

Gathering Women's Rhetorics for the Twenty-First Century

In June 2015 Bree Newsome scaled the flagpole in front of South Carolina's state capitol and removed the Confederate flag, ten days after the Charleston church massacre by a white supremacist and ahead of a pro-flag rally. The next month, the Confederate flag was permanently removed from the state capitol, having flown there since 1961—some say to commemorate the start of the Civil War; others say to oppose to the civil rights movement. You can find the photo of her taking down the flag in this collection—a powerful, persuasive act viewed as central to the permanent removal of the flag.

Newsome is a compelling example of a twenty-first-century women rhetor—along with bloggers, writers, politicians, activists, artists, and everyday social media users—who give new meaning to Aristotle's ubiquitous definition of rhetoric as the discovery of the "available means of persuasion." While persuasion may at first invoke classical or combative modes historically assigned to men, women's rhetorical practices encompass expansive means of persuasion, such as invitation-al, irenic (peacemaking), collaborative, humorous, and more. Women's persuasive acts from the first two decades of the twenty-first century include new technologies and repurposed old ones, engaged not only to persuade but to tell their stories, sponsor change, and challenge cultural forces that repress and oppress. In so doing, they insist on the presence of women's voices in the public sphere, which history has long denied. How far we have come from Quintilian's two-thousand-year-old definition of the rhetorical orator as a "good man speaking well." *Persuasive Acts: Women's Rhetorics in the Twenty-First Century* gathers an expansive array of voices and texts, so that you may converse with them, extend them, and build rhetorics of your own.

It is an exciting time to assemble and engage women's rhetorics, as we are hearing the voices of more women, and in more ways, than ever before. Women are represented in proliferating numbers in traditional sites of public oratory—politics, courtrooms, churches—that once excluded them as well as in new rhetorical spheres online. The following pages feature the Supreme Court justice Sandra Sotomayor, the Iranian lawyer and judge Shirin Ebadi, the first female major US party presidential nominee Hillary Rodham Clinton, the Reverend Jennifer Bailey, and Malala Yousafzai, to name just a few. These women are changing the shape

and tenor of traditionally masculine public arenas, bringing their unique gendered (among other) identities to bear on interpreting law, sharing sacred texts, or delivering a stump speech.

The contents also reflect the rhetorical revolution that has occurred online. This century, social media platforms have opened a space for women and other marginalized groups to self-publish and amplify their voices in ways previously unimaginable. Through the blog of a young Iraqi woman, we have access to her daily accounts of life in Baghdad during the US occupation of Iraq. Thanks to the ease and speed of information sharing online, a rape survivor's victim impact statement, read aloud in court to her assailant, reached an international audience. The employment of social media platforms has now become an essential tool in organizing and sustaining social movements. We see this demonstrated in the Black Lives Matter movement, launched in 2013 by three black women in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman for murdering the unarmed black teen Trayvon Martin. We also witness it in the Women's March, a grassroots movement begun in 2016 as a protest march to newly elected President Trump, and #YesAllWomen, the hashtag and social media campaign initiated in response to misogyny and violence spurred by the 2014 Isla Vista killings. We capture examples of these rhetorical acts as demonstrations of the powerful escalation of women's voices online.

Yet even in the face of so much progress, the mechanisms that silence women are far from absent in our culture. While these structures may not be as explicit as they once were—say, written in law or even publicly spoken—they remain insidious, sometimes more so because they are less visible. Mechanisms to silence women also appear in new forms, as in online harassment and doxxing (broadcasting one's private identifying information online). In fact, the impetus for some of the strongest surges of women's voices in the last two decades often comes back to the denial of women's voices, personhood, and agency. Many of the writers in this collection forcefully challenge systems and structures that silence women so the next generation of women may speak even more freely.

As we gathered rhetorics with an eye on the present and the future, we also attended closely to history—on what and who has made way for this groundswell of voices. As we witnessed in the #MeToo movement, a viral hashtag spurred by the sexual misconduct allegations against the movie mogul Harvey Weinstein in 2017, women's rhetorical acts enable one another. One woman breaking a silence creates a space for another to share her story, and another, and another. That's how we think of this anthology. Twenty-first-century women rhetors have benefited from the risk-taking, persistence, and conviction of rhetors across centuries—like Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Mary Wollstonecraft, Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Audre Lorde, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, and Gloria Anzaldúa—as well as the many women whose speech, writing, and art will never appear in print and whose names we may never know.

This collection is also possible because in the late twentieth century, feminist scholars of rhetoric undertook trailblazing work to recover and reclaim women's rhetoric as part of the rhetorical tradition, breaking open a male-only canon. Thirty years ago, anthologies of rhetoric included two or three women wedged among an ensemble of male voices. Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald tell us that when they began teaching rhetoric in the 1980s, they learned to expect the persistent question from their female students: "Where are the women?" They answered this question by compiling the first, and still most expansive, collection of women's rhetorics: *Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetoric(s)*. The seventy pieces in their collection span 5 BCE–CE 1999 and represent an emergent tradition of women's rhetorics. *Available Means* includes writers and speakers who fiercely advocated for women's public participation and civil rights alongside women who wrote in "unprivileged or devalued forms such as letters, journals, and speeches to other women" (xx). Often denied education and a public voice, these women borrowed and appropriated conventions of the male tradition to use to their own ends, and they invented their own "available means" when conventional forms did not suit their purposes. In *Persuasive Acts*, we continue this gathering of women's rhetorics into the twenty-first century, which extends, responds to, and critiques the voices, strategies, and forms that preceded them.

An Anthology of Women's Rhetorics for a New Millennium

Thanks to *Available Means*, alongside the work of scholars including—but certainly not limited to—Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, Cheryl Glenn, Gesa Kirsch, Jacqueline Jones Royster, Shirley Wilson Logan, Andrea Lunsford, and Krista Ratcliffe, students don't have to ask, "Where are the women?" Today, our syllabi and reading lists make clear that women are a cornerstone of rhetorical theory and practice. However, women's rhetorics in the twenty-first century are expanding faster than editors can anthologize them. *Available Means* is older than most college students, who have lived in a very different rhetorical era, where the vehicles for public participation, and the voices doing so, exceed what could have been predicted then.

In 2001 there was no Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Snapchat. We couldn't predict that high schoolers in Parkland, Florida, after suffering a devastating school shooting on Valentine's Day 2018, would demand gun control through tweets challenging politicians' statements. Or that millions of women would tweet #MeToo as a rallying cry against sexual assault and sponsor new social movements to transform a toxic culture for women. The democratization of the public sphere through social media—which, we hasten to add, also brings with it exclusionary and pernicious dynamics—has radically altered how we practice and theorize

rhetoric. We knew it was time for a new collection to document these changing rhetorical practices and ever-widening group of participants.

The expansiveness suggested by the title *Persuasive Acts* aims to capture the myriad shapes of women's rhetorics in contemporary culture. While writing and speaking are traditional rhetorical forms, writing is now more likely to occur online than in print, and speeches are more often streamed on a device than delivered at a podium. Therefore, works in this anthology are gathered both from more traditional sites, like the *New York Times* and the Democratic National Convention, as well as newer rhetorical platforms like Twitter and podcasts.

In addition to speaking and writing, women in this collection also engage in making, which has long been part of women's rhetorical work. Women have participated in rhetorical making through quilting, crafts, recipes, and activist art. We use the term *making* even more expansively in this volume, referencing both digital and material creations, from Instagram posts to videos to feminist cross-stitch. We find the term apt because it emphasizes women's prolific *production*, both of rhetorical texts and of new knowledge and theory.

Along with dramatic changes in where and how women practice rhetoric, we also address significant cultural shifts pertinent to women, gender, and feminism. These are defined by more capacious conceptions of identity, which disrupt views of categories such as gender, race, ability, or sexuality as isolated or fixed. Within—and beyond—feminist rhetorics, the concept of intersectionality has taken on enormous importance as a way to understand ourselves, one another, and the interplay of identities, culture, and power. Intersectionality highlights the interconnectedness of categories like gender, race, religion, ability, geographic location, sexual identity, and class to show how they result in different experiences of systemic oppression and discrimination. The term *intersectionality* was coined by the legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1986 in order to describe the marginalization of black women by both feminism and antiracist groups because their concerns were not fully addressed by either. Of course, as Crenshaw acknowledges in “Why Intersectionality Can't Wait,” included in this collection, “[Intersectionality] was a lived reality before it became a term.” As is true of so much feminist work, Crenshaw's theory gave conceptual language to the material realities of women. And while it was articulated on behalf of black women, Crenshaw argues that its power comes in bringing to light “the invisibility of many constituents within groups that claim them as members, but often fail to represent them . . . People of color within LGBTQ movements; girls of color in the fight against the school-to-prison pipeline; women within immigration movements; trans women within feminist movements; and people with disabilities fighting police abuse—all face vulnerabilities that reflect the intersections of racism, sexism, class oppression, transphobia, able-ism and more. Intersectionality has given

many advocates a way to frame their circumstances and to fight for their visibility and inclusion.”

The women featured in this collection repeatedly make explicit ways their gendered identity interlocks with other social locations. Karin Hitselberger discusses her “rebellious” use of selfies to showcase her experience as a disabled, plus-size woman. Amy Alexander offers a critique of the women’s march from the perspective of a “black woman of a certain age, a divorced mom of two teenagers who has no choice but to focus daily on the challenges of keeping a home, my family, and myself on track.” Jennine Capó Crucet describes her experience of leaving home as a Latina, first-generation, female college student. In the twenty-first century, the *woman* in women’s rhetorics is not viewed as an isolated category or one that assumes whiteness. Instead, gender is always in interplay with other identities.

The last two decades have also seen an increase in public conversation, as well as within feminist rhetoric, that expands how *woman* is conceived. While contesting and rewriting cultural articulations of womanhood has always been integral to women’s rhetorics, this century’s transgender activists further challenge us to refuse rigid, biologically determined binaries of gender. In so doing, they point to problematic exclusions within the feminist movement. In her 2001 “Transfeminist Manifesto,” Emi Koyama reframes this omission as an opportunity for growth: “Every time a group of women previously silenced begins to speak out, other feminists are challenged to rethink their idea of whom they represent and what they stand for. While this process sometimes leads to a painful realization of our own biases and internalized oppressions as feminists, it eventually benefits the movement by widening our perspectives and constituency.”

You will find examples of transwomen taking part in this revolution in the pages ahead. The trans writer and performance artist Julia Serano, for instance, describes the important rhetorical shift from once making audiences comfortable with her “bodily incongruity” by delivering a one-liner penis joke to now turning the tables back on audiences to ask: “Why do so many people—even those who are otherwise well-meaning, open-minded, progressive, pro-trans and anti-sexist—continue to get so hung up over the status of our genitals?” Staceyann Chin adds to this dialogue, observing that we don’t have a language large enough to capture our gendered identities, leaving us with only two pronoun choices, “with each of us forced to choose between one of the two ways of saying *I am here*.” Increasingly, however, as the contributors to this text demonstrate, women are finding available means to articulate and embrace their gendered identities as complex, fluid, and contradictory. For example, Johanna Hedva prefers gender-neutral pronouns to name their identities. In fact, the increasing fluidity of the concept of womanhood led us to consider whether we should retain the category of “women’s rhetoric” for this project. Ultimately, we decided that *woman*, while it should be interrogated,

still needs both representation and celebration, especially in an era when women's rights are under siege. As Charlotte has argued elsewhere, "While the term 'woman' [can] be narrow and problematic, to lose it risks making invisible the particular challenges women have faced" (Hogg 189). We use the term *woman*, then, expansively and fluidly, with the aim of achieving greater inclusivity.

Such elasticity is also evident in the concept of feminism itself, particularly as more people grapple with the term *feminism* as it reverberates through social media. Beyoncé, arguably the most influential female icon in this century, ended her 2014 MTV Video Music Awards performance with the word FEMINIST blazing in lights behind her, a powerful celebrity endorsement that went viral. Public figures, from politicians to celebrities, are now often asked if they define themselves as feminist, and answers reflect a shift from second- to third-wave feminism and beyond, to the ire of some and the delight of others. Feminism in the twenty-first century, influenced by millennials, seeks a malleability that reflects a range of voices and positions. As the journalists Dave Sheinin, Krissah Thompson, and Soraya Nadia McDonald explain: "This New Wave feminism is shaped less by a shared struggle against oppression than by a collective embrace of individual freedoms, concerned less with targeting narrowly defined enemies than with broadening feminism's reach through inclusiveness, and held together not by a handful of national organizations and charismatic leaders but by the invisible bonds of the Internet and social media." This question of how the term *feminism*—and those who embrace or resist it—is taken up or taken on propels many rhetorical declarations, acts, and discussions in the following pages.

In addition to reflecting changing conceptions of gender, identity, and feminism, this collection showcases powerful responses to twenty-first-century events, economic developments, and cultural shifts. One of the most notable is the 9/11 attack on American soil. On September 11, 2001, two US passenger planes, hijacked by members of the terrorist group Al Qaeda, flew into the two World Trade Center towers in lower Manhattan, destroying the 110-story symbols of American economic power and prosperity. In a coordinated effort, terrorists also hijacked another plane to strike the Pentagon—a symbol of US military power—and a fourth plane crashed in rural Pennsylvania when passengers onboard thwarted the hijackers. These terrorist acts heightened Islamophobia in the United States and led to the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. *Persuasive Acts* includes voices from the Iraq veteran and US senator Tammy Duckworth; Captain Brenda Berkman, a firefighter who was a first responder at Ground Zero after the 9/11 attack; and the anonymous Iraqi blogger known as Riverbend, who describes the effects of the US invasion on her life in Baghdad. In the tradition of feminist rhetorics, these writers challenge dominant narratives of war, patriotism, and heroism as well as reveal untold stories that center women's experiences.

Women rhetors have also both challenged and leveraged increased globalization—a process that integrates national economies, societies, and cultures through a global network of trade, technology, media, transportation and immigration. While globalization is not unique to the twenty-first century, the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai argues that the *current* moment of globalization is “new in the sense that it combines high connectivity with new levels, forms, and types of circulation” (qtd. in Gries, 12). This heightened speed and connectivity impact the global spread of capitalism, the interdependence among national economies, the transmission of cultural and social norms and values, and the governance and political processes of and among nation-states. To be sure, the spread of globalization is imbued with power and, most often, the wealthiest and most dominant nations exert the greatest influence. As the feminist scholar Virginia Vargas observes, “Globalization—highly unequal in reach and impact—divides at the same time as it integrates. As such, it is a threat, but it is also a possibility and a promise” (906).

Our contributors wield the rhetorical affordances and challenge the consequences of globalization, particularly as they are experienced by women and marginalized people. For instance, as globalization heightens the disparity between rich and poor, human migration increases: those from impoverished countries seek work in wealthy industrialized nations. And with increased migration comes increased risk of human trafficking, as Ai-jen Poo illustrates in “Lola Wasn’t Alone.” Here she narrates the devastating, and all too common, stories of women trafficked into domestic slavery in the United States. The environmental organizer Thanu Yakupitiyage furthers this conversation by showing the intersection of globalization, climate change, and migration, pointing to the hypocrisy of the Trump administration’s expansion of the fossil fuel industry—which causes climate disaster that leads to migration—alongside a crackdown on US immigration policy.

The growth of transnational feminism represents another development in twenty-first-century rhetorics, offering powerful critiques of the gendered consequences of globalization. Rooted in postcolonialist and antiracist feminist theory, transnational feminism illuminates how women’s lives are shaped by national boundaries and histories of colonialism. The renowned feminist scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty places decolonization, anticapitalist critique, and solidarity at the center of transnational feminist work, with the goal of working toward “justice, participation, redistribution of wealth and resources, commitment to individual and collective human rights and to public welfare and services, and accountability to and responsibility for the collective” (9). This vision is evident in the environmental activist Vandana Shiva’s call for “Earth Democracy,” which rejects capitalist ownership culture to promote a just sharing of the earth’s resources.

Transnational feminists also critique the tendency of Western feminism to assume their values, methods of advocacy, and goals can be neatly applied to women in other countries. Instead, as contributor Patricia Valoy argues, “[Transnational feminists] see liberation as something that must come from within our own communities and nations—not something that is bestowed on us by people in power.” From Shirin Ebadi’s story of Iranian feminists’ courageous activism in the face of a repressive political regime to Jeanette Urquilla’s work to end the criminalization of abortion in El Salvador, we witness examples of context-sensitive feminist activism around the globe. In this collection, you’ll see women’s rhetorical acts spurred by these complex and momentous exigencies.

Bridging Theory and Practice in Twenty-First-Century Women’s Rhetorics

As we shared early drafts of this anthology with students, one of Shari’s undergraduates, KaDeja Songoyele, emphasized that a collection of women’s rhetorics should bridge the gap between women in and outside of the university as well as between theory and practice. Her suggestion is an apt description of the lineage of women’s rhetorics, which refuses a neat divide between theories about rhetoric and rhetorical acts themselves. As Ritchie and Ronald observe, “Women have purposefully sought to keep the context, the immediacy of experience, attached to theorizing rather than creating an abstract set of prescriptions disconnected from the context or stripped of the exigencies of everyday life” (xxvii). In short, they emphasize that we “read women’s rhetorics as theory” (xxvii). The twenty-first-century texts gathered here follow in this tradition. They are often borne of deep urgency to respond to a problem of lived experience, whether in the community, a profession, or one’s body. In the persuasive acts that follow, through various forms and approaches, they both provide new rhetorical theories and expand and resist existing ones. Such forms also reflect the flexibility of genre that can—and as Songoyele urges, *should*—reach multiple audiences. As a result, here you’ll see pieces that look and sound less like traditional, academic genres of rhetorical theory and more like story, narrative, and testimony. According to Katherine Mack and Jonathan Alexander, this blend of personal and political in writing, which hearkens to the popular form of memoir, “Participates in distinctive and rhetorically powerful ways in twenty-first century culture,” no doubt a responsiveness to more intimacy revealed on social media and the reach for broader audiences (67).

The texts in this anthology also work in close connection with the growing body of feminist rhetorical theory that has emerged alongside the recovery and reclamation of women’s rhetorics. While we can’t—and wouldn’t want to—restrict categories of women’s rhetorical acts, feminist rhetoricians trace key theoret-

ical threads and sets of tactics that are often woven through, and result from, women's speaking, writing, and making. Cheryl Glenn, for instance, locates in women's rhetorics what she calls *rhetorical feminism*: "A tactic (actually a set of tactics)—a theoretical stance—that is responsive to the ideology that is feminism and to the key strategy that is feminist rhetoric" ("Introduction" 4). Many contributors' pieces reflect and extend Glenn's rhetorical feminism, whose key features include:

- (1) Disidentification with mainstream (hegemonic) rhetoric; (2) goals that are dialogic and *transactional* rather than monologic and *reactional*; (3) attention to marginalized audiences who may or may not have the power to address or resolve the problem at hand; (4) use of vernacular and experiences shared with marginalized audiences; (5) redesign of rhetorical appeals, to include *logos* based on dialogue and understanding, *ethos* rooted in experience, and *pathos* aligned with emotion; (6) use of and respect for alternative delivery systems, especially those long considered passive or feminine, such as emotion, silence, and listening; and perhaps most important; (7) a deep commitment to possibility and hope. ("A Feminist Tactic" 3–4)

You'll see features of rhetorical feminism as delineated by Glenn throughout this anthology, as contributors to *Persuasive Acts* use their voices to make connections with others, to foster understanding across differences, and to highlight the stories of women who have been forgotten or hidden. Employing conversational speech and stories, Jessica Valenti addresses young women with frankness about sex positivity not often heard in sex education, and Angy Rivera candidly shares her experiences of being undocumented. Through delivery systems such as photography and drawings, rhetors convey emotion with little to no text, as in Jessamyn Stanley's *Every Body Yoga* image or Hana Shafi's drawing of a woman on a scale. They show that pain, anger, joy, shame, and frustration are part of rhetorical acts, and in so doing they disrupt the ancient divide between reason and emotion, where *pathos* is a device employed to evoke to the audience's emotion, but the rhetor is expected to be "rational." Emma Gonzalez, after surviving a school shooting in Parkland, Florida, delivered a pivotal, powerful speech that marked the beginning of the #NeverAgain movement. In her piece, she tells the story behind that moment, an exemplar of rhetorical feminism, conveyed through tears, rife with righteous anger and stubborn hope, and grounded in evidence designed to change a national dialogue.

Indeed, one of the most powerful rhetorical vehicles employed by rhetors in this collection is testimony. The feminist scholar Leigh Gilmore forwards the concept of *testimonial agency*, which involves the movement, or the circulation, of a testimony in search of a listener, an adequate witness (66). While women's testimonies have historically been disbelieved or disregarded, Gilmore argues for their potential to "force repressed histories and contexts into view" and, therefore, to

carve a path toward justice (158). We see adept engagement of testimony in individual rhetorical acts, like in Emily Doe's (Chanel Miller's) victim impact statement, delivered at the sentencing of the man who raped her. While her rapist, whom the media repeatedly described as a "Stanford swimmer," was required to serve a mere six months in jail, Doe's powerful testimony circulated to millions of readers, finding a supportive audience who provided a "feminist form of witness" to her story (165). We also see the commanding effect of testimonial collectives, as in #BlackLivesMatter, which teaches us "how to bear witness to histories of the present, and how to look at images of death, grief, and protest as a form of ethical engagement" (163). In the twenty-first century, testimonial networks increasingly develop online and across social media, circulating to diverse audiences and creating space for connection and affirmation—spaces where women are heard and believed.

Rhetors across the collection also participate in the making of feminist counterpublics; that is, they create spheres that welcome arguments, testimonies, and conversations that are devalued or disallowed in the larger public sphere. Nancy Fraser popularized the term *counterpublic* in 1990, arguing that the public sphere has never been a truly democratic forum in which all can freely participate. Nevertheless, women and other marginalized subjects have long created their own spheres for dialogue and action, through acts like consciousness-raising groups, civil rights sit-ins, and SlutWalks. This collection features examples of contemporary counterpublics, now increasingly occurring in digital spaces, which afford rhetors greater reach and circulation potential. Feminist counterpublics—like #MeToo, #YesAllWomen, body-positive Instagram feeds, and Black Lives Matter—serve as spaces for education, empowerment, and an exchange of ideas and stories that allow both withdrawal from and reentry into the wider public sphere, providing a space apart in order to eventually make change in the collective public (Fraser).

As we think about how movements form and messages spread online, new articulations of rhetorical circulation aid our examination of how and where rhetoric moves, which messages become viral and which dissipate without much attention, and what is the relationship between digital circulation and material change. As many of the digital pieces in this collection show, online rhetoric, especially, circulates in ways that are unanticipated and unplanned by the rhetor, taking on a life of its own (Gries 8). Sasha Weiss's essay on #YesAllWomen is one such example, where the hashtag circulated to spur demonstrations and gatherings, appeared on clothing, bumper stickers, and iPhone cases, was co-opted by some who opposed the movement, and was critiqued and revised into hashtags like #YesAllWhiteWomen, which highlighted the disproportionate impact of violence and discrimination on women of color (Edwards and Lang). As Dustin Edwards and Heather Lang observe of #YesAllWomen's circulation, its "broader makeup—from the

material infrastructure of the Internet, to the politics of social media platforms, to human actors divergently using the tag—is messy, entangled, and always becoming” (131). We hope readers will trace how the rhetorics in this collection have circulated in ways that shape gendered narratives and social action.

Even as this collection forwards the import and relevance of feminist frameworks, and as Ritchie and Ronald note in *Available Means*, the trajectory of women’s rhetorics may seem to “conflate women’s rhetoric with feminism,” it is critical to note that feminism and women’s rhetorics are not synonymous or monolithic (xxiii). It is true that the struggle for rights has been and remains a primary and urgent exigence for women’s rhetorical acts, but we are mindful that feminists do not solely represent women’s rhetorics, even as they garner greatest representation here. As is the case with selections in *Available Means*, “It is difficult to separate the history of women’s rhetorics from the history of the struggle for women’s rights because the desire/demand for rights often becomes the impetus for writing” (xxii).

And yet, you will find in the pages ahead that arguments for women’s rights, the rights of the marginalized, and social change emerge from rhetors who occupy multiple, and sometimes seemingly contradictory, social locations. Katharine Hayhoe, a climate scientist and evangelical Christian, insists not only that she can claim both locations, but that they do not negate one another. Kimberly Shappley relays the struggles she faced in reconciling the values she internalized as a conservative, evangelical Christian and as the mother of a transgender child. And rhetors in this collection often make the case that feminism is strengthened by flexibility that allows for contradictions, as in Erica Thurman’s call for “a black womanhood that makes room for scholarly publications, a code-switching blog and twerking. Sometimes all at the same damn time.” Across the pieces in *Persuasive Acts*, women remake and redefine their own identities, providing new tactics for and theories of rhetorical agency.

Gathering Twenty-First-Century Women’s Rhetorics: Rhetorical Sway

Not surprisingly, making choices for inclusion was by far the most vexing element of amassing this anthology, given the abundance of riches of women’s persuasive acts since the turn of the century. While we knew we couldn’t be exhaustive in terms of coverage, we selected criteria for inclusion that worked from the exigencies we describe earlier: the proliferation of means of persuasion due to online platforms and the emergence of political and cultural shifts. In particular, we selected texts with these criteria in mind: (1) anticipation of endurance or rhetorical impact; (2) the blend, unique to these times, of voices that are well-known with those that are lesser-known or even “unknown”; (3) representation of rhetors from mul-

multiple social locations employing varied moves and forms; and (4) opportunities for pieces to speak with and against each other within and across sections of the book. As we worked through texts, we found ourselves increasingly adopting what we came to call *rhetorical sway*: rhetorical impact demonstrated through creating or connecting to cultural flashpoints that forward or respond to gendered issues. For us, rhetorical sway is determined in part by traditional rhetorical theories and features, but it is more profoundly influenced by women's rhetorical theories that value inclusion and representation and that encompass expansive forms of argument, evidence, and ethos.

We began by considering what constitutes rhetorical endurance or lasting impact—it quickly became clear that anthologizing a contemporary, rather than historical, collection does not allow us to measure a text's endurance using traditional measures, like historical weight or canonization. Instead, we saw this as an opportunity to resist traditional gauges of value determination, which in the past have served to delegitimize or overlook other voices—we did not want to narrow the rich rhetorical landscape before us. At the same time, we sought to acknowledge voices and pieces that *did* take hold in these times because of what they might signal rhetorically about a cultural or political moment. Ultimately, we assessed a piece's rhetorical impact and potential for endurance through both older and newer criteria. In the case of the former, we considered history-making events or rhetorics with profound cultural or political visibility, such as the acceptance speech of the first female major party presidential nominee or a notable dissent from a Supreme Court justice. We also located rhetorical sway through newer measures like going viral, trending, or reaching audiences through new media platforms. For us, this signaled not just fleeting popularity but a cultural contribution that held public attention during these fragmented, divisive times—often in ways that created dialogue or furthered a stalled conversation. We see this in, for instance, in Gabrielle Blair's tweet thread on abortion rights, which was retweeted sixty-five thousand times in two days. She seized a *kairotic* opportunity, posting the thread during the controversial confirmation process of the Supreme Court nominee (now justice) Brett Kavanaugh, and sparked an important conversation about abortion rights at a time when the Supreme Court could overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

We see potential in texts that are temporarily all-consuming to create further, long-term reverberations that forward new ways to understand rhetorical significance. For instance, as Feminista Jones observes, black women are at the forefront of deftly employed online platforms to shape cultural conversations; she notes that “among two dozen hashtags referred to in a 2016 article as influential in shaping the discussion around feminism, ten were created by Black women” (41). The Black Lives Matter movement began with a hashtag that was used about twelve million times from 2013 to 2016 to create an international movement (Anderson and Hit-

lin). Similarly, the high school students who inundated social media after the Parkland shooting not only captured national attention but leveraged the connectivity it fostered to build a more sustained movement, March for Our Lives, the largest youth protests in the United States since the Vietnam War (Lyons).

We also see evidence of rhetorical sway in rhetorics that intervene in a collective emotion or cultural narrative—like #YesAllWomen’s disruption of the shame women often experience when they are harassed or assaulted—or that invite connection, which is important on its own but might also lead to further coalition building or activism. And in the best case, going viral or trending spurs further reverberations and possibilities for shifting understanding of an issue.

Even within women’s rhetorics, however, rhetorical sway has often been associated with well-established (meaning well-accomplished but also socially and financially secure; read: usually white) women. For us, a rhetor with sway is sometimes well-known, but just as often is one we have deemed powerful because she represents a perspective and position not often heard. In this way, we challenge traditional, Aristotelian concepts of ethos that focus on men speaking in public venues—Kathleen J. Ryan, Nancy Myers, and Rebecca Jones explain that this classical definition was “used, primarily, in a homogenous community among male orators in positions of power” (5). Deemed unfit for public participation, women had to invent ways to establish credibility, working both within and against the criteria for good character, goodwill, and intellect valued by dominant publics (7). In this collection, women’s rhetorical acts continue to extend the concept of ethos to better account for difference and collectivity. Deliberately, then, we put well-known voices alongside those who may not be familiar to further disrupt the connection between ethos, power, and privilege. To us, these disruptions constitute rhetorical sway.

Whereas traditional rhetoric tends to focus on canonical individual contributions, we also locate rhetorical sway in the powerful acts of women’s collectives, which we can trace to the suffragists who composed the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments or the 1970s Combahee River Collective, a black feminist lesbian organization. As Feminista Jones argues of the latter, “What made their work incredibly important is the consideration they took to be more inclusive of intersectional identities and the experiences of Black women throughout the African diaspora” (9). The sensibility of working together continues to sustain black women in online spaces, where Jones says, “We truly feel that we are all we have” (9). In this anthology, you’ll see women enacting collaboration as rhetorical sway to support themselves and each other, even among differences. The 2017 Women’s March *Guiding Vision and Definition of Principles* is one example, in which (not without controversy) organizers created a document meant to inspire inclusion and acknowledge difference while building a coalition. Paola Bacchetta, Tina Campt,

Inderpal Grewal, Caren Kaplan, Mino Moallem and Jennifer Terry co-authored “Transnational Feminist Practices against War” just after 9/11 to disavow the US military responses to terror. Other voices emerge from a collective via hashtags or as a part of the National Domestic Workers Alliance to promote and sustain action by and for women. These pieces reinforce that women’s actions, shaped by cooperation and collaboration, often result in more powerful effects than could be accomplished by a lone rhetor as *the* source of knowledge.

Along with contributions from new and established voices whose acts demonstrate rhetorical sway, we sought voices that represent authors’ intersectional experiences and identities. The primary moves within and across these women’s persuasive acts create opportunities to better understand that rhetoric by white women has been the most visible but not the most viable. The impassioned rhetorics written from intersectional experience show that positionalities aren’t simply identities to list but converge materially, emotionally, and structurally in everyday lived realities.

From these many locations, rhetors in this collection achieve sway through a plethora of rhetorical strategies and moves. One is the appeal of humor, traditionally deemed men’s domain. Writers and makers in our collection such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the creators of mansplaining tweets, and Lindy West prove otherwise, showing that a little irreverence in the face of patriarchal systems can sustain us with wit while offering a biting cultural critique. Rhetors also engage in language play and subversion, challenging notions of decorum or “proper speech” commonly associated with rhetoric. For instance, Robin M. Boylorn demonstrates the rhythmic mix of vernaculars and sounds in her piece that originally appeared on the Crunk Feminist Collective website. As the Crunk Feminist mission statement describes, “Our relationship to feminism and our world is bound up with a proclivity for the percussive, as we divorce ourselves from ‘correct’ or hegemonic ways of being in favor of following the rhythm of our own heartbeats. In other words, what others may call audacious and crazy, we call CRUNK.” Boylorn’s piece is alive with sounds of hip-hop, code-switching, story, and razor-sharp critique.

Forms such as a feminist cross-stitch pattern that circulates on BuzzFeed and other sites, a tweet thread with thousands of retweets, a comic, a podcast, or a YouTube video invite women rhetors to broaden the scope and reach of their appeals. These forms allow art and sound to reach a range of audiences online, in order to persuade and cajole or to share and identify, as they encourage collective endorsement and response. Texts that demonstrate rhetorical sway, then, work within and against traditional rhetorical means to invent rhetorics that engage wide audiences, change conversations, and create openings for new rhetors to enter.

Constructing Women's Rhetorical Acts: A Word about Structure and Constraints

This collection is divided into sections centered on key themes that represent women's rich rhetorical contributions to critical contemporary issues and arenas: Civic Engagement, Feminisms, Protest and Resistance, Education, Work and Labor, and Identities and the Body. Each section merges traditional and new themes, forms, and genres and encompasses perspectives located as close as the body and as broad as national and global politics. Some of these rhetorical arenas have long excluded women, like traditional sites of civic engagement (the courtroom, the political sphere, and places of worship), and some represent areas in which women have long engaged but now do so in new ways or from a wider range of perspectives. Whether these rhetors are breaking new ground with their sheer presence or expanding boundaries in existing conversations, each of these arenas is changed by their work.

While the anthology focuses primarily on US texts, each section includes pieces by transnational writers—and often, as Valoy reminds us, the personal is the transnational (for global anthologies, see *Decolonizing Feminism: Transnational Feminism and Globalization*, edited by Margaret A. McLaren, or *Women across Cultures: A Global Perspective*, edited by Shawn Meghan Burn). As we organized the collection, it was important to us not to group more recently emerging voices (like transnational or transgender rhetors) in their own categories—which risks cordoning them off—and instead to show how topics like feminism or education are changed when we attend closely to new perspectives. While we aimed for broad coverage of the first two decades of this century, the proliferation of media and assault on women's issues following the 2016 presidential election led to more entries from the 2010s.

Even as we have divided texts into themes, we intend for pieces to dialogue within and across them. In section 2, "Rhetorics of Feminisms," for example, Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In*, which was on the *New York Times* best-seller list for over a year and had sold over four million copies by 2018, was also criticized for its blinders in terms of class and race. Two contributors in that same section, Barbara Sostaita and Amy Alexander, each take to task Sandberg's "third-wave corporat-ism," (Alexander) disputing, expanding, and nuancing Sandberg's uses of feminism. We see dialogue across sections as well, as with Lindy West's piece on online harassment in section 1, "Rhetorics of Civic Engagement," and Suzanne Samin's discussion of the exclusion of female gamers in section 3, "Rhetorics of Protest and Resistance."

In finalizing our selections, we faced an overabundance, not only from the sources we searched and found but also from the generosity of colleagues, some we

sought out and others who offered suggestions as we shared drafts at conferences, and undergraduate and graduate students, who led us to a wealth of voices, sites, and activities. So while the most challenging part of compiling this anthology was making difficult choices about selections, we were heartened both by the surplus of rhetorics and the sharing of voices.

But of course some constraints exist. At the most basic level, for every selection there are at least a dozen that we reluctantly didn't include due to the space limits for publication (which connects to the affordability of the book for students), challenges with permissions in terms of cost, and authors who declined inclusion or did not respond to our queries. We had to come to terms with the fact that, just as in choosing texts for syllabi, our choices must be representational rather than exhaustive. We were also limited to a print book, which means that we aren't able to capture the vividness of new media in its original form. Finally, the limits of our own positionalities—as two cisgender, Generation X, white tenured professors raised on the Plains—required us to do careful rhetorical listening (Ratcliffe) in order to better understand which voices are most audible to us, which voices we have not heard (and why), and how we can listen more closely across difference. In so doing, we read widely and deeply, and we benefited greatly from the recommendations of generous peers and students across disciplines, institutions, and social locations, whose suggestions we actively sought across our three years of work on this project.

Our hope is that as you engage the anthology, in or out of the classrooms, you'll bring—and compose—your own rhetorics that speak to, with, and against the pieces included in ways that further circulation, rebuttals, and continued conversation. We invite you to consider how definitions of womanhood and feminism take shape across the pieces, how they complicate and enrich one another, as well as how you would define and distinguish women's versus feminist rhetoric. Above all, we hope you will do your own theoretical work with these texts, noting recurrences and intersections across contributions and sections. How do these rhetorical acts allow us to discover new ways of enacting and understanding rhetorical work? What do they teach us about the power of writing, speaking, and making that we haven't before addressed, or valued, or sanctioned? How do they change how we might learn to practice rhetoric, or teach rhetoric to others?

A Coda: On Resilience and Hope

In the throes of compiling this anthology, we hoped it would feature an inaugural speech by the first US female president. We would be able to declare that a woman had finally broken the highest glass ceiling. Instead, with Hillary Clinton's loss in the 2016 presidential election, we faced a very different cultural and rhetorical cli-

mate—one in which women had to come to terms with the election of a man who boasted about his ability to grab women and whose proposed policies demeaned Muslims, immigrants, and people of color. It was yet another silencing.

And yet, even in the face of disappointment, fury, and grief, women began to act, to organize, to speak, to write, and to make. We found ourselves exchanging daily texts and emails with new discoveries of women's rhetorical force and resilience, imagining them as part of this anthology. Even more, our colleagues, students, and friends supplied us with a steady stream of women's rhetorics they wanted to share. Women, it became clear, would not be silenced.

In the process of creating this anthology, we were sustained by the voices that appear in the following pages, as well as the many we were not able to include, and the legacy of the voices from history that led the charge. We were buoyed by our undergraduate and graduate students teaching us about a new voice, collective, or venue. We were motivated by rhetorical moves of connection essential to rhetorical feminisms as seen by Adrienne Keene, who chooses the intimate form of a letter to remind Native college students that despite the pressures endured by colonialism and isolation, they are loved and they matter.

All around us, and reflected in this collection, we see examples of “feminist rhetorical resilience,” a concept formulated by Elizabeth Flynn, Patricia Sotirin, and Ann Brady. Resilience is a response to adversity, and contributors write from experiences of trauma, natural disaster, war, disability, poverty, and other forms of pain. Their pieces make clear that the very requirement of resilience is disproportionately experienced by women of color, poor women, women with disabilities, and queer and trans women. Feminist resilience, though, is not the “pull yourself up by the bootstraps” variety, nor does it overlook the social conditions that make resilience more necessary for some than for others. Instead, it relies on support through relationships and involves “ongoing responsiveness” to challenging conditions (7). It is a transformative process, and while it may not change “bleak or oppressive” conditions, it “changes the way a life is lived” (7). Resilient living—and, we would add, rhetorical making—involves “determination, perseverance, hope and imagination” (7).

We see resilience beautifully displayed in Shirin Ebadi's essay, “The Women Who Dared to Rise Up,” describing her work with a group of Iranian women's rights activists to regroup after an attempt to protest was halted by police brutality. As Ebadi writes, “It was the fateful crackdown . . . that actually gave the women their new direction. As I have experienced so often myself, being crushed simply gives you greater exercise in collecting the shards of yourself, putting them back together, and figuring out what to do next.” Lezley McSpadden—the mother of Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager killed by police officers in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014—also powerfully articulates resilience through relationship

building among mothers of victims, even as she expresses dismay and helplessness at the seemingly endless loss of black lives. In these examples, resilience involves both coping with and confronting oppressive cultural systems; it serves to build connections among women and offer strength through word and deed.

As we reluctantly had to stop amassing texts as we moved to publication—already exceeding our word count more than we care to confess—we were heartened by the 2018 midterm elections, which showed record gains for women in the House of Representatives—102 women, the most in US history—as well as the first two Muslim American representatives, the first two Native American congresswomen, and the youngest woman ever elected to Congress, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (Lu and Collins).

We see these acts of feminist resilience as intimately related to hope. Of course, as Glenn explains: “I may be hopeful, but I am not naïve. I believe that critical thinking without hope is cynicism, but hope without critical thinking is naïveté. I am a rhetorical feminist” (“A Feminist Tactic”). Contributors Michelle Obama, Jennifer Bailey, Nadia Bolz-Weber, Adrienne Keene, Thanu Yakupitiyage, Julia Serano, and Johanna Hedva each engage and richly inflect the concept of hope, even as they tackle painful issues and experiences. “Hope,” clarifies Bailey, “is not the same as optimism.” For her, hope is borne from bearing witness to pain and suffering and from collectivizing to change a broken world. Indeed, there is much work to be done, as women know all too well from the realities of their lives. But we need not go about this work alone. The women’s rhetorical acts assembled here build upon the legacy of women who came before, and they offer community, strategies, and tactics for the women who live now. We hope that as you engage these voices, you feel a sense of community and support that buoys you to create your own rhetorics, to continue to listen to unheard voices, and to make space for future women rhetors.

WORKS CITED

- Anderson, Monica, and Paul Hitlin. “Social Media Conversations About Race.” Pew Research Center: Internet and Technology, 15 Aug. 2016.
- Bradley, Kate. “The Effects of Globalization in the Twenty-First Century.” *Classrooms*, n.d., classroom.synonym.com/effects-globalization-21st-century-13074.html.
- Burn, Shawn Meghan, editor. *Women across Cultures: A Global Perspective*. McGraw-Hill Education, 2019.
- Edwards, Dustin, and Heather Lang. “Entanglements That Matter: A New Materialist Trace of #YesAllWomen.” *Circulation, Writing, and Rhetoric*, edited by Laurie E. Gries and Collin Gifford Brooke, Utah State UP, 2018, pp. 118–34.
- Flynn, Elizabeth, Patricia Sotirin, and Ann Brady, editors. *Feminist Rhetorical Resilience*. Utah State UP, 2012.

- Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *Social Text*, no. 25/26, 1990, pp. 56–80.
- Gilmore, Leigh. *Tainted Witness: Why We Doubt What Women Say About Their Lives*. Columbia UP, 2018.
- Glenn, Cheryl. "A Feminist Tactic of Hope." Conference on College Composition and Communication. Kansas City, MO, March 2018.
- Glenn, Cheryl. Introduction. *Rhetorical Feminism and This Thing Called Hope*. Southern Illinois UP, 2018, pp. 1–4.
- Gries, Laurie. Introduction. *Circulation, Writing, and Rhetoric*, edited by Laurie E. Gries and Collin Gifford Brooke, Utah State UP, 2018, pp. 3–26.
- Hogg, Charlotte. "What's (Not) in a Name: Considerations and Consequences of a Field's Nomenclature." *Peitho: Journal of the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2017, pp. 181–209.
- Jones, Feminista. *Reclaiming Our Space: How Black Feminists Are Changing the World from the Tweets to the Streets*. Beacon Press, 2019.
- Lu, Denise, and Keith Collins. "'Year of the Woman' Indeed: Record Gains in the House." *The New York Times*, 16 Nov. 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/11/09/us/women-elect-ed-midterm-elections.html>.
- Lyons, Joseph D. "How Many People Attended March for Our Lives? It's Officially the Biggest in the Last 40 Years." *Bustle*, 4 Apr. 2018, <https://www.bustle.com/p/how-many-people-attended-march-for-our-lives-its-officially-the-biggest-in-the-last-40-years-8605361>.
- Mack, Katherine, and Jonathan Alexander. "The Ethics of Memoir: Ethos in Uptake." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 49, no. 1, Jan. 2019, pp. 49–70.
- McLaren, Margaret A., editor. *Decolonizing Feminism: Transnational Feminism and Globalization*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.
- "Mission Statement." *Crunk Feminist Collective*, 8 Aug. 2016, www.crunkfeministcollective.com/about/.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Point Par Point, 2007.
- Ratcliffe, Krista. "Rhetorical Listening: A Trope for Interpretive Invention and a 'Code of Cross-Cultural Conduct.'" *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 51, no. 2, Dec. 1999, pp. 195–224.
- Ritchie, Joy S., and Kate Ronald. "A Gathering of Rhetorics." *Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetoric(s)*, U of Pittsburgh P, 2001, pp. xv–xxxii.
- Sheinin, Dave, Krissah Thompson, and Soraya Nadia McDonald. "Betty Friedan to Beyoncé: Today's Generation Embraces Feminism on Its Own Terms." *The Washington Post*, 27 Jan. 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/feminism/betty-friedan-to-beyonce-todays-generation-embraces-feminism-on-its-own-terms/2016/01/27/ab480e74-8e19-11e5-ae1f-af46b7df8483_story.html?noredirect=on.
- Vargas, Virginia. "Feminism, Globalization and the Global Justice and Solidarity Movement." *Cultural Studies*, vol. 17, no. 6, Nov. 2003, pp. 905–20.