how we construct a critical feminist lineage (Ahmed).

I make a critical choice in my engagement with *SCUM Manifesto* by choosing to analyze it at face-value. That is, in a sea of satirical uptakes of the manifesto, this response operates from the perception of Solanas' attempted assassination of Warhol, an influential male artist, as proof of her dedication to the beliefs represented in the document. If critics dismiss this event (perhaps in a case of "life imitating art"), it is possible to make arguments for the manifesto as a site of resistance through rhetorical tropes such as *parrhesia* and diatribe (Kennedy). Ahmed herself has appraised *SCUM* as a feminist snap, as an affective manifesto that draws power from its own literalism. But what's missing from the analysis of language, form, and rhetoric within Solanas' *SCUM Manifesto* is a sense of accountability from a feminist perspective—rather than the heterosexist, patriarchal dismissal of Solanas' power and rage. On the contrary, this analysis is necessitated precisely because of Solanas' powerful and influential rage, a rage that need not be undermined or diluted by layers of perceived irony and satire.

## Manifestos and Rage

Sara Ahmed suggests the concept of a feminist snap as a requirement of feminist praxis—that feminists must utilize their rage to enact social change. "From a shattering," she writes, "a story can be told, one that finds in fragility the source of a connection" (183). In other words, affinities may emerge from a snap. According to her, the snap may manifest as a willingness to snap bonds that no longer serve, a site of feminist work where the violences of experience become visible, and a form of optimism without attaching specific future outcomes (194). "We snap. We snap under the weight; things break. A manifesto is written out of feminist snap. A manifesto is feminist snap," says Ahmed (255). Feminist movements have procured manifestos for the cause since the suffrage movement (Campbell 1989). If there was ever a time for Solanas to procure *SCUM*, it was the 1960's, a time where manifestos were a main mode of feminist communication.

As a rhetorical genre, manifestos are commonly recognized as a declaration of the intentions, motives, or views of their creators. Other radical feminist texts include the New York Radical Feminists' "Politics of the Ego: A Manifesto," "Redstockings Manifesto," and Kate Millet's "Sexual Politics: A Manifesto for Revolution." Interestingly, these examples are representations of a collective with a specific mission. Solanas' individual enactment of the manifesto genre embodies a neoliberal, phallogocentric style of the manifesto misaligned with a satirical reading. With *SCUM*'s references to the status quo situated in 1967 U.S. society,

principles for a new distribution of power pertaining only to women, and protocol for enforcement including murder of the non-compliant (Solanas 14), Solanas chose a form that would forward her ideas as social action (Miller).

With Solanas composing in a genre used to inscribe patriarchy into society since the 1600's, I note that her writing may be constrained by the genre of the manifesto itself-including the often hyperbolic tone that the genre engenders. Kimber C. Pearce argues that "generic appropriation" may constrain feminist rhetoric "to the prior discourse of the patriarchy to which they were opposed" (307). She uses generic appropriation here to mean "making over and setting apart" as one's own substantive, stylistic, and situational rhetorical form (307). Through the notion of generic appropriation, I recognize that Solanas' language may have been shaped by the conventions of the manifesto even if her intention was to diverge from them. In turn, Solanas makes an attempt to subvert the genre, yet employs rhetorical devices that preclude her intention to resist. While I recognize this aspect of generic constraints, they should not be cited as a means to see all rhetorical artifacts in a positive (or redeemable) light. It is important to listen beyond any shocking assertions in order to identify *how* the artifact functions as a product of patriarchy.

As a feminist, I can understand how and why *SCUM* came into existence and recognize its power. *In Rage Becomes Her: The Power of Women's Anger*, Soraya Chemaly's points to a commonality among women who experience rage: They have faced the phenomena of open dismissal and pathologization of their anger<sup>9</sup>. When men display anger, it reaffirms gender norms and traditional assumptions of masculinity—business as usual. What typically follows is rewards: men gain power from reproducing these assumptions of masculinity, often despite the effect of their anger on others. It follows that when women express anger, they transgress gender norms (defying the agreeable object role historically assigned to women), resulting in powerlessness. Feeling powerless is distressing, conditioning women against expressing their anger in the future and toward a mode of communication that prioritizes the comfort of others. Clearly, something has to change. This is the reason that feminist rage, along with feminine rage in general, needs to be visible and appreciated as a justified human reaction. Texts like *SCUM* provide rich ground to examine the presence of such feeling but, as a reader, I'm left wondering what I am supposed to take away from the text in terms of next steps for feminist activism. As a rhetorician, I have concerns about alienating potential allies and inspiring hatred.

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<sup>9</sup> This norm is experienced by and is commonly understood among different kinds of women, despite unique experiences of those multiply-marginalized.

With a compassion for the personal and historical context in which Solanas authored *SCUM*, it is useful to frame the manifesto as an Ahmedian feminist snap. Solanas had endured long-spanning and varied trauma that shaped her perception of the world—and created within her a burning rage. As Ahmed states, “A [feminist] snap is not a starting point, but a snap can be the start of something” (194). Often met with violent consequences, physical or otherwise, women have come to understand the costs of displaying anger and are compelled to reconstitute, disregard, redirect, or minimize it. As an embodied experience, anger takes up cognitive real estate and will manifest in bodily reactions such as short temperedness, discontent, and an impairment of overall health. This “anger feedback loop” is often a direct implication of unacknowledged social injustice (Chemaly). All one has to do is wait for the...SNAP.

## Rhetoric of Domination

As feminists, we are responsible for the circulation of our politics and we need to be aware of the ways in which our politics will be used against us. Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin reveal hermeneutic and ideological boundaries that limit the possibilities for rhetorical feminism (331). They understand Aristotelian rhetoric, or rhetoric-as-persuasion, as a conscious intent to change others, which is centered on competition and dominance. A rhetoric of domination constitutes patriarchy, where “some people are less valuable than others” (335). According to Foss and Griffin, patriarchy does not recognize inherent worth in people; value must be “earned, achieved, or granted” and is measured “only in relation to some outside standard” (336). That is, one’s adherence to the unwritten rules of belief, attitude, and behavior that constitute civility in patriarchy shapes the perception of the already raced, sexed, and gendered subject<sup>10</sup>. Critical to the functioning of patriarchy is a hierarchical structure that controls and oppresses ways of knowing and ways of being in the world (335). Foss and Griffin characterize a rhetoric of domination with four primary rhetorical strategies that “confirm the power of the system” (336): Compliance, manipulation, rebellion, and withdrawal. In what follows, I define and trace these rhetorical strategies to expose the way Solanas builds a rhetoric of domination in the *SCUM Manifesto*.

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<sup>10</sup> Civility has been used as a form of racial, sexed, and gendered discipline. Examples include patriarchy’s framing of women as hysterical and unfit to participate in a public forum, to colonialism’s address of BIPOCs as uncivil savages, to heteronormative understandings of LGBTQIA+ sexualities as deviant. In each case, the idea of civility is reserved for the dominant class and is symbolically and materially unavailable to othered populations. For more on civility and inequality, see Cloud and Lozano.

While I explore the use of all four rhetorical strategies in the composition of the text, I do not believe they are all equally deployed or equally impactful. Rather, my goal is to thoroughly demonstrate a multitude of pitfalls that Solanas succumbs to in the making of the manifesto and the implications of uncritical subversion. It is also worth mentioning that this analysis does not take issue with the presence, the guiding light, of rage. After all, as Soraya Chemaly writes, “Anger isn’t what gets in our way—it is our way. All we have to do is own it.” This analysis hinges on a difference between leveraging rage toward patriarchy and condemning all male-presenting persons. It is possible to assess each instance of male subjugation as a critique of patriarchal values. However, without maintaining patriarchy as an institution that prescribes power dynamics between the genders, one would find themselves, as Solanas has, forwarding eugenics under the guise of a feminist snap. Feminist criticism hinges on an understanding of patriarchy as a cultural hegemony responsible for the systemic oppression of non-males<sup>11</sup>, not simply an intentional and individualized domination of women (Becker; Freedman; Offen).

## Compliance

Foss and Griffin define compliance in a rhetorical context as “acquiescence to the requirements of the system” (336). In other words, a compliant rhetor judges and responds to a rhetorical situation on the basis of patriarchal standards. In her attempt to persuade readers to join the *SCUM* movement, I identify *argumentum ad hominem* as one stylistic technique through which compliance operates. By personally attacking the interlocutor on the basis of perceived character, this technique represents compliance with patriarchy because it functions on the basis that there is a “better” sex and that there exists a male essence. Solanas’ attacks on her opposition preclude a possibility for her manifesto to embody the feminist value of equity by disenfranchising the entire male population through a definition of maleness as an irreparable, non-human condition.

*Argumentum ad hominem*<sup>12</sup> (Greek; “argument to the person”) has a long history in the rhetorical tradition. While there are various forms that this device can take, such as circumstantial or *tu quoque*, the form of relevance to this assessment of the *SCUM Manifesto* is defined by Graciela M. Chichi as the abusive type. She writes, “the...‘abusive’ variant of the *ad hominem-fallacy*, which is a dialogue move, but not an argument” consists of a personal attack on the interlocutor (334). It is particularly striking that this rhetorical choice is not regarded as an

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11 With particular favor toward white, cisgendered, and able males.

12 *Argumentum ad hominem* ranks second-to-last in Paul Graham’s Hierarchy of Disagreement just above “name-calling.”

argument, rather as a baseless attack on the opposition based on their perceived character or social group; in this case, the opposing argument is not considered at all (Chichi 342). Solanas may have relied on *argumentum ad hominem* as a persuasive strategy because she could not identify an argument that all individual male-presenting persons make. Rather than refer to patriarchy, an identifiable system of oppression, she essentializes “male” as the source of female oppression.

There are several identifiable instances of *argumentum ad hominem* in the manifesto, especially in the introductory sections. Within her attacks, I identify exaggerated statements (hyperbole), that I imagine Solanas used to enhance her “argument.” However, rather than enhance her point, I argue that her employment of hyperbole in conjunction *with argumentum ad hominem* serves to essentialize her opposition (in this case, males). From a contemporary feminist standpoint, this move undercuts her credibility as a feminist rhetor and aligns her with a system that does not recognize inherent value in all beings. Solanas writes:

The male is completely egocentric, trapped inside himself, incapable of empathizing or identifying with others, or love, friendship, affection of tenderness. He is a completely isolated unit, incapable of rapport with anyone. His responses are entirely visceral, not cerebral; his intelligence is a mere tool in the services of his drives and needs; he is incapable of mental passion, mental interaction; he can't relate to anything other than his own physical sensations. (1)

In this section, she begins to describe the consequences of the “biological accident” that are males (1). Rather than defining “maleness” as a socially-constructed and performative identity category, she writes that “maleness is a deficiency disease and males are emotional cripples” (1). It follows that her language in this passage would be constructed through the negative, or a lack, save for the use of the adverbs “completely” and “entirely.” I hear these adverbs as hyperbolic hinges for her prescribed constituents of maleness. If her manifesto was written as a response to patriarchy, she would be able to define it as a hegemonic power structure. However, since her manifesto is an opposition to all male-presenting persons, she binds herself by this definition that does not account for intersectional manifestations of personhood, a core value of contemporary feminist praxis—and one that applies to men!

While intersectionality (Crenshaw) entered feminist discourse about twenty years after she wrote the manifesto, it is also useful to point to the way she bound herself in the context of radical feminism. Intersectionality conceived as theory, methodology, heuristic, or all three, has unleashed an astoundingly fertile and interdisciplinary archive of feminist critical inquiry at this

new standard. Deborah L. Rhode's "Feminist Critical Theories" identifies two central commitments addressed across feminist analytical frameworks: 1) They seek to promote equity between sexes and 2) they seek to identify the fundamental social transformations necessary for full equity between the sexes. Both Freedman and Rhode underscore values that, as Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin say, construct a feminist rhetorical theory which "challenge[s] the reality the system has created" (336). Rhode's exploration is useful for contemporary feminist rhetorical analysis because her study was constructed to "underscore the importance of multiple frameworks that avoid universal or essentialist claims and that yield concrete strategies for social change" (619). By bringing together frameworks that maintain validation of subjectivity and recognition that identity comes from a matrix of systems, Freedman and Rhode's thinking inform this study as an exigence to yield useful principles for intersectional feminist research that grapples with activism and social movements.

If one objective of the radical feminist movement was to challenge the concept of gender roles so that genital differences between human beings would no longer matter culturally (Willis), a biologically-determined understanding of maleness serves to reify the position that sex and gender are genetic predispositions that determine personalities. With Solanas basing her argument on males as a biological accident from the beginning of the text, she continuously relies on the binary of female-male that, along with the normalization of gender roles and compulsory heteronormativity, is imbricated in patriarchy. Thus, I argue that the basis of her argument reifies the binary opposition that defines identity and relationships in patriarchal society. This compliance results in a failure to resist patriarchy and capitulates to anti-feminist rhetoric.

## Manipulation

Foss and Griffin define manipulation in this context as a delusion of control when a rhetor believes they are not complying with the system, but still accept the system's terms, unspoken rules, and values. In other words, a manipulative rhetor will attempt to redress the conditions of the system to suit their needs or desires. In this case, I identify dehumanization as a rhetorical device through which manipulation operates in the manifesto. For example, equating a person or population to pests, deadly animals, parasites, disease, filth, zombies, or demons would qualify as dehumanization (Szilagyi). By shifting a focus away from *systemic* inequity and oppression, onto males as non-human succubi, Solanas' message preys on the reader's capacity to empathize with male-presenting persons. Dehumanizing rhetoric employs terms that

interpolate different groups of people as any number of non-human beings that have a particularly negative connotation.

In *SCUM*, Solanas graduates from using animal metaphors, to genocide, and finally to eugenics as a means for social change. For example, Solanas writes:

He is trapped in a twilight zone halfway between humans and apes, and is far worse off than the apes because, unlike the apes, he is capable of a large array of negative feelings—hate, jealousy, contempt, disgust, guilt, shame, doubt—and moreover, he is aware of what he is and what he isn't. (1)

In this passage, she makes the case that men are not apes because they possess a self-awareness and a nuanced emotional capacity. In general, this kind of rhetoric supports the diminishment of boundaries between verbal abuse and physical abuse by influencing the way people think and act toward each other. In fact, she draws comparisons between male-presenting persons and apes at three separate occasions throughout her manifesto. In some cases, she utilizes the metaphor to draw physical comparison; in other cases, she employs the metaphor to illustrate a minimized IQ. Another animal-based metaphor she takes up is comparing male-presenting persons to dogs at two occasions in her work. At one point, she writes:

Just as humans have a prior right to existence over dogs by virtue of being more highly evolved and having a superior consciousness, so women have a prior right to existence over men. The elimination of any male is, therefore, a righteous and good act, an act highly beneficial to women as well as an act of mercy. (12)

In this passage, she crosses the line from dehumanization to genocide. This statement blatantly forwards the superiority of one sex over the other as a way to disenfranchise that “lesser” sex. With one sex having the right to live over the other, Solanas frames genocide as an advisable path toward revolution. Implicit in this passage is the notion that this genocide would come from a place of compassion and charity. By laying out the groundwork that men are sub-human, she begins to reduce the ability for the reader to relate to the “apes” and “dogs” to which she refers. This manipulative language aims to deceive the reader from their own morality in order to justify *SCUM's* agenda.

Eventually, Solanas moves away from animal metaphors and speaks in terms of degeneration, referring to deterioration that can only be prevented through the eradication of the invasive actor (Szilagyi). Solanas posits:

As for the issue of whether or not to continue to reproduce males, it doesn't follow that because the male, like disease, has always existed among us that he should continue to exist. When genetic control is possible— and soon it will be—it goes without saying that we should produce only whole, complete beings, not physical defects or deficiencies, including emotional deficiencies, such as maleness. Just as the deliberate production of blind people would be highly immoral, so would be the deliberate production of emotional cripples. (12)

In this passage, Solanas discusses the birth of male babies in terms of pathology, with eugenics as a viable cure for the degeneration of society. However, male presenting persons are not the only population implicated in the statement. By stating that “whole, complete beings” are the only ones with a right to life, she negates the worth of disabled persons. Solanas has demonstrated that she does not believe in the immanent worth of all people, and this section shows that she does not believe in a person's right to life either. By devaluing subjectivities that stem from a diversity of lived experiences, Solanas aligns herself with patriarchal notions of abstract objectivity and ableism. In short, arguing for eugenics separates this work from artifacts that represent feminist ideology.

## Rebellion

Foss and Griffin define rebellion in a rhetorical context as a refusal or challenge that counterproductively serves to harm the rebel, rather than the system (336). In Solanas' endeavor to persuade readers that males are worthy only of extinction, I identify calls to violence as one way rebellion manifests in this particular case. In her attempt to justify genocide and eugenics, Solanas contradicts her own stance against violence that she frames as a rudimentary male stimulant. Throughout the manifesto, Solanas spends time condemning men for their obsession with violence as a phallogocentric compensation for the sexual satisfaction they cannot attain as “incomplete females” (1). She writes:

The male's normal compensation for not being female, namely, getting his Big Gun off, is grossly inadequate, as he can get it off only a very limited number of times; so he gets it off on a really massive scale, and proves to the entire world that he's a 'Man'. Since he has no compassion or ability to empathize or identify, proving his manhood is worth an endless amount of mutilation and suffering and an endless number of lives, including his own—his own life being worthless, he would rather go out in a blaze of glory than to plod grimly on for fifty more years. (“War” 2).

Since males are aware that “men are women and women are men” (2), Solanas argues that they are motivated to prove their manhood and choose violence as a means to do so. In protest, she frames compassion and relatability as valuable characteristics, which prevent the need for violence toward the self or others. Solanas argues that women are superior to men largely in part for their emotional competency, which I hear as an essential understanding of an affective female, or feminine, disposition. At any rate, *SCUM* forwards that males are “completely physical” (1) without these characteristics and seek to “get off” as a compulsory response to avoid passivity and their true womanhood (2). Her unproductive subversion of maleness and femaleness serves to reify the subjugated, subordinate, and inferior position of femaleness in the system of patriarchy. Thus, violence is a defense against the desire to be female.

Later in the work, Solanas writes:

The male is eaten up with tension, with frustration at not being female, at not being capable of ever achieving satisfaction or pleasure of any kind; eaten up with hate—not rational hate that is directed at those who abuse or insult you—but irrational, indiscriminate hate... hatred, at bottom, of his own worthless self. Gratuitous violence, besides ‘proving’ he’s a ‘Man’, serves as an outlet for his hate and, in addition—the male being capable only of sexual responses and needing very strong stimuli to stimulate his half-dead self—provides him with a little sexual thrill. (“Hatred and Violence” 11)

In this section, she identifies “indiscriminate hate” born from self-loathing as the root of “gratuitous violence.” Throughout the manifesto, she juxtaposes the male or incomplete female to “groovy chicks” whose “function is to relate, groove, love and be herself, irreplaceable by anyone else” (5). I problematize her binary by extrapolating that if groovy chicks love themselves, then there is no need to turn to violence as an outlet for hate. If groovy chicks believe they are irreplaceable, then they won’t feel the need to “go out in a blaze of glory” (2). If her differentiation between male women and female men is based in self-worth, *SCUM*’s rebellion as a destructive killing mob collapses the opportunity for female empowerment outside of a patriarchal structure by adopting tactics that undermine her own categorical identifications. Of the revolution, she writes:

SCUM will keep on destroying, looting, fucking-up and killing until the money-work system no longer exists and automation is completely instituted or until enough women cooperate with SCUM to make violence unnecessary to achieve these goals, that is, until enough women either unwork or quit work, start looting, leave men and refuse to obey all laws inappropriate to a truly civilized society. (15)

In *SCUM*, she advocates for a completely automated society so that women won't have to spend time doing mundane tasks. Yet, her calls to violence enact rebellion as a strategy of the rhetoric of domination. After spending the first thirteen pages establishing the frailty of males for their institution of violence as a means to compensate for their own passivity, she turns to those who would be her followers and asks them to take up the same contemptible violence to create a utopia. Turning "patriarchy" into "matriarchy" may seem like feminist revolution, but the power dynamic lives on through a patriarchal mode of communication that hinges on sex and gender roles. Based on the enactment of rebellion, I argue that taking up Solanas and *SCUM* as models for feminist resistance distorts the principles that guide contemporary feminist praxis.

## Withdrawal

Foss and Griffin define withdrawal in this context as a separation between rhetors and information and/or resources vital to their freedom or survival (336). In other words, a withdrawn rhetor will remove herself from company that can benefit her well-being or the success of her message. In this case, Solanas embodies this rhetorical strategy in two ways: 1) by choosing not to address a feminist audience in her manifesto or aligning herself with a community, and 2) through her rejection of feminist aid during her trial for attempted murder. However, I must say that, both of these choices align with Foss and Griffin's feminist rhetorical principle of self-determination in decision-making. While she made the decision for herself as to who would represent her and how she would represent her ideas, her choices manifest as a withdrawal that adds to the rhetoric of domination she built in her manifesto.

Intriguingly, Solanas did not frame her manifesto as feminist. For example, the only appearance of the term "feminist" in the manifesto is in its antithetical form. Solanas writes, "Great Art' proves that men are superior to women, [...] being labeled 'Great Art', almost all of which, as the anti-feminists are fond of reminding us, was created by men." In the construction of this passage, she refers to anti-feminists as "them" and aligns herself with "us," which may be interpreted as "the feminists" or as "groovy chicks," the latter of which she addresses repeatedly throughout her piece. While creating a new profile of womanhood is not explicitly anti-feminist, she implicitly denies association with feminists and creates an abstract category for the kind of women who are fit for the *SCUM* revolution.

At the time of Solanas' arrest, Ti-Grace Atkinson<sup>13</sup>, then the president of the National Organization of Women (NOW), partnered with Flo Kennedy to form Solanas' defense team in

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13 While Atkinson's relationship to Solanas helps me ground my argument in a historic context, I am compelled to disclose that she is an author of the "Forbidden Discourse: The Silencing of

the Warhol case. Atkinson and Kennedy offered to take Solanas' case despite instruction from Betty Friedan to distance herself from Solanas to avoid "connecting violence and feminism" (Fahs 577). Friedan declared, "desist immediately from linking NOW in any way with Valerie Solanas. Miss Solanas' motives in [the] Warhol case [are] entirely irrelevant to NOW's goals of full equality for women in truly equal partnership with men" (Pan). While Friedan became a controversial figure in her own right, she saw a danger in responding to Solanas as a soldier for the feminist cause. From jail, three months after her arrest, Solanas wrote to Atkinson,

I know you, along with all the other professional parasites with nothing of their own going for them, are eagerly awaiting my commitment to the bughouse [...] I want to make perfectly clear that I am not being committed because of my views or the "SCUM Manifesto" [...] Nor do I want you to continue to mouth your cultivated banalities about my motive for shooting Warhol. Your gall in presuming to be competent to discourse on such a matter is beyond belief. In short, do not ever publicly discuss me, SCUM, or any aspect at all of my care. Just DON'T. (Pan)

Clearly, Solanas had no interest in aligning with feminist leaders of her time<sup>14</sup>. These choices represent withdrawal because her rejection of legal counsel showed that she would rather risk conviction than accept free aid that may grant her freedom. However, Atkinson felt compelled to aid Solanas despite her initial refusal because "[Solanas] had done something appropriate to the feelings [women] were all having. She was fighting back" (Fahs 576). Here, Atkinson refers to the affective undercurrent of rage that maintains a presence in resistance efforts. Although, I am pressed to argue that not all resistance can be characterized as *feminist* resistance.

## Conclusion

Despite her initial inclination to help Solanas get through her trial, Atkinson inevitably cut ties with Solanas. In an interview with Breanne Fahs, Atkinson said that Solanas' interpersonal nature was to "*dominate* and abuse you and she was very *manipulative*" (578, my emphasis)<sup>15</sup>. At least Valerie Solanas is consistent. At any rate, Atkinson's ruminations on her time with Solanas and on the feminism of the 60's and 70's reflects the core of my argument in this study. When

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Feminist Criticism of 'Gender'" statement. Written, signed, and circulated by Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists (TERFs), this statement 1) argues for the exclusion of women who have undergone M>F transition from "RadFem" conferences and 2) undermines the validity of gender theory. Atkinson is cited in this article because her affiliation with Solanas during her trial makes her first-hand account a relevant perspective for the purposes of this article.

<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that these leaders represented the women's liberation movement, from which radical feminism derived.

<sup>15</sup> I can't help but be amused by the coincidence in word choice here.

Fahs asked Atkinson if she felt that Solanas was a feminist; she answered a simple “no.” When asked to elaborate, Atkinson said:

She’s part of my archive, but I don’t think of her as part of my *feminist* archive.

She was a glitch, a mistake. The fact that she keeps coming up, you could say that means we as women, as feminists, yearn for some violence, or somebody to fight back, and she looked like she was fighting back. (Fahs 579; my emphasis)

In her own words, Atkinson describes phenomena that wove *SCUM* into the tapestry of feminist history. Solanas was fighting back, but she wasn’t fighting a fight in the name of feminism. Her anger and her resistance gave the impression of a fight inspired by the feminist movement. By sacrificing the principles of feminist ideology, Solanas maintains a rhetoric of domination that becomes another cog in the wheel of systemic violence.

This research responds to the call to extrapolate theoretical principles from the practices of women to suggest alternative ways of viewing rhetoric from specific historical periods and engaging with it from a contemporary standpoint (Colman). Revisiting artifacts with a tumultuous rhetorical life, such as *SCUM*, can help us reflect on the kind of legacy we want to create. In her interview with Breanne Fahs, Ti-Grace Atkinson shared:

Later, I kept seeing people who were interested in Valerie and who responded with a kind of excitement. I asked this one woman, “Why does she attract you?” because I realized she really wasn’t interested in deep feminist questions. She said, “Well, she seems to have some panache, some style about it; you know, she shot somebody.” In a way I have to say that was probably what attracted me too. I was filled with rage and I thought it was somehow appropriate to “just shoot them all!” It certainly seemed deserved, but it was a misreading of what was going on. (Fahs 580)

As this exchange shows, Valerie Solanas and her *SCUM Manifesto* are lightning rods, stirring interest in change (to say the least) for five decades—and are prone to “misreadings”. Clearly, her commitment to her beliefs and demonstration of rage draw an audience to her. But as Atkinson observes, the excitement the rhetor and her rhetoric engender are not necessarily for the benefit of feminism. Working to eschew the trap of patriarchal rhetoric does not mean that feminist rhetoric should be left only with civility on one hand and confrontation avoidance on the other. In fact Nina M. Lozano-Reich & Dana L. Cloud point out that power imbalances in economic, political, and social context make these options quite difficult to adhere to (221). However, the question of audience becomes increasingly important here. Solanas is writing (in

part) to an audience of females (based on her use of “we” and “females” throughout the manifesto), to bring them together to create the maleless utopia she illustrates. This subversion of the status quo is undone by the maintenance of a rhetoric of domination—she entangles her feminine rage with the persuasive power of oppressive linguistic practices. This is the hinge from which this assessment comes.

This analysis sought to unpack *SCUM Manifesto* by thinking through its claims with a contemporary feminist lens, resting on the notion that the affective undercurrent of anger and rage instantiated an alignment between Solanas’ rhetoric and the historical moment. Seemingly by virtue of *kairos*, this particular manifesto has been imbricated in the iconography of second-wave feminism and the radical feminist movement. This alignment misrepresents the ideological principles of equity that feminism seeks to generate. This misalignment adds to the symphony of observations that the metaphor of feminist “waves” does a disservice to the understanding of the history of feminism. Lumping all woman-centered activism of the 60’s, 70’s, and 80’s into the “second-wave” of feminism represents all resistance efforts as a unified phenomenon. However, feminism is not an umbrella for all rhetorics of resistance and positioning it as such serves to distort the personal and political goals of a feminist ideology. In fact, this may be one of the only acknowledgeable examples of “reverse sexism,” which, without the backing of a system of institutional power, isn’t even a recognized prejudice in social justice discourse (Bearman).

By reproducing a rhetoric of domination through the rhetorical strategies of compliance, manipulation, rebellion, and withdrawal, Solanas confirms, rather than challenges, the power of cultural hegemony over meaning-making (Foss). For one, the basis of her argument complies with the binary opposition that defines identity and relationships in patriarchal society—the reductive heteronormative ideology remains so when the sexes are reversed. While setting up her version of the binary, she employs hyperbolic language to dehumanize male-presenting persons in the effort to justify genocide and eugenics. However, reproducing linguistic violence as a condition to meet a desired end traps her message in the rhetoric of domination and separates her work from the trajectory of feminist resistance—and pits populations against each other. In other words, not all resistance should be thought of as feminist resistance if it forgoes feminist commitments in the process. If there is any takeaway from this particular manifesto for feminism, it is to maintain feminist integrity by avoiding assimilation to patriarchal rhetorics of domination.

## Future Research

As alluded to earlier, this analysis is but one addition to the various readings of *SCUM*, and I suspect that many more will continue to emerge. Thinking ahead, what might we also gain from a distanced reading that considers affect and not pure intention? An interesting approach might be to analyze the manifesto as through a rhetoric of queer aesthetics. In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Jack Halberstam writes that “the queer art of failure turns on the impossible, the improbable, the unlikely, and the unremarkable. It quietly loses, and in losing it imagines other goals for life, for love, for art, and for being” (88). Failure gives an idea of what may not serve the cause, information that may ultimately aid in long-term or alternative successes. More information allows for critical decision-making and a reduction of risk. Deemed failures give an idea of what certain choices look like, what they reflect, and they demonstrate the parameters of a discourse community. These facets present the opportunity to reproduce the results or to shift direction. Solanas’ manifesto can be read as a failed *feminist* resistance because it capitulates to patriarchal rhetoric.

A productive outcome from engaging with *SCUM* as a feminist rhetorician lies in its potentiality as a model by which one may appraise the imbrication of patriarchy in a seemingly anti-patriarchal text. This type of rhetorical failure of resistance is productive only when we are able to, as Ahmed writes, “accept our complicity,” “forgo any illusions of purity,” and “give up the safety of exteriority” (94). There were and there are versions of feminism that condone that “the elimination of any male is, therefore, a righteous and good act, an act highly beneficial to women as well as an act of mercy” (Solanas). That’s to say that we are responsible for the circulation of our politics and we need to be aware of the ways in which our politics will be used against us. How can we advocate for a more just future if we don’t question the lineage of the feminist standpoint? The failure is productive in that it gives us a location from which to critically curate a feminist rhetoric of accountability.

## Appendix A: Summary of SCUM

*SCUM* Manifesto begins by urging “groovy chicks” to “overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation, and eliminate the male sex” (1). Then follows with a theory that males are deficient females through an identification of the Y chromosome as an incomplete X chromosome. It follows that the biological deficiency manifests in emotional incompetencies such as a lack of emotional intelligence and personal passions. Since males lack empathy and are unable to relate to anything or anyone, Solanas reads them as narcissists who cannot feel anything outside of their own physical sensations. She continues

through a subverted Freudian analysis of “pussy envy” (which I discuss later), and posits that males spend their lives attempting to become female and overcome their inferiority. Due to the biological, emotional, and social inadequacies of the male sex, she identifies twenty-two socio-economic shortcomings of male-centered social systems (patriarchy, but never names it as such).

The manifesto is broken into sections as follows: War; niceness, politeness, and “dignity;” money, marriage and prostitution, work and prevention of an automated society; fatherhood and mental illness (fear, cowardice, timidity, humility, insecurity, passivity); suppression of Individuality, animalism (domesticity and motherhood) and functionalism; prevention of privacy; isolation, suburbs and prevention of community; conformity; authority and government; philosophy, religion and morality based on sex; prejudice (racial, ethnic, religious, etc.); competition, prestige, status, formal education, ignorance and social and economic classes; prevention of conversation; prevention of friendship and love; “Great Art” and “Culture;” sexuality; boredom; secrecy, censorship, suppression of knowledge and ideas, and exposés; distrust; ugliness; hate and violence; and disease and death. She uses these sections to justify the elimination of the male sex. In order to accomplish these goals, Solanas proposes that a revolutionary vanguard of women be formed. This vanguard is referred to as SCUM, which “criminal disobedience” in order to destroy the system. The manifesto ends by describing a female-dominated utopian future in which, without men, violence will be rendered obsolete.

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