

Feminist Challenges or Feminist Rhetorics?
Locations, Scholarship, Discourse

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Edited by

Kirsti Cole

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS

P U B L I S H I N G

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TO MY PARENTS, SCOTT AND NANCY COLE, FOR THEIR SUPPORT
TO MELISSA PURDUE, FOR HELPING ME PUT ON THE CONFERENCE
AND
TO MY HUSBAND, JOSHUA PREISS, FOR STANDING IN THE DOORWAY,
LISTENING

"SHE DIDN'T WRITE IT.
(BUT IF IT'S CLEAR SHE DID THE DEED. . .)
SHE WROTE IT, BUT SHE SHOULDN'T HAVE.
(IT'S POLITICAL, SEXUAL, MASCULINE, FEMINIST.)
SHE WROTE IT, BUT LOOK WHAT SHE WROTE ABOUT.
(THE BEDROOM, THE KITCHEN, HER FAMILY. OTHER WOMEN!)
SHE WROTE IT, BUT SHE WROTE ONLY ONE OF IT.
("JANE EYRE. POOR DEAR, THAT'S ALL SHE EVER. . .")
SHE WROTE IT, BUT SHE ISN'T REALLY AN ARTIST, AND IT ISN'T REALLY
ART.
(IT'S A THRILLER, A ROMANCE, A CHILDREN'S BOOK. IT'S SCI FI!)
SHE WROTE IT, BUT SHE HAD HELP.
(ROBERT BROWNING. BRANWELL BRONTE. HER OWN "MASCULINE SIDE.")
SHE WROTE IT, BUT SHE'S AN ANOMALY.
(WOOLF. WITH LEONARD'S HELP....)
SHE WROTE IT BUT. . ."

—JOANNA RUSS,
HOW TO SUPPRESS WOMEN'S WRITING

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	x
Preface	xi
Introduction	xiii
Challenges, Rhetorics, and Feminisms: Where We Speak, Where We Write, Where We Live Kirsti K. Cole	

Part I: Historic Writing Landscapes: Sites of Resistance, Sites of Normativity

Catherine Livingston Garrettson and Integrated Male-Female Spheres in the Early American Republic	2
Heather Blain Vorhies	
Sites of Writing: Fanny Fern and the Space of Normativity in 19 th Century Publishing	10
Jennifer Dorsey	
“Come Sit at the Table with Us”: Traces of Racial History and Women’s Agency in <i>Place</i>	24
Suelynn Duffey	
Making Space for Writing: High School Girls’ Newspapers, Writing Clubs, and Literary Magazines 1897-1930.....	39
Lori Ostegaard, Amy Macklenburg-Faenger, and Henrietta Rix Woods	
“Madness” as a Rhetorical Tool: Examining the Rhetorical Techniques of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Virginia Woolf, and Anne Sexton	57
Sarah B. Franco	

**Part II: Contemporary Rhetorics:
Resistance, Vulnerability and Riots**

When Free Speech Courts Compassion: Civic Housekeeping and the Hope of Public Deliberation	68
William Duffy	
When Women Kill Newborns: The Rhetoric of Vulnerability	83
Susan Ayres	
Politics of Care and Affect at Camp Casey	98
Amy Pason	
Rhetoric of Riot: Creating Alternative Feminist Sites of Resistance.....	114
Rebekah Buchanan	
If not a Mother and not a Maid, Then What?: How Feminist Pedagogy Fits (or Doesn't) in the 21 st Century	127
Kristin Winet	
That's a Blonde Remark TM : Gendered Communication in the Workplace...	145
Margaret Weaver	

Interspaces

Feminism and Zines: An Origin Story (And the Accidents that Reveal Them)	158
Alison Piepmeier	

**Part III: Language, Voice, and Folksonomy:
Rhetorical Perspectives on Feminism**

Reworking Landscapes: Creating Identity in Body, Space, and Language.....	178
Janella D. Moy	
Echo as Ventriloquist: Disembodied Vocal Performance and Feminist Rhetorical Agency	193
Lydia McDermott	

Distributed (Un)Certainty: Folksonomy as a Feminist Enterprise..... 208
Aurora Matzke

Recontextualizing Feminist Rhetoric: Exploring the Progression
and Future of Feminist Rhetoric as a Field of Study 228
Jessica L. Furgerson

**Part IV: Global Rhetoric:
Survivance, Authority, and Dress**

Unveiling the Violence of Harmony: Challenging and Renewing
the Politics of Intellectual Property Rights through (Dis)Harmony 240
Jennifer H. Maher and Catherine Fox

Feminist Indigenous Rhetoric of Survivance and Discursive Spaces
in S. Alice Callahan's *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*..... 264
Kelly Sassi

Survivance as Resistance to Authoritative Discourse: An American
Indian Student Uses Her Words, Her Way 283
Rebecca Gardner

Toward a Chicana Feminist Body Politic 301
Marissa M. Juarez

The Cultural Rhetoric of the Sari..... 309
Moushumi Biswas

Bibliography 326

Contributors..... 354

Index 360

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- 2.7-1 Danielle Bustian's 1993 zine *War*
- 2.7-2 *Sister Stand*. 1971
- 2.7-3 *Riot Grrrl*. 1993
- 2.7-4 *Women: Motherhood to Militancy*. 1971
- 2.7-5 *Bust*. 1994
- 2.7-6 *The Future Generation*. 1996
- 2.7-7 *The North Dixien*. 1984
- 2.7-8 *9½ News*.
- 2.7-9 A trailer for "Barbie: A Fairy Secret"
- 2.7-10 *The Adventures of Mon. Edouard de Crack*. 1830
- 2.7-11 *Seen by Cate*
- 4.5-1 Maharani Chimnabai and Indira Raje of Baroda wearing the Nauvari, or traditional Maharashtrian sari, in 1924.
- 4.5-2 Conforming to the dress code, 1912. The disrobing of Draupadi by Dushyashan in full view of the royal court.
- 4.5-3 A miniature of the Basohli School, attributed to Nainsukh, c.1765.
- 4.5-4 North Indian lady draped in the Nivi style. Painting by Raja Ravi Varma. This is a faithful photographic reproduction of an original two-dimensional work of art, which is in the public domain in the United States.
- 4.5-5 Miss Universe 1994 Sushmita Sen has been the role model for subsequent generations of girls in India.
- 4.5-6 Watercolor illustrations of different sari drapes (1928) by Rao Bahadur M. V. Dhurandhar. According to The Indian Copyright Act of 1957, this work is in the public domain in India since its term of copyright has expired.
- 4.5-7 Kama Sutra-style drape combined with contemporary design sensibilities as evident in the halter neck blouse. Model: Bollywood actress Nandana Dev Sen.

PREFACE

In October 2011, 250 scholars and students attended the International Conference on Feminisms and Rhetorics at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The theme of the conference also serves as the title for this book: *Feminist Challenges or Feminist Rhetorics?: Locations, Scholarship, Discourse*. Improvising from Joanna Russ's 1983 guidebook, *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, I wrote the call to pose an important set of questions:

1. What are feminist rhetorics?
2. What are feminist challenges?
3. Where are these rhetorics and challenges located?
4. Where do they appear and/or become suppressed in scholarship?
5. What are discourses that are feminist? Rhetorical? How do these discourses pose or create challenges?

The conference committee was strongly interdisciplinary, reflecting disciplines not only in the Humanities, but in the Social Sciences as well. Because of our broad interdisciplinarity, we developed a theme seeking to recognize the spaces between disciplines and communities. The conference was meant to acknowledge the academic and socio-discursive spaces that feminisms, and rhetorics on or about feminisms, inhabit. At the time that the conference call was developed in late 2009, major political figures, as well as religious and social leaders had discussed feminism, including the Dalai Lama. The discussion, however, seemed to revolve (as it often does) around cultural or essentialized discourses of feminism. Our committee sought proposals for the conference, and for this collection that speak to the challenges and diversities of feminist rhetoric and discourse, in public and private life, in the academy, and in the media. We issued a challenge to participants: can your paper significantly engage disciplines other than Rhetoric and Composition? Does your work have consequences for communities located outside of the academy?

The goal of the conference was to explore space, location, and to challenge frequently problematic conceptions of what feminist rhetoric looks like, how it is located, and when and how it might appear in scholarship, or be

ignored. A challenge of feminist rhetoric, it seems, is paying attention and disseminating work with an eye not only towards the named, the famous, and the easily recognizable, but towards to young, the underprivileged, the other. This collection addresses that gap.

The chapters collected in this book generate discussion about the intersections not only of feminisms and rhetorics, and the ways in which those intersections are productive, but also the locations of feminist rhetorics, the various discourses that invoke "feminism" or "feminist," and the scholarship that provokes, challenges, and deliberates issues of key concern.

In focusing on challenge, on location, this collection acknowledges the academic and socio-discursive spaces that feminisms, and rhetorics on or about feminisms, inhabit. Feminism, but also women and what it means to be a woman, is a signifier under siege in public discourse currently. The chapters included here speak to the challenges and diversities of feminist rhetoric and discourse, in public and private life, in the academy, and in the media. The authors represented in this collection, who were selected and vetted by blind-review from a call for research papers based on their conference participation, present potential consequences for communities in the academy and beyond, spanning international, geopolitical, racial, and religious contexts.

This volume provides a unique lens into feminist rhetorics because in presenting the challenges thereof, it covers a broad but cohesive set of issues. The intersections between them have been catalogued by a variety of scholars in Communication, English, History and Women's Studies, but the authors included in this collection approach feminist challenges from a broad variety of perspectives. Authors included here approach feminist challenges in several categories such as women's history, genre, material culture, and political discourse. As editor, I chose to include such a diverse range of authors and perspectives not only to most thoroughly address the theme, but also to meet the needs of women represented in the field of Rhetoric and Composition.

Kirsti K. Cole
Minnesota State University, Mankato
September 2013

INTRODUCTION

In her 1995 article “Remapping Rhetorical Territory” Cheryl Glenn argues that “as we write our histories of rhetoric, especially as we write women into the tradition, we, like historians in other fields, must continue to resist received notions both of history and of writing history, what Michel de Certeau calls ‘scriptural construction’” (290). She goes on to say that the text of history writing “initiates a play between the object under study and the discourse performing the analysis” (290) and cites Fredric Jameson who defines history as an “‘ideologeme,’ a construct that is susceptible to both a conceptual description and a narrative manifestation all at once” (290). Glenn’s work has informed many of the scholars in the field of rhetoric and composition committed to the inclusion of women’s voices in the body of work representing scholarship in Rhetoric and Composition.

Some of the texts that have sought to include women in the history and theory of rhetoric include Andrea A. Lunsford who in *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition* provides a collected series of essays in which women’s role in the rhetorical tradition, women’s use of rhetoric and women’s use of language to understand themselves and their experiences are explored. In *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity through the Renaissance*, Cheryl Glenn explores how and why women have been historically excluded from the rhetorical tradition. She locates a variety of women’s work, analyzing and contextualizing women’s rhetoric within the Western tradition from antiquity to the Renaissance. In her book, *Rereading the Sophists: Classic Rhetoric Refigured*, Jarratt analyzes and compares the exclusion of women from the rhetorical tradition to the exclusion of sophists within the rhetorical tradition as similar discursive constructs. Joan Wallach Scott’s *Gender and the Politics of History* explores the importance of gender in historical analysis and urges for a reevaluation of received history in terms of recent feminist theories. In *Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1866-1910*, Nan Johnson builds on Scott’s work by treating rhetorical theories and practices as sites that provide for observing the interaction between rhetorical performance and cultural identity constructions, particularly gender. However, in the field of rhetoric there has been no book-length discussion that compiles the various challenges that the

locations of rhetorics, particularly feminist rhetorics, may entail. As illustrated by this brief review of literature, we recognize the need for a collection demonstrating that a rhetorical focus can benefit several disciplines. As such, this volume brings into focus these amorphous and sometime nebulous analyses of terms such as feminism, women, and gender when connected with the various locations of rhetoric. We intend to explore the intersections that result from a study of rhetorics and the challenges of connecting feminism and rhetorics, focused on theoretical and political relationships.

This collection of essays builds on current scholarship in women's rhetoric, which either tends to be religious, academic, or anthologizes the work of women rhetors. Examples of this work includes Roxanne Mountford's *The Gendered Pulpit*, Michelle Ballif, Diane Davis and Roxanne Mountford's collection *Women's Ways of Making It in Rhetoric and Composition*, Eileen Schell's *Rhetorica in Motion*, and most recently Rebecca Dingo's *Networking Arguments*. Dingo's argument in her text is important in framing this collection, because though Glenn's discussion above about reclamation is important work for scholars in the field, Dingo says that we have been focused on historical recovery work but have not "examined the pretexts of recovery work" (32), and that these pretexts allow rhetoricians to "understand networked power and how the process of moving texts from one scale to another can have the effect of further silencing women" (32). In other words, the current trend in scholarship focused on women's rhetoric tends to be an assessment of our past with no indication as to whether or not feminism, particularly the challenges of feminist rhetorics, where they take place, who they involve, what types of discourse they encompass, is taken into account. In this collection, we begin in the past, looking at the historic landscapes of women's writing, and then move toward contemporary rhetorics, theories of rhetoric, and ends with a focus on the global, and a discussion of future sites of inquiry for feminist rhetorics.

An Overview of the Collection

Part 1, *Historic Writing Landscapes: Sites of Resistance, Sites of Normativity*, provides a historical grounding for the work done in this collection. In the five chapters included in this section, the authors locate the spheres, spaces, sites, and tools of writing, and writing as a woman or girl prior to the 1940s.

In Heather Blain Vorhies' chapter, she argues that fully imagining women's historical lives, lives that are often so different and yet so much the same as our own, with accuracy and with care is incredibly difficult. In research on women, where there is often a much smaller amount of archival material than in research on men, we need to use this critical imagination to flesh out history of our sources, placing the materials into the contexts of women's lives and the communities that surrounded them. In order to address this issue, she turns to Catherine Livingston Garrett, the wife of an itinerant preacher who, as a woman from a wealthy family, was fortunate enough to be literate in both reading and writing. She argues that by simply regarding context, and not the individual woman's writing, we risk conventionalizing the work of the rhetors active at the time.

Jennifer Dorsey's work on 19th Century author, Fanny Fern allows an important interrogation of the publishing practices of the time. She argues that the standard gender roles of the mid-nineteenth century fulfilled a normative pattern in which men lived their lives in the exterior world conducting business in a competitive, market-driven environment while women cloistered themselves within the confines of home and family, only venturing out of bounds to act in a supporting role to their husbands, fathers, or brothers. For Dorsey, Fanny Fern did not wish to ascribe to this model of antebellum gendered normativity, nor did the circumstances of her own real-life drama allow her to do so. She wrote about the grittiness of marriage, death, relationships, and competition in the literary marketplace in order to stay employed, but perhaps more importantly to evangelize a progressive worldview about the state of gender normativity in nineteenth-century America to her largely female readership.

Suelyn Duffey argues in her chapter that place-specific memories locate the author in Southwestern Ohio, a place rich in conflict over slavery during the nineteenth century. Long into the twentieth century, racial mixing at dining tables seems to have been almost as powerfully laden as sexual mixing across races (Du Pre Lumpkin). But a multi-generational line of the author's relatives embodied a resistance to this dominant prejudice with their invocation: "come sit at the table with us," an invitation they spoke to neighborhood African Americans. Geographical places in this county function as both a rhetorical and geophysical space, rekindled the speaker's memories, and led her on a journey through farm houses, dining rooms, and kitchens, domestic spaces in which she discovered family stories about how her female ancestors had exercised significant agency in them.

In Lori Ostergaard, Amy Mecklenburg-Faenger, and Henrietta Rix Wood's chapter, they focus on High School girls' newspapers, writing clubs, and literary magazines from 1897-1930. They argue that locating early twentieth-century women's experiences as writers in the curriculum and extracurricular activities of high schools may afford a more comprehensive blueprint of the sites of women's authorship during this time. Because women represented only a small percentage of the college population, high school histories may help us to account for the experiences of the majority of women who never set foot on a college campus and whose written works have, therefore, been excluded from many of our histories of early twentieth-century rhetorical education and empowerment. Histories of high-school publications and writing clubs may also provide us with insights into the Progressive-Era pedagogies—practical and vocational—employed more often by high school teachers than by faculty teaching writing at elite universities, demonstrating how some early feminist pedagogues may have fostered independence, entrepreneurship, and authorship among girls and young women during this time.

Sarah B. Franco's chapter on madness as a rhetorical tool ends the first section of the collections. She focuses on Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Virginia Woolf, and Anne Sexton who, she argues, faced similar challenges as they worked toward entering a realm constructed around patriarchal ideals and dominated by patriarchal discourse. Not only did they have to first clear a space for themselves in a literary sphere rife with white, male voices, they also suffered from the effects of mental illness and the stigma associated with "madness." Franco reframes madness in order to demonstrate how these writers used the male-enforced stigma identifying them by their illness as a rhetorical strategy to comment on their experiences of oppression as women and as writers in a male-dominated society.

Contemporary Rhetorics: Resistance, Vulnerability, and Riots comprise Part 2 of the collection. In this section, authors provide a broad and diverse overview of contemporary rhetorics. These chapters focus on not only where we might find women's and feminist rhetorics, but also the ways in which these rhetorics can become sites of resistance.

In his chapter on free speech and the Supreme Court, William Duffy argues that the *Snyder v. Phelps* ruling is a provocative site of inquiry because it hinges not just on the question of when outrageous acts like hate

speech fall outside the boundaries of constitutional protection, but it also speaks to the idea of the public sphere as a site for deliberation, and by extension, the function of civil discourse in maintaining the public sphere itself. His work on regulated discourse and free speech is significant because he argues that without free speech we would be unable to identify issues of public concern because there would be no workable public space where such matters could be deliberated.

Susan Ayres explores neonaticide, the act of killing a newborn, as a global problem. This chapter presents two pairs of vignettes as a way to explore jurisprudence regarding women who commit acts of violence and to argue for the application of a rhetoric of vulnerability as informed by the pre-Socratic concept of *kairos*, or right-timing and due measure. She re-examines neonaticide through the *kairic* rhetoric of vulnerability, arguing for changes in state assets to provide options for unwanted pregnancy (right-timing), and in the criminal justice system's laws and defenses regarding neonaticide (due measure).

Amy Pason's chapter also focuses on a politic of care, but for her it is Camp Casey that provides an important site for inquiry. She argues that Camp Casey exemplifies how emotion can be utilized by activists, and more importantly, how emotion works to interpellate audiences towards action, and that emotional response can translate into an ethic of care—an ethic that mobilized the peace movement as it asserted our obligation to care and cooperate with others for a more peaceful world.

Rebekah Buchanan introduces zines to this collection, a topic that will be explored in further detail by Alison Piepmeier. She argues that in the Riot Grrrl Movement zines became widely used as a way to communicate personal experiences with sexism, racism, abuse, and other issues within the scene. When the Riot Grrrl Movement chose to use zines as a form of communication, they became a more personal way to present self and feminism as well as re-envision the role of women in the punk scene. They subverted traditional uses of the medium for their own use as feminists and activists. The role of the Riot Grrrl Movement in the recreation of punk and the infusion of feminism and activism into a music scene is an important site for exploration.

Kristin Mock's work moves us from punk rock to the classroom, providing a critical inquiry into feminist pedagogical models and exploring how traditional mother/maid roles for women may serve to undermine teaching

assistants. She argues that as more and more graduate students teach first-year composition classes, it is critical for us to gain a better understanding of how inexperienced teachers view, understand, and enact feminist pedagogy in their classrooms and with their students if we are to prepare them to confidently enter and sustain interest in the field of feminist rhetorics.

Building community features in Margaret Weaver's chapter, in which she argues that faculty can be seduced into ignoring how our bodies complicate community interaction because so much of the work faculty do with colleagues is disembodied through emails, phone calls, and written texts. Face-to-face committee work, however, serves as a powerful reminder that our bodies *do* matter. She believes it is important to address the fact that while feminists have attempted to write women's bodies back into where they have been erased, our focus has been on our written texts and classroom interactions, but that committee level interactions are a crucial site of study.

At the center of this book, is Alison Piepmeier's work on girl zines, after her book was published. Dr. Piepmeier was the one of the keynotes from the conference, and has adapted her talk to fit this collection. Her chapter offers an origin story about grrrl zines, and makes an argument about why these stories matter—the stories we tell, and the readings and misreadings we do. She argues that origin stories are important because they tell us where to look and what patterns to watch for. The “wrong” stories can give us a distorted or diminished understanding of the past and, by extension, the present moment. In the case of grrrl zines, if we think of them as originating from the male-dominated spaces of zines and punk culture, then grrrl zines appear as aberrations at best; as one author suggests, they seem “a side note to women's history.” Her chapter serves as a significant interspace for this collection because it moves us from history, and origin, to ways of reading.

In Part 3, Language, Voice, and Folksonomy: Rhetorical Perspectives on Feminism, Rhetorical Theories, the intersections with feminism, and sites for future study are explored by the authors included.

Janella D. Moy's chapter on landscape demonstrates the ways in which body, space, and language intersect to create identity. She uses Audre Lorde's *Zami* to claim that for non-heterosexuals, secretive identity production is necessary for defining one's identity through safe modes and

spaces, making one's identity visible for self-acknowledgment, and looking outside of traditional political spaces/spheres (school, work, family) to find sources for identification. In a world that identifies the dominant culture as positive and anything in opposition to that culture as negative, looking outside of expected spaces to form a positive identity helps promote one's independence, especially for minorities facing continual ostracism. For Moy, writing and language, areas in which identity can be manipulated, are major focuses in Lorde's work and a crucial place to begin.

Lydia McDermott extends Moy's inquiry by moving into a discussion of feminist rhetorical agency. Her focus is on Echo, the mythical nymph, who was cursed by Juno to be confined forever to repeating the words of others. For McDermott, Echo represents a gendered aspect of writing, rhetoric, and form.

Extending our understanding of rhetorical agency, Aurora Matzke argues that it is useful to reposition folksonomy as feminist praxis, with careful attention to the etymological roots of both *folk* and *nomos* embedded within the term. She argues that socially networked classroom environments take fuller advantage of the wisdom of the crowd to develop and sustain curricula that requires students and teachers to critique their own educational assumptions, if these communities engage feminist methodologies of disruption and lack.

In the final chapter in Part 3, Jessica L. Furgerson builds on Matzke's discussion of the classroom environment by reviewing feminist additions to our understanding of rhetoric primarily in the form of methodological choices. She traces this framework and argues that feminist method directly lends itself to the consideration of key areas of future inquiry in studying and theorizing feminist rhetoric.

The collection concludes with a focus on the global, the transnational, and the intercultural. In *Global Rhetoric: Survivance, Authority, and Dress*, authors pose questions about the ways in which we might think about feminisms and rhetorics extending beyond traditional sites of scholarship.

Catherine Fox and Jennifer Maher discuss the ways in which harmony, as a trope, plays a problematic role in the on-going colonization of indigenous peoples. They argue that in locating indigenous resistance to the numerous effects of a Western epistemology, many researchers

essentialize indigenous peoples by problematically representing them through the stereotype of stewardship and living in harmony with the land. Fox and Maher attempt to complicate what they understand as a binary approach by analyzing indigenous peoples' use of complex rhetorical strategies to assert their sovereignty in the realm of intellectual property, specifically through a reinvention of harmony that is premised in (dis)harmony.

Kelly Sassi focuses on feminist-indigenous rhetorics by providing a reading of the treatments of Sophia Alice Callahan's *Wynema*. She argues that we ought to look at Callahan's multiple identities holistically and acknowledge that she is part of a larger movement of American Indian writers identified by Malea Powell, who are using writing tactically by employing rhetorics of survivance. Survivance is a term created from survival and resistance. Sassi uses *Wynema*, a work of fiction, to argue that like nonfiction works, Callahan makes the same rhetorical moves of survivance.

Rebecca Gardner's chapter also focuses on American Indian rhetoric, but in her chapter she discusses an essay that one student wrote for a personal writing class at a Midwestern public university. The assignment was for students to write an essay explaining one of their beliefs, including the source of the belief and how it is apparent in their lives. Gardner argues that the assimilation policies of the United States government, partially enacted through English education, did not silence all Natives. Though the damage inflicted by the policies is real, Indians are adapting and creating a future for themselves, as individuals and as nations. She focuses on the possibilities of literacy not only as a weapon, but also as a tool.

In Marissa M. Juarez's chapter, she poses a Chicana feminist body politics. She argues that Chicana feminists' reclamation work is central to understanding how body politics can disarticulate a Western, Eurocentric tradition. To understand Chicana feminists' work first requires an understanding of the role the body plays in reclamation scholarship. She follows Cindy Crus claiming that a Chicana body politics needs to "embody our theory," and to do so she suggests incorporating narratives about the body in the classroom and working to ensure that the theories we develop remain informed by our communities, connected to the material world.

Moushumi Biswas ends the collections by providing a reading of the cultural rhetoric of the Sari. This chapter examines the role drag plays in the act of wearing the sari, the cultural performance, and how it concerns 21st century feminist critique. She argues that over the centuries, Indian women have learned to accept wearing five meters of cloth every day and even turned the restrictive apparel into a powerful tool to negotiate challenges in a male-dominated society.

This is a large and very diverse collections of scholarship focused on finding, analyzing, and forging new space for feminist(s) and rhetoric(s), and represents a significant entry into further discussion on what we value as scholarship in the critical discourses to which we subscribe as feminist researchers.

PART I:

**HISTORIC WRITING LANDSCAPES:
SITES OF RESISTANCE,
SITES OF NORMATIVITY**

CATHERINE LIVINGSTON GARRETTSON AND INTEGRATED MALE-FEMALE SPHERES IN THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

HEATHER BLAIN VORHIES

When it comes to late eighteenth and early nineteenth century America, we have a lot of assumptions. Travel was impossible. Women stayed home. Women were subjugated. There was little intellectual discussion, never mind a real intellectual community of any sort. Literacy was nonexistent. Everyone was repressed. Yet the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in America were very much a time of transition. Between the Revolution and the ante-bellum period, in what we call the early American Republic, we have what Diane Lobody, the Catherine Garrettson scholar, calls “women in transition, experiencing vast changes in values, in possibilities, in hopes, and in rhetoric.”¹

What was life like in the early nineteenth century for women? There's much we don't know, but what we do know challenges ideologies of gendered behavior and spheres in the early American Republic: namely, that “what is most striking is not the degree to which women and men were separate in early American Methodism, but the extent to which they worked together.”² For many Methodist women in the early American Republic, the separate spheres and expectations of Christian women's behavior outlined most famously in Barbara Welter's 1966 “The Cult of True Womanhood,” were more an ideal and less an actuality. There's no doubt that as Welter describes, periodicals and writings of the time urged “piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.”³ Yet, these ideals were part and parcel of a larger Methodist tradition that encouraged intellectual engagement and personal experience among women, a tradition that held

¹ Diane Helen Lobody, “Lost in an Ocean of Love: The Mystical Writings of Catherine Livingston Garrettson,” (PhD diss. Drew University, 1990): 2.

² John H. Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 152.

³ Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966): 152.

these activities in both mixed and single gendered company, calling women and men to act, first and foremost, in evangelical service to God.

Fully imagining women's historical lives, lives that are often so different and yet so much the same as our own, with accuracy and with care is incredibly difficult. However, in the June 2011 issue of *College Composition and Communication*, Gesa Kirsch and Jacqueline Jones Royster proposed critical imagination and an ethos of care as part of a larger methodology toward excellence in feminist historical research. Kirsch and Royster ask "When we study women of the past, especially those whose voices have rarely been heard or studied by rhetoricians, how do we render their work and lives meaningfully? How do we honor their traditions? How do we transport ourselves back to the time and context in which they lived, knowing full well that it is not possible to see things from their vantage point?"⁴ Their answer to this problem is a methodological one: Kirsch and Royster propose critical imagination, "interrogating the contexts, conditions, lives, and practices of women who are no longer alive to speak directly on their behalf" in looking "for what is likely or possible, given the facts on hand."⁵ In research on women, where there is often a much smaller amount of archival material than in research on men, we need to use this critical imagination to flesh out history of our sources, placing the materials into the contexts of women's lives and the communities that surrounded them.

Catherine Livingston Garrettson is an excellent example of a late eighteenth and early nineteenth century woman whose work was deeply intellectual and persuasive. The intellectual and persuasive nature of her work becomes apparent through critical imagination. Garrettson was a rhetorical practitioner, not a rhetorical theorist, and my interest in her writings comes from the ways her work challenges the privileging of rhetorical theory over rhetorical practice, "formal" over informal education, and written over spoken composition. Garrettson, like her fellow Methodist women and men, existed in a community that avidly practiced persuasion and considered it the best way to pass on God's message, read religious and certain secular texts while striving for greater literacy among all Methodists, and in towns up and down America's East Coast, spoke for God while on the road or across the kitchen table, and wrote for God when stopping.

⁴ Gesa E. Kirsch and Jacqueline J. Royster, "Feminist Rhetorical Practices: In Search of Excellence," *College Composition and Communication* 61, no. 4 (June 2011): 648.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 650.

At a glance, Catherine Garrettson isn't much more than the wife of an itinerant preacher who, as a woman from a wealthy family, was fortunate enough to be literate in both reading and writing. But as Diane Lobody writes, "To sketch a picture of her [Catherine Garrettson's] religious contribution that sees her primarily in terms of her identity as minister's wife does her a disservice. In a curious way, it perpetuates the nineteenth-century stereotype of the model of holy womanhood."⁶ Garrettson spent her days in correspondence with her traveling husband, family, friends, and fellow Methodists, advising, discussing, and sometimes cajoling them in the service of God. And, as Methodist historian John H. Wigger reminds us, "While few Methodist women preached, a far greater number participated in the movement's early development as class leaders, unofficial counselors to young circuit riders, network builders, extra-legal activists, and financial patrons."⁷ Wigger argues "these activities were as integral to the life of the movement as was the preaching of circuit riders."⁸ Catherine Garrettson was just such a woman.

When Catherine Livingston Garrettson was young, her well-to-do parents most likely would have never guessed her future life as the wife of an itinerant Methodist preacher. Indeed, Garrettson's young life had more in common with our contemporary Paris Hilton than with a pious Christian gentlewoman: as a young society woman, Garrettson attended lavish parties and flirted with men.⁹ Yet something would change: Garrettson would become a Methodist, eschewing society for class meetings. And when Garrettson decided to settle down in her early forties, to a man of few means who struggled with the demands marriage would place on his itinerant preaching, her parents were less than thrilled. In fact, Garrettson's mother, Margaret Beekman Livingston, refused to give permission for her daughter to marry for several years. Love won out, and in 1793, Catherine Livingston married American Methodist preacher Freeborn Garrettson.¹⁰

Catherine Garrettson, and her daughter Mary Garrettson, are emblematic of religious life and women's rhetorical practice in the transitional early American Republic. While Catherine Garrettson was foremost the wife of an itinerant preacher, her first duty always, was service to God. In short, before anything else, before purity, piety, submissiveness, and domesticity, Catherine Garrettson was an evangelist. Over her rather large collection of writings, which include dream journals, vast correspondence with friends

⁶ Lobody, *Lost in An Ocean of Love*, 25.

⁷ Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 157.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Lobody, *Lost in An Ocean of Love*, 44.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

and family, spiritual journals, assorted writings and musings, and diary, Catherine Garrettson sought to save her fellow Americans' souls. Her Friday, February 22, 1811 entry from her spiritual journals hints at Garrettson's fervid evangelism.

Was a day of affliction of body, and humiliation of soul. In the evening I was greatly drawn out in prayer. 1. For the perfection of my own soul in deep know n with God, and universal holiness. 2. For those immediately under my charge, especially for the salvation of my dear Daughter, who I fear is not in a state of union with God whom her parents adore. 3. For relatives, especially for an old sister, the first child of my mother, who is in a state of second child-hood. 4. For the general church, and the spread of the gospel. My heart was tender, and tears of joy flowed, while on my knees in secret.¹¹

This evangelical calling was not something Garrettson accepted easily. Lobody notes that Garrettson "was reluctant to fling herself into public activities; nevertheless, her desire for service, her unremitting evangelical endeavors, and her ministry of hospitality evidenced the translation of evangelical feminine virtues into evangelic women's power."¹² From the seat of her and Freeborn's farmhouse in Rhinebeck, New York, or "Traveler's Rest," according to itinerant preacher and American Methodist bishop Francis Asbury,¹³ Catherine Garrettson ministered, comforted, and evangelized. She argued and advised the best way for Methodists to proceed in their conversion. Thus, she writes on December 16, 1817 to her husband:

The school you speak of I am rejoiced at, would to heaven there were on established in every conference. Should the M-- keep their zeal and acquire the pursuit of knowledge I have always said they will be the first ministry in the world. But in the pursuit of knowledge is danger of losing Gospel simplicity. This should never be lost sight of, or every other attainment will be like the surrender of the substance for the shadow. Let us ever keep in

¹¹ Catherine Garrettson, Journal, February 22-June 14, 1811, 1080-5-2:10, Garrettson Family Papers, Methodist Collection—Drew University, Madison, New Jersey.

¹² Lobody, *Lost in An Ocean of Love*, 24.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 67.

view that crowning doctrine *holiness*. This alone can save us, and make us finally triumphant over every foe.¹⁴

A little later in that same letter, she advises Freeborn that “Our preachers complain of the closeness of the Christians. The reason is obvious. Religion is at such a low ebb they have no love to them who minister to them in holy things. Let the preacher get his soul purified, and all alive to God, and then see if there will not be openings of the heart towards him.” She adds a sentence later, however, in a moment of wifely humility that “I will not attempt to give my advice respecting your movements.”¹⁵

Garrettson's correspondence mostly deals with domestic things: illness, death, groceries for the household, the growth and education of children. Yet, her correspondence, as well as her many other written texts, seeks first to persuade all of those around her to a Christian life.

You have now my dearest Mary entered the church militant and enrolled your name among the followers of Jesus. This is an important step and I doubt not you have maturely weighed the nature of the engagements you have entered into. The next step as you have entered a seeker, is to be looking earnestly for an application of the blood of Christ to your soul, that your spirit may be united to that God, who has crowned your life with mercies. Do my dear girl endeavor to live by rule and have your stated hours for prayer, and do not give your suit over till you feel that you love Jesus with your whole hearth. You must my dear Mary guard against self-indulgence, be regular in going to bed and in rising. This I know will be a great cross but remember nature must be before we can become spiritual. By method there is time for every duty and one need not infringe upon the other. Oh that your dear father on his return may salute you a child of God, an heir of glory.¹⁶

Garrettson's correspondence in itself does not mark a mixed-gender persuasion: Garrettson's letters, besides those to her husband, are mostly addressed to female friends and family. At face value, her letters confirm our ideology of separate, gendered spheres. After all, Garrettson's audience for her letters was overwhelmingly female, with the exception of her

¹⁴ Catherine Livingston Garrettson to Freeborn Garrettson, Correspondence to Freeborn Garrettson 1804-1837, 1080-5-2:20, Garrettson Family Papers, Methodist Collection—Drew University, Madison, New Jersey.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Catherine Livingston Garrettson to Mary Rutherford Garrettson, Correspondence to Mary Garrettson, 1080-5-2:21, Garrettson Family Papers, Methodist Collection—Drew University, Madison, New Jersey.

husband. Yet, this is only one part of Garrettson's writing, and, as with all archival material, we have to remember that we only have access to what material has been saved and sent to the archive.

It is in relation to her other writings and her daughter, Mary Rutherford Garrettson's, that a fuller picture of Catherine Garrettson's rhetorical practice emerges. Much of Garrettson's rhetorical practice is something for which we need to use our critical imagination; while Garrettson did write a diary recording her many spiritual conversations with both women and men, much of Garrettson's rhetorical work and intellectual life would have been oral. In class meetings, at love feasts, in conversation with her fellow Methodists or Methodists-to-be, Garrettson would have prayed publicly (Garrettson sometimes noted others' reactions to their own prayers in her spiritual journal), discussed sermons, Biblical passages, and texts, counseled new members publicly and privately, and conversed in order to convert.

What Mary Rutherford Garrettson, Catherine Livingston Garrettson's daughter, reminds us so well, is that so much of the integral nature of male-female spheres simply wasn't important enough to be noted. After her father's (Freeborn Garrettson) death, Mary Garrettson keeps correspondence with Richard Reece, a British friend of her father's active in the Methodist movement in England. Mary Garrettson and Reece trade texts across the Atlantic, while Mary Garrettson sends the British Methodists a painting of her father, and Reece praises her work with infant Sunday schools. "A mind well disciplined is an instrument which may be applied to any useful and important purpose in after life," he writes. "Very little has been printed for the aid of these [infant Sunday school] teachers. I will endeavor to procure everything and send it to you with the Tracts by the next Packet which will sail in a few days. The last part of Mr. Watson's Institutes is coming out of the press. You shall have a copy of them very soon."¹⁷ Reece was an old friend of the Garrettsons, "friends so beloved and esteemed."¹⁸

What Reese shows us is the integrated nature of the Methodist world when it comes to gender. Reese writes in the 1840s, but his relationship with the Garrettson family began well before then; Reese was also at the end of a long line of visitors to the Garrettson household, those visitors who would have been entertained by Catherine Garrettson. For while women after John Wesley's death were effectively barred from preaching

¹⁷ Richard Reece to Mary Rutherford Garrettson, Correspondence from Richard Reece, 1080-5-3:14, Garrettson Family Papers, Methodist Collection—Drew University, Madison, New Jersey.

¹⁸ Ibid.

in an official capacity,¹⁹ Methodists felt that studying and discussing theology along with personal experiences of God—these things were the domain of both genders. Like a long tradition of women before her,²⁰ Catherine Garrettson would feed her mixed-gendered rhetorical practice into conversation.

Why is the transitional nature of the early American Republic so important to note? In short, because in our discussions of nineteenth century rhetoric and women, we have often assumed the gender separation which applies for the larger part of the nineteenth century (the ante-bellum period onward) also applies for the early American Republic. By the 1820s, women's public exhorting was less accepted than it had once been.²¹ By ascribing later nineteenth century values to the early American Republic, we fail to recognize the ways in which women, most often informally educated in rhetoric, actively participated in the spread of Methodism and actively added to its theology, working along with men at written, but mostly at oral rhetorical practice.

Critical imagination is crucial for research in women's rhetorical history. By gathering together the artifacts we do have from both women and men, by locating these artifacts in historical contexts, and by resisting the placement of our own gendered assumptions on past eras, we can strive to break down the male/female, theory/practice, formal/informal, and the inherent active/passive binary that we have created for rhetoric in the early American Republic. For, as Barbara Biesecker writes in "Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric," "If feminists working in the history of Rhetoric could deconstruct the all-too-easy bipolarization of the active and the passive, we would go a long way toward dismantling the ideology of individualism that monumentalizes some acts and trivializes others."²² Indeed, intrinsic in our hierarchies of theory/practice, formal/informal, and written/spoken is the ideology (at least when it comes to women) is that theory, formal education, and written composition, rather than extemporaneous conversation is "active" rather than passive.

¹⁹ Wigger notes that Catherine Van Wyck, Benjamin Bishop's wife, Fanny Butterfield Newell, Hannah Herrington, and Jarena Lee all exhorted publicly (154-55).

²⁰ Jane Donawerth, "Conversation and the Boundaries of Public Discourse in Rhetorical Theory by Renaissance Women," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 181-99.

²¹ Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 156.

²² Barbara Biesecker, "Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25, no. 2 (1992): 146-47.