

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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This thesis examines selected writings from the woman's movement 1840-present.

Selected writings from Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Adrienne Rich, and bell hooks provide examples of how women across time periods have been viewed as the other, and how the rhetorical strategies of moral conflict, consciousness raising, and the personal as political have been used to subvert the dominant discourse of woman as other.

AFTER HER SILENCE: A RHETORICAL LOOK AT WRITERS FROM THE
WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

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Introduction

The ability to persuade others well has set the “standard of excellence” for men over the centuries (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak” 1). Notable in the history of rhetoric is a curious silence of the voice of women within the rhetorical canon. This thesis examines the absence of women within the rhetorical canon, and the rhetorical strategies women have used to give themselves a voice.

Writings and speeches by women have not had the same presence in the history of rhetoric as those of men. Since most women were not allowed to speak in public, their silence was reinforced by men. The very act of speaking in public was a violation of the domestic sphere women were supposed to inhabit. While the male centeredness of public address is now more easily recognized, efforts to include women in the history of public speaking still meet with some resistance (Ramsey 352). The rhetoric of women was often not preserved, and much of it is lost forever. Other writings can be found only in manuscript collections or rare, out-of-print-publications. The documents that do manage to survive and gain publication are not given the same consideration by scholars as those of men. Often only fragments of them are used for analysis in studies or in classrooms (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak” 1).

In recent years scholars of rhetoric have become curious about the existence of women in rhetoric and have begun to put together collections of writings, speeches, and essays unearthed through extensive searching. Women’s public addresses have become an area of significant rhetorical study in the last couple of decades. Much research has been done on “individual rhetors, on key rhetorical strategies of the first wave of feminism, on specific exigencies faced by the first wave, and on the woman suffrage

press” (Ramsey 354). The studies focusing on women’s public address are important because these speeches have an impact on rhetorical studies as a whole, and because they recognize the demands, creativity and successes of the writings of women (Ramsey 354). The time has come for women to find a place in the rhetorical canon. It is the goal of this thesis to show that women have used rhetoric as a platform for the issues that affect them. “Man cannot speak for her, because he has been educated to believe that she differs from him so materially, that he cannot judge of her thoughts, feelings, and opinions by his own,” said Elizabeth Cady Stanton at her first public address during the Seneca Falls convention in 1848 (Stanton 42). The needs of women, according to Stanton, are different from the needs of men and because of this, men’s rhetoric will not speak for a woman.

Researchers first began to study social movements by focusing on the individual within the movement. In the 1960s this approach became problematic when liberatory movements began to emerge. The analysis shifted from people to organizations. Yet another scholarly approach, the “resource mobilization paradigm” focused on understanding how organizations recruit, mobilize, and utilize resources in order to challenge societal norms. This new approach also started to look at the impact of the tactics different movements used, and scholars began to look at how movements functioned once they came into existence rather than how they had developed in the first place (Stevens 9).

Robert Cathcart defined social movements as “primarily symbolic or rhetorical acts” that are distinguished by certain reciprocal rhetorical acts that are set off by the movement and the “established system” on the other side (Stevens 12). Rhetorical by

nature, social movements use symbols to persuasive ends and they seek change not through violence, but rather through appeal and argument. Today symbols, persuasion, contingency, public life, argument, and appeal are all concepts of rhetoric (Morris 1). The ability to persuade another is the power of a piece of discourse. Many rhetorical works fail to persuade for reasons that have nothing to do with the style or content of the work. When it comes to social movements that advocate for changes that are controversial, failure is expected and is common. Campbell gives the example of a woman who urges legal changes that will give a wife the right to her own earnings. In a speech to men who are opposed to women speaking in the first place, she will not succeed even if her speech is powerful and worthy of consideration (Campbell, "Man Cannot Speak" 2).

The 19th century women's movement arose from efforts by women to end slavery and alcohol abuse, and to improve the plight of prostitutes. Often women were excluded from organizations for reform led by men, because the women were involved with problems outside of the domestic sphere they were supposed to inhabit. It was out of this exclusion that the women's rights movement was formed. Women reformers learned that before they could work for the rights of others, they first had to work for their own (Campbell, "Man Cannot Speak" 4).

These women formed female anti-slavery societies, but then began to fight for their own rights in order to become more effective in the struggle for the abolishment of slavery. The beginning of the women's rights movement is dated from 1840 when five female delegates were refused seating at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. The anger they felt after being excluded from this convention caused them to form their

own women's rights organization, which eventually led to the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 (Campbell, "Man Cannot Speak" 4).

At the Seneca Falls Convention, Elizabeth Cady Stanton made her first speech. In addition, the Declaration of Sentiments, the movement's manifesto largely drafted by Stanton, was signed and ratified. Thereafter, conventions at the local, regional, and national level were held until the start of the Civil War in 1861 (Campbell, "Man Cannot Speak" 4). Women activists put all their energy into supporting the Union cause; because of their contributions they hoped to be rewarded with suffrage. Instead they were told that women's suffrage was so controversial that it would defeat Afro-American male suffrage. The Fourteenth Amendment in 1868 introduced the word "male" into the U.S. Constitution. The anger and resentment over this caused a split among women's movement organizers into rival organizations in 1869. There was a final effort for suffrage through the courts using the argument that the Fourteenth Amendment had defined citizenship and that citizenship implied suffrage. The Supreme Court rejected the argument in 1875 (Campbell, "Man Cannot Speak" 4-5).

Throughout the late 19th century the temperance movement, like abolitionism, was a major outlet for woman's rights advocates. The effects of alcohol abuse were most apparent in relation to women, because alcoholism among males was a major problem and any woman married to an alcoholic husband was constantly at his mercy. During this time a woman did not have the rights to herself, property, or even her children. If her husband was an abusive alcoholic, trying to leave him was difficult for women who didn't have any legal standing. Even in the early 1900's there were still thirty-seven

states where a woman had no right to her children; all of her possessions and earnings belonged to her husband (Campbell, "Man Cannot Speak" 5).

Temperance was an acceptable area of reform for women, but did not redefine a woman's sphere. This sphere consisted of the home and family, raising children and taking care of domestic matters. Temperance activism to "protect the home" was seen as consistent with women's sphere. Due to the fact that brothels were often attached to saloons, alcohol was seen as an invitation to immorality in addition to a threat both socially and economically to the home. Women's temperance organizations gave a voice to the discontent of females within middle-class family life and marital practices. By becoming active in temperance reform, women could criticize men for their failures within the "marital bargain." This was the way wives subordinated themselves to their husbands as long as their husbands provided for the family (Dubois 264). By struggling against the misuse and abuse that came with alcohol, women affirmed their "piety, purity, and domesticity" (Campbell, "Man Cannot Speak" 6).

In addition to temperance reform, many moral reform societies were also formed by these pious women in order to combat the increase in drinking, prostitution, and other "vices." There were four hundred moral reform societies in the 1840s organized by females in New England and New York. The enthusiasm for moral reform crossed the boundaries of class. The moral reform activism of women of the middle class only deepened their "gender-consciousness" and "helped expand their sense of common womanhood" to include working-class women thereby laying the foundation for what would later become the women's rights movement (Dubois 263-264).

Working for temperance reform had fewer “social costs” for women than working for woman’s rights, a demand for individualism that 19th century Americans found unacceptable. Women’s suffrage eventually became more acceptable to those who had rejected it previously when it was presented as a way for women to protect their homes or domestic life from the evils that came with alcohol (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak” 6).

On August 26, 1920, women in the United States were finally given the right to vote for the first time in the elections yet this achievement would not mean as much as women activists had first hoped. Few women voted, and it was clear that women did not have a distinct voting bloc. After suffrage, the women’s movement began to decline for many reasons. The “Red Scare” of the 1920s caused women’s activities to be attacked for supporting progressive causes. A bitter divide over the Equal Rights Amendment introduced in 1923 only further hastened the end of the movement (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak” 7).

Those early agitators of the women’s movement couldn’t simply start their own movement. Instead they had to begin with wider causes that were more readily accepted in society, such as temperance in order to further their own agenda. Their affiliation with more accepted areas of reform has since caused the rhetoric of the women’s movement to be one of association and indirection. In the 19th century association with more widely accepted audiences drew attention to the new movement of women’s suffrage and also helped beginning leaders like Elizabeth Cady Stanton find a platform on which they were allowed to speak.

The central element in the oppression of women was the denial of women’s rights to speak (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak” 9). When a woman spoke in public, she

displayed her “masculinity.” Since rhetoric was considered to be a masculine activity, the woman speaking was then considered to possess qualities traditionally associated with males. By speaking, a woman was enacting her equality and was able, like her male counterparts, to function in the public sphere, even though such function continued to meet with resistance (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak” 11).

The women’s movement, according to Simone De Beauvoir, “has never been anything more than a symbolic agitation. They have gained only what men have been willing to grant; they have taken nothing, they have only received (De Beauvoir XXV). The reason for this is that women are not able to organize themselves effectively, since they lack a past, a history, and a religion of their own. Instead, women live among men and are attached to them through “residence, housework, economic condition, and social standing” (De Beauvoir XXV). This bond that unites women with her oppressor is unlike any other (De Beauvoir XXV).

One way of understanding women’s place in rhetoric is by examining Simone De Beauvoir’s concept of “the other.” Women’s writing has never been seen as being equal to that of men. “Woman has always been man’s dependent, if not his slave; the two sexes have never shared the world in equality” (De Beauvoir XXVI). The rhetoric of women, just like women themselves, has been subordinated to that of the other. While women are beginning to find a place in the rhetorical canon, writing and speaking are still dominated by men and women writers are not as well known or studied. If woman were to decline her position as “other,” according to De Beauvoir, women would have to give up all the advantages given to them by their alliance with man (De Beauvoir XXVII).

De Beauvoir warns that women cannot start to believe that they are equal when they are like men. Women instead need to retain their feminine qualities (De Beauvoir). Women and other oppressed groups have always known that they must begin to forge a system of shared beliefs into a language that can become a powerful tool for social change. In order to do this, women must first find a way to speak in the context of being silenced and viewed as being invisible in the rhetorical canon (Miller 86).

Adopting a dominant discourse, like writing and public speaking, for subversive means does not come without a set of risks (Miller). The demand by women for equality alters the rhetorical picture drastically. The tensions caused by feminist advocacy in our society unearthed the rhetoric of moral conflict. “The sex-roles” requirements for women contradict the dominant values of American culture,” says Campbell. The values of self-reliance, achievement, and independence seen as dominant in American culture are the very same roles assumed by rhetoricians, who must have the qualities of self-reliance, self-confidence, and independence. The concept of “true womanhood” defined females as “other” which meant that they were suited only for limited gender-based roles. This very assumption is a “violation of the female role” (Campbell 172). Feminist rhetoric is unique. No matter how “traditional the argumentation, how justificatory its form, how discursive its method, or how scholarly its style it attacks the most fundamental values of cultural context in which occurs” (Campbell 172). Women who made speeches, published newspapers, and held conventions entered into the public sphere and lost their claims to purity and piety. It was from this contradiction that the Women’s Rights Movement started. Demands for legal, economic, and social equality made by feminists are all examples of the contradiction between the dominant American values and the sex-

roles that were required for women. Woman's demands threatened the institutions of marriage and the family, child-rearing, and male-female roles. This caused them to be seen as revolutionary and extremely radical. If these demands were to be met it would require major and possibly even revolutionary social change. While these demands would meet the criteria of any Aristotelian critic, they are unique and highly radical because they placed under attack the very fundamental and contradictory values of American culture (Campbell 174).

A distinctive stylistic feature of women's liberation rhetoric is consciousness raising, a mode of interaction or rhetorical transaction that feminist advocates adapted to their rhetorical problem. This problem amounted to women being divided from each other on all levels-age, income, education, ethnic origin, class and geography. Almost all women had to spend their lives under the control of their fathers, husbands, and employers, living the invisible and isolated life of the other. Due to their ingrained negative self-images it is hard for women to see themselves as agents for social change. A campaign to reach this passive type of audience has to be able to get past the isolation that women feel and create "sisterhood." Further it must speak to women in terms of private, personal experience, because women do not have the public experience that is common among men (Campbell 174-175).

Consciousness raising involves meetings of small groups with no leader. At these meetings, each person is encouraged to express her personal feelings and experiences. By not having a leader everyone is able to participate and lead (Campbell 175). Consciousness raising is an attractive communication style for people who are working for social change (Campbell, "Man Cannot Speak" 13). It invites audiences to participate

in the persuasive process, thereby empowering them. The goal is to create awareness through the shared experiences, showing that what were thought to be individual problems are common and shared due to the participants' position as women and other. While the participants try to understand their lives as women there is no message or party line. Everyone is encouraged to disagree and to find what they consider to be their own truths. The features of this type of rhetoric are characteristic of the rhetoric as a whole and include: "affirmation of the effective, of the validity of personal experience, of the necessity for self-exposure and self-criticism, of the value of dialogue, and of the goal of autonomous individual decision making" (Campbell 175).

Using consciousness raising strategy to demand legal, economic, and social equality helps women to see that their experiences are not just unique to the individual, but are the conditions of women in society. Without this understanding, there is no persuasive campaign or rhetoric. Instead there is just limited small group interaction (Campbell 178).

A central concept of the rhetoric of the women's movement is the interrelationship of the personal and the political. Every issue within the movement is both personal and political. The rhetoric of women's liberation includes numerous essays, speeches, and other discourse discussing the personal experiences of women all in different circumstances. These types of rhetoric use personal experience to illustrate public demands while treating threats and fears in concrete and effective terms. The sharing of personal experiences is liberating, feminists believe. Women, no matter their differences in age, education, income, etc., share a "common condition, a radical form of consubstantiality that is the genesis of the peculiar kind of identification they call

sisterhood” (Campbell 179). Rhetorical transactions such as Speak -outs, where women discuss highly personal issues such as rape, abortion, and orgasm further confirm the idea of “sisterhood.” Sisterhood is powerful, feminists argue, because it comes from the recognition of common experience and persuasion. The rhetoric of the women’s movement is disturbing because it is so blatantly personal (Campbell 179).

This thesis examines selected writings from the women’s movement 1840-present. Selected writings from Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Adrienne Rich, and bell hooks provide examples from women across time periods and show us how the rhetorical strategies of moral conflict, consciousness raising, and the personal as political have been used to subvert the dominant discourse of women as other.

The Early Movement

Despite the invisibility of women in public discourse during her lifetime, Elizabeth Cady Stanton managed to defy the assumed female role both in her writings and personally. Stanton, along with Susan B. Anthony and Lucretia Coffin Mott, was one of the major early figures in the fight for women's rights. Stanton understood the importance of reformers creating political organizations. She recognized that women's rights, like abolition, had to become a political movement in order to "give reality to its principles" (Dubois, "Elizabeth Cady Stanton" 13). On this basis she demanded suffrage for women.

Stanton was the moving force behind the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention. This convention initiated the women's suffrage movement. Seneca Falls provided an "ideological key" for all the conventions that followed (Campbell, "Man Cannot Speak" 50). During the process of developing an ideology, a movement begins to acquire coherence as the members decide what they believe is important. This ideology must energize listeners into becoming activists, a process that is complicated in the case of women, because they had been socialized to be passive and submissive (Campbell, "Man Cannot Speak" 50).

At the convention, Stanton, along with Mary Ann McClintock, Lucretia Coffin Mott, and Martha Coffin Wright, authored what would become the movement's manifesto, *The Declaration of Sentiments*. This declaration parodied the *Declaration of Independence*. The Declaration proved highly strategic and rhetorical in that it addressed an audience and it provided justification (Campbell "Men Cannot Speak" 53).

The right of women to speak was of particular emphasis in the Declarations, and the need to persuade men on the right to speak was important to the movement's cause. Although thought to be naturally superior to men in terms of morals, women felt that they were not awarded their superiority. The prime sources of resentment listed in the resolutions were restrictive marriage laws and the practices of most churches. Other barriers that were particularly frustrating to middle-class white women included the denial of higher education, the denial of the opportunity to practice a profession or to run a business, and the denial of the right to own and manage property (Campbell, "Man Cannot Speak" 53). The goal of this first wave of feminism was to take steps towards equality. The movement adopted underlying themes of virtue, rationality, and nurture over nature, thus the writings of the time did not fundamentally challenge the personal and political divide. Although encompassed within the fight for equality were issues of a personal nature to women, the phrase "the personal as political" was not used until the second wave of feminism (Arneil 156).

In addition to issues of equality, the emphasis on rhetorical action was made especially clear in the final resolution, which read, "Especially in regard to the great subjects of morals and religion, it is self-evidently her right to participate with her brother in teaching them, both in private and in public, by writing and speaking. . .in any assemblies proper to be held" (Campbell, "Man Cannot Speak" 57-58). Clearly, the right to speak was of primary importance within the movement. The writers of the Declaration believed that women should be allowed to voice opinions on subjects such as morality and religions. They raised the question if women were viewed as morally superior to men, then would it not seem fair that they be given the right to speak out on moral

subjects just as the men did? The writers also made clear that they should be allowed to write and speak on these subjects in both public and private just like their male counterparts. The women leaders first had to justify their right to speak before they could broaden the scope of their rhetoric to the issues of women's equality.

The Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 was the site of Stanton's first speech. Her speech would be the first effort in what would become a major rhetorical career. Although many other speakers would make great contributions during her lifetime, Stanton would remain the movement's greatest speaker (Campbell, "Man Cannot Speak II" 41).

No woman was supposed to be a public speaker, and Stanton began her speech by explaining that she was willing to violate the traditional female role. Stanton's speech employs the rhetoric of moral conflict, and she made little or no effort to make her violation inoffensive to the audience. Stanton opened her speech saying:

I should feel exceedingly diffident to appear before you at this time having never before spoken in public, were I not nerved by a sense of right and duty, did I not feel the time had come for the question of woman's wrongs to be laid before the public, did I not believe that woman herself must do this work; for woman alone can understand the height, the depth, the length, and the breadth of her own degradation. (Campbell, "Man Cannot Speak II" 42)

Stanton challenged the limited sphere held by women by speaking in public and by demanding social and legal equality. From the start, she presented a highly radical idea that placed under attack the established gender roles of her era and the fundamental

values of American culture. This speech was so broad in scope that it covered much of what would be discussed and debated during the entire prewar period (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak” 63).

Stanton took a rather satirical view of women’s sphere, saying, “But, say you, God has appointed woman’s sphere; it is His will that she is as she is. Well, if that be so then woman will be kept in her sphere by God’s laws. . . .Wherever God has placed woman, there must she ever be” (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak II” 180). Here she pokes fun at the idea that women’s sphere is already decided for them.

This speech refutes the concept of women’s proper sphere by giving examples of the different conditions of woman of all ages all over the world, asking, “Now, which of all these conditions, think you, is in accordance with the will of God?” She lists among the conditions the confinement of women in harems in Turkey, the compression of women’s feet in China, and women standing all day in cotton fields and rice plantations in “Christian America.” She asks “Who can decide which of all these is the woman’s true sphere?” (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak II” 180). It was these comments that provided the most controversial moments within her speech, blatantly attacking the fundamental values of what was considered to be the proper woman’s sphere at the time. Stanton made no attempt in her speech to base her appeals on traditional notions of women’s sphere or nature. Her demand for equality was clear and direct. This was a radical stance to take, because Stanton attacked the very values of an American culture that believed women were relegated to a certain sphere and that this sphere was the “right” sphere (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak” 99). Placing God in her speech was a strategic move, because no one would want to question God. If the conditions of women all over the

world were in accordance with God, why should any human purport to have the answer to what should be the proper sphere for women?

To illustrate what Stanton believed the woman of her day should be, she told a story of a competition in ancient Athens. This story depicted two statues of the goddess Minerva that were designed to grace the temple in her honor. One statue was delicately carved and beautiful. The other, almost Amazonian in its appearance, offended the crowd, and was rejected. Slowly the delicate lines and features of the chosen statue grew fainter and became a shapeless ball. Stanton relates the metaphor of the shapeless ball to women of the nineteenth century saying, “. . . in the lofty position which she was designed fully and nobly to fill. The place is not too high, too large, too sacred for women, but the type you have chosen is far too small for it. The woman we declare unto you is the rude misshapen unpolished object of the successful artist” (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak II” 184). The metaphor of the shapeless ball illustrated Stanton’s claim that if a woman is to be a wife, mother, and educator of a “race of heroes and martyrs” then womanhood must be of a larger scale than what man has carved for her (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak II” 185). This story became an extended metaphor in praise of the “new woman” of the day.

The “new woman” described by Stanton epitomized the rhetoric of moral conflict, assigning to women characteristics that were considered to be those of men such as self-reliance and independence. These same male traits were also traits of rhetoricians an area typically reserved only for men. In her speech Stanton says:

The women who are called masculine, who are brave, courageous, self-reliant and independent, are they who, in the face of adverse winds, have kept one steady course upward and onward in the paths of virtue and

peace – they who have taken their gauge of womanhood from their own native strength and dignity – they who have learned for themselves the will of God concerning them. This is our type of womanhood. (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak II” 186)

According to Stanton, women who exhibited the same traits as men faced criticism and adversity. Stanton herself would face much of the same criticism when she spoke so blatantly in public about the proper sphere of women. Her rhetoric in this speech was controversial, because she associated women with traits considered masculine and still believed that the will of God played a part in endowing women with these characteristics.

Stanton’s last public speech, “The Solitude of Self,” given in 1892 remains one of the most moving statements about feminism of any age. Although written in the late 19th century, it still speaks to a contemporary audience (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak”). The basic message was “the infinite diversity in human character” and the necessity of equal rights for all individuals. Stanton’s approach to women’s liberation, which had placed emphasis on the unique capacities and inclinations of women, had become, over the years, overshadowed by an emphasis on that which is common to all women (Dubois, “Elizabeth Cady Stanton” 189). The idea that the causes of the women’s movement were common to all women played a large part in the personal as political rhetoric. Stanton always discussed within her speeches personal issues that she believed affected all women. By bringing these issues to light, Stanton used the personal as a political platform in order to reach all women.

The “Solitude of Self” speech attempted to insert women’s voices into the American political and philosophical discourse about freedom and individual autonomy.

Being an individual was recast in terms of women's experiences. Stanton believed that as mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters women had common concerns, and as a sex they were equal in importance to men. However, both of these conditions were not as important in determining women's rights according to Stanton, as "the individuality of each human soul" (Dubois, "Elizabeth Cady Stanton" 188).

The idea that each individual was unique was also a rebuttal to the idea of women's inferiority. Individual solitude and responsibility meant the right to an education and other opportunities for personal growth and development. This idea of "self-sovereignty" refuted the idea that men could act for women in any way, whether at the voting boxes or on juries. Stanton's conclusion was a pointed question, "Who I ask you, can take, dare take on himself the rights, the responsibilities of another human soul?" (Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak* 139). The belief that men had no right to act for women was a highly radical idea at a time when women could not speak for themselves and depended on either male family members or husbands to speak represent them. Believing that everyone had the right to education and other opportunities that contributed to their growth was a radical idea for women who were not allowed access to same education that men received. Stanton's speech was an example of the rhetoric of moral conflict, as it contradicted the values held about women and their place in society. Women were not treated as individuals; they were merely extensions of the men in their lives.

"The Solitude of Self" became a work of rhetoric by indirection, as it gave new life to the religious concept of the "priesthood of all believers" and also to the political ideas expressed in natural rights philosophy. The idea that individuals are unique,

responsible, and alone is the basis for the Protestant attack on priestly intercession and the republican idea that rights are not given by governments, but are innate in individuals (Campbell, "Man Cannot Speak 138). Stanton drew upon a Shakespeare play to further her point of the contrast between the condition of every human being and the special nature of women's place. Stanton says:

Shakespeare's play of "Titus Andronicus" contains a terrible satire on woman's position in the 19th century. Rude men (the play tells us) seized the king's daughter, cut out her tongue, cut off her hands, and then bade her to go call for water and wash her hands. What a picture of woman's position! Robbed of her natural rights, handicapped by law and custom at every turn, yet compelled to fight her own battles, and in the emergencies of life to fall back on herself for protection. (Campbell, "Man Cannot Speak" II 376-377)

Modern day critics would say that the speech violated all traditional rhetorical conventions in that it moved toward a more "radical philosophical argument, dramatized the fundamental, existential condition of human solitude in all phases of women's lives and linked this condition to the humanistic values that demand the rights of women as part of their fundamental 'natural rights' as human beings" (Ritchie 171). Stanton's audiences were aware of the arguments for women's suffrage and they did not need to hear them again. Instead, her speech mused about what it meant to be human, and created a sharp contrast between the condition of all humans and the special nature of women's place. In her study of Stanton's speeches Karlyn Kohrs Campbell writes, "The principle that each person is unique, responsible, and alone denied the view of woman as

property. It also implied her right to keep her wages, to own property, to sue and make contracts, and to have custody of her children” (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak” 139). This speech moved women to keep on fighting for suffrage, because believing that all people are responsible helped women to realize that they had a voice, and that they could change the outcome of events in their country if they were given suffrage. Eradicating the view of women as property meant that women could crawl out from under the rule of their fathers, husbands, and brothers and take responsibility for themselves as individuals rather than allowing men to speak for them.

The roots of Stanton’s individualism started in classical, natural rights. However, this individualism looked forward as well to aspects of what would become modern, twentieth century feminism. This new individual Stanton spoke about was not just a person of political philosophy, but also of psychology. While Stanton urged women to continue to fight for their equality in “the outer conditions of human beings,” she also encouraged them to fight for development and independence in inner aspects as well. Her speech stressed the psychological dimension of freedom, and advocated for the individual self-determination of women (Dubois, “Elizabeth Cady Stanton” 188).

The lived experiences of their sex included grievances more deeply felt among most women than lack of equality. Stanton would discover that making a particular case for women’s suffrage by basing arguments on the actual grievances of women’s lives gained more response from the women who attended her speeches than her appeals for suffrage. When Stanton spoke of sexual abuse in or out of marriage she was speaking directly to experiences that enraged women and contributed to their fight for freedom. Writing to her friend Susan B. Anthony, Stanton remarked that, “Women respond to my

divorce speech as they never did to suffrage” (Dubois, Elizabeth Cady Stanton” 100).

Using the personal as a basis for her speech was not uncommon, especially because every issue that the women’s movement faced was personal. Stanton used personal experiences as a platform to make her case for better lives of women in all circumstances. By using the personal as a political platform, the early speakers of the suffrage movement as exemplified by Stanton, developed as feminists (Dubois). This sharing of the personal would eventually lead to the rhetorical strategy of consciousness raising prevalent in the 1960s and 70s.

In Stanton’s time, consciousness raising as it is known today did not exist. Stanton and other early feminists used personal issues relating to women to connect to their audiences, but most of the meetings and conventions that Stanton organized or attended had a set group of speakers who were seen as leaders of the movement. Consciousness raising as it is known today usually does not involve a leader, and Stanton, one of the founding figures of the women’s rights movement, can easily be viewed as such. Many of the speeches Stanton gave had a “message” such as equality, better access to divorce, or voting rights. Messages that were not part of the consciousness raising sessions of later feminist groups. In other speeches Stanton would use a mixture of the personal as political and the rhetoric of moral conflict to challenge marriage and divorce laws and their effect on women’s lives.

Her address to the Legislature of New York exhibited a mixture of adaptation and confrontation. Stanton adapted the structure of her speech which was organized in terms of “woman’s traditional roles – woman as woman (or as person and citizen, the most radical of the categories); then as wife, widow, and mother” (Campbell, “Man Cannot

Speak” 96). Her speech was directed towards legal changes that would help women fulfill their duties as both wives and mothers more fully, and also help widows avoid lives of destitution (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak” 96).

The subjects of marriage and divorce greatly affected women and their ability to fulfill their duties. Stanton was as passionate about this subject as she was about her demand for women’s suffrage. During the post-Civil War era, the legal disabilities of married women were almost as strict as slavery had been for black Americans. Most men, however, especially politicians, were tired of war and were satisfied with the way things stood. Stanton insisted that reform of marriage and divorce laws become a priority. This caused angry opposition among the less radical of the reformers. Stanton based her argument regarding marriage and divorce reforms on legal texts, but she was also aware of the actual conditions of many women in abusive marriages (Stanton 220-24).

Stanton linked the demand for political equality with changes in women’s economic and sexual conditions. She believed that the values of equality, independence, and enlightened self-interest could be extended from the public sphere to domestic relations which were still being shaped by feudal standards. Marriage, she believed, should be just like any other contractual relation which either party had equal freedom to dissolve. Stanton connected the rise of divorce in her day to women’s “growing independence” (Dubois, “Elizabeth Cady Stanton” 96). Other feminists believed that women having “sovereignty” over their sexuality, and that a woman’s wishes taking precedence over their husband’s or that of any other authority would mean the end of marriage and family (Dubois, “Elizabeth Cady Stanton” 97). Stanton also rejected the religious views of marriage as sacred saying that “all God’s arrangements are perfect,

harmonious, and complete” (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak” 75). Her previous argument concerning women’s sphere applies here. If the arrangements that God creates are perfect we should not question them. Marriage should not be the only thing considered sacred because any arrangement that God makes is a perfect one.

Stanton also made comments about marriage that echoed the traditional ideas of true womanhood. One example was the statement, “nothing is sacred in the family and home, but just so far as it is built up and anchored in love” (Campbell, “Man Cannot Speak” 75). In saying this she affirmed that home was the woman’s sphere, but also told men that they should meet the demands for divorce. Stanton argued for changes in the laws of marriage and divorce, but she did not want to make a new institution out of marriage or change the relationship of men and women within it.

During her fight for marriage and divorce reform, Stanton spoke to small private groups of women on sex and marriage. She would hold parlor meetings of women only on the subjects of “marriage” and “maternity” in the afternoons before lecturing on suffrage during the evening (Dubois, “Elizabeth Cady Stanton” 95). These small group meetings could be considered an early form of consciousness raising.

Stanton spoke about issues such as marriage and divorce because they were personal and they affected the lives of all the women who heard her speeches. This worked as a tool to motivate women with regard to gaining the right to vote.

While Stanton believed she was justified in her arguments for equality and rights for women, De Beauvoir would contend that what Stanton argued for in her speech on marriage and divorce laws for women was nothing more than a “symbolic agitation.” Eventually, women were granted revised laws for marriage and divorce, but these were

rights granted by men. The attachment women had to men during Stanton's time through residence, housework, economic conditions, and social standing meant, in De Beauvoir's view, that women did not gain anything through their appeals for equal rights or marriage reform. Instead these rights were granted to them by men (DeBeauvoir).

Nevertheless, many of Stanton's arguments based upon the personal lives of women would later come to alienate large groups of other women such as African Americans, who did not see the oppressions of middle class white women as the same as those of black women. This alienation was, in part, a consequence of Stanton's rhetorical strategy, because Stanton had to find a way to motivate middle class white women into doing something to support the cause. She discovered that domestic issues stirred these women to action, because these issues affected them.

Many would consider Stanton racist in her belief that white women should have the vote before black men. While many feminist rhetoricians celebrate Stanton for challenging the conventional views of women, she is also censored, as she held profoundly racist and elitist ideas about citizenship. In one letter to the editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Stanton wrote:

The representative women of the nation have done their uttermost for the last thirty years to secure freedom for the Negro, and so long as he was the lowest in the scale of being we were willing to press his claims; but now, as the celestial gate to civil rights is slowly moving on its hinges, it becomes a serious question whether we had better stand aside and see "Sambo" walk into the kingdom first. (Poirot 187)

While Stanton championed education in many of her speeches, lack of education was also the main way she distinguished political subjects. For Stanton the ideal citizens were those who were rational by means of having an education, which she felt made them better able to participate both intellectually and morally in all aspects of public life. In an 1848 address, Stanton distinguished educated women from uneducated “barbarians,” (meaning immigrants) and said that times like hers showed “the indignation she and others like her felt at being at a disadvantage to those men whom they saw their intellectual and moral inferiors” (Poirot 195).

Often Stanton used education as a means of hierarchical distinction, saying in an address to the New York legislature:

Women are moral, virtuous, and intelligent, and in all respects quite equal to the proud white man himself, and yet by your laws she is classed with idiots, lunatics and negroes; and though we do not feel honored by the place assigned us, yet, in fact, our legal position is lower than that of either. . .Can it be that. . .you. . .would willingly build up an aristocracy that places the ignorant and vulgar above the educated and refined the alien and the ditch-digger above the authors and the poets of the day an aristocracy that would raise the sons above the mothers that bore them. (Poirot 195)

It was comments like these that showed Stanton’s elitism, as she maintained that rule by any less educated than middle-class white women would be a violation of the “fundamental principles and values of a liberal republic” (Poirot 195). This elitism and argument reverses her rhetorical appeals to all women. In this line of argument Stanton

sounds like the men of her day who maintained women had a proper sphere to be governed by men. Stanton echoes Thomas Jefferson's sentiments of "natural aristocracy" when she says, "It is better to be the slave of an educated white man, than of a degraded ignorant black one" (Poirot 195). The oppressed, which Stanton had always believed to be the middle-class white woman, might now become the oppressor, failing to examine the issues of large groups of women who could not relate to the types of oppression that Stanton and other early movement leaders fought against.

Stanton's rhetoric is remarkable for many reasons. She was the organizer and advocate for feminism's first wave, and she was one of its first theorists. Suzanne M. Marilley says that in the early years, "Cady Stanton was the woman suffrage movement's "most consistent and daring liberal thinker" (Pierot 187). Although women would not be granted the right to vote until after her death, Stanton broke ground in being one of the first women to have a major career as a public speaker. Stanton also showed women that personal issues could be a political platform. While her arguments may seem simplistic now, at the time they were daring both in their content and mode of delivery.

The Movement during the Seventies

The goal of the early women's movement was to motivate for equality. Stanton and the early reformers fought for and eventually won the right to vote. Fifty years later women activists could turn their attention to new, highly personal issues affecting women. By all appearances it would seem that women were doing well in terms of equality in the Seventies. They could vote and own property, and they had achieved what on the surface appeared to be equality with men. Despite outward appearances, however women had not achieved the equality they wanted. An intensely personal movement started during the Seventies. During this period, Stanton's belief that women's experiences were common to all women was called into question. Lesbians and women of color began to point out that the movement had not encompassed race or sexuality in its presentation that all women faced common oppression.

The rhetoric of common oppression spoke effectively to middle-class white women, but for others, this type of rhetoric was an excuse for women of privilege to ignore the differences between their social status and the status of masses of other women. Bell Hooks believed that white women were able to make their causes the focus of the movement and to use a rhetoric of commonality that made their causes synonymous with oppression (hooks 274). Though it was effective for the elite majority, this personal-as-political rhetoric did not reach wide masses of women (hooks 273).

Specific problems and dilemmas of leisure-class white housewives were real concerns and merited consideration and change, but they were not the pressing political concerns of masses of women. Masses of women were

concerned about economic survival, ethnic and racial discrimination, etc.

(hooks 271)

As a widely acclaimed African American author of social and political commentary, in addition to critical race and feminist theory, bell hooks was a passionate defender of feminist ideology (Ritchie 32). She used her writings to speak out against the idea that all women shared a common oppression. If middle-class black women had begun a movement that labeled them as oppressed, hooks maintains, nobody would have taken them seriously. If these same women had organized public forums and given speeches about their “oppression,” they would have been attacked from all sides and criticized. The middle-class white woman could appeal to a large audience without worrying about being attacked or criticized. The isolation African American women suffered because of their race did not allow them a base on which to test their ideas of common oppression (hooks 274).

In her essay *Talking Back*, hooks reacts against the rhetoric that Elizabeth Cady Stanton used to mobilize women during the early years of the movement. The old rhetoric of common oppression among women was now obsolete, according to hooks. Now that basic equality had been achieved the old rhetoric did not apply to the diverging branches of oppression that were coming to light in the Seventies. Many of the rhetorical techniques from Stanton’s day were still being used; however, they were used in different ways. According to hooks, dealing with issues concerning all women early in the movement were not sustained. Instead, the individual had to become more important than the group struggle (hooks 275).

Paralleling hook's views on race, radical feminist Adrienne Rich contends in her essay on lesbianism that the issue of sexuality was not included in the early movement's belief that all women shared the same oppression. While the main goal in Stanton's time was equality, radical feminists were not interested in women becoming the same as or equal to men. Instead the objective of radical feminism was to break down patriarchy and emancipate women. The first difference among women introduced by radical feminists was sexual identity and the underlying heterosexual assumptions of proponents of the personal and political analysis (Arneil 178).

Adrienne Rich spent fifteen years in the women's movement, and, in addition to identifying herself as a radical feminist she was also a lesbian. Rich, along with Kate Millet, Shulamith Firestone, and Mary Daly, would create many challenges for women's liberationists, and call for other forms of feminism. Radical feminists refused to postpone the issues of gender injustice, male chauvinism, and sexual politics because they were already associated with movements seeking social justice (Rich viii).

Women's sexuality is denied or forced upon them by men says anthropologist Kathleen Gough in her essay "The Origin of the Family (Rich 214)." Rich refers to a list of eight characteristics of male power in both contemporary and archaic societies. These characteristics not only provide the framework for Rich's essay on lesbianism, but also examples of how men subordinate women to the position of Other. These characteristics include: denying women their own sexuality or forcing male-defined sexuality upon them, commanding or exploiting their labor to control their production, controlling or robbing them of their children, confining them physically and preventing their movement, using them as objects in male transactions, cramping their creativeness, and

withholding from them large areas of society's knowledge and cultural attainments (Rich 214). Rich uses this list of characteristics to point out that we (women) are not simply confronted with inequality and property possession, but with "physical brutality" and "control of consciousness." Some of these characteristics are more easily recognized than others as the enforcers of heterosexuality; however, each one helps to convince women that "marriage and sexual orientation towards men are inevitable," even if by conforming to these characteristics women lead unsatisfied lives of oppression (Rich 209).

Most of these characteristics were what Stanton and the early reformers fought against even if not all of them were articulated. During Stanton's time women were the property of their fathers or husbands. Married women had no right to their possessions or even their children. During the 1970's, consciousness raising encouraged women to see how they had learned to accept the ways that men deny or force upon them their gender role, not to question. The rhetoric of the 1970's pointed out to women how, because they are tied to men through so many ways, they fail to see how they are oppressed by men. The question feminists had to address, according to Rich, is not simply one of "gender inequality" or the domination of culture by males or "taboos against homosexuality," but is instead the enforcement of heterosexuality on women as a way of granting males the rights of physical, economic, and emotional access. The invisibility of lesbians is one of the ways this is enforced. Rich believed that, "feminist research and theory that contribute to lesbian invisibility or marginality are actually working against the liberation and empowerment of women as a group" (Rich 216).

The erosion of the private sphere of women was a development of radical feminism. Consciousness raising groups helped women to overcome the isolated private, personal sphere and begin to share their common experiences with other women while searching for solutions. New concepts were introduced into feminist thought, such as “the woman-identified woman” and the “lesbian continuum.” These concepts were first articulated in an essay published by the New York Radical Lesbians which attempted to broaden the meaning of lesbian to one that incorporated politics, identity, and ideology (Arneil 181). Rich went even further in defining lesbianism, including “any relationship of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support” (Arneil 181). Rich wrote “Compulsory Homosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” in order to challenge the institution of heterosexuality. Rich wanted to encourage heterosexual feminists to examine heterosexuality as a political institution that disempowers women and to then go about changing the institution. She also “hoped that other lesbians would feel the depth and breadth of woman identification and woman bonding that has run like a continuous though stifled theme through the heterosexual experience, and that this would become increasingly a politically activating impulse, not simply a validation of personal lives” (Rich 203). Rich wanted women to notice how normative heterosexuality kept all women powerless in their relationships in much the same way that Stanton believed the old divorce laws had.

“Lesbians,” writes Arneil, “are particularly dangerous to western political theory and politics because they fall outside of the private sphere of family and heterosexuality and therefore cannot be controlled by those institutions” (Arneil 181-182). This

rhetorical position maintains that as long as lesbians are being pushed to the margins, men are still able to force heterosexuality on women. This provides the rationale for Rich's stance that lesbianism should be used as a form of resistance, a concept that became a major theme not only in Rich's essays, but in many women's lives.

Resistance was also a common theme for bell hooks. Hooks writes in her essay "Homeplace (a site of resistance)" that rhetorical theory comes not only from public, academic or philosophical areas, but also from the reality of women's lives. Hooks takes the creating of a homeplace by black women and turns it into a subversive political gesture. Writing about the homeplace as a site of resistance is a radical stance in that it contradicts the very "sex role" requirements that were the means of oppressing women. Women's place was supposed to be in the home, taking care of children. Yet hooks maintains that what was meant to give women a limited sphere was also a site for resistance. "One's homeplace was the site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist" writes hooks (Ritchie 384). Hooks writes:

Historically black women have resisted white supremacist domination by working to establish a homeplace. It does not matter that sexism assigned them this role. It is more important that they took this conventional role and expanded it to include caring for one another, for children, for black men, in ways that elevated our spirits, that kept us from despair, that taught some of us to be revolutionaries able to struggle for freedom."
(Ritchie 385)

According to hooks, when African women first came to America they did not see anything wrong or unusual with the idea that a woman worked in the fields and outside of

the home. It was when they adopted the values of the white patriarchal society that was divided into two spheres that they begin to view being a “woman” as requiring a domestic role (Arneil). For black women, the work they did for their families was considered humanizing labor. It was work that affirmed their identity as women. They were able to show love and care which they believed to be the very gesture of humanity. Even after the end of slavery, labor outside of the home was often seen as stressful, degrading, and dehumanizing (Arneil). With this in mind, it is easy to see why hooks refutes Stanton’s idea of common oppression for all women. What the middle class white woman was fighting so ardently against (domesticity/the home sphere) was the very site that black women believed affirmed their identity as women to a point. Neither Stanton nor hooks actually wanted to be confined to the home. However, for African Americans, the home sphere was a starting point for resistance. It was in the home that these women had a say in what happened. For African Americans many of the jobs outside of the home consisted of manual labor and often times caring for white children. The work they did for their own families was not seen as isolating or tedious as many white women of the middle class thought of their own works. Hooks’ rhetorical goal in siting the home as a place of resistance was to unify more women. By taking a place that all women had in common and using it as a stepping off point for resisting their oppression hooks was able to reach more women.

Many black autobiographies, fiction, and poetry praise the black mother who sacrifices for her family, however this also implies that sacrifice is not out of choice and will, but is instead the perfect embodiment of women’s “natural” role. This leads white observers to believe that the black woman who works hard to be a good caretaker is only

doing what she is supposed to be doing. The failure to recognize the choice to be a homemaker, and the revising of woman's role and the idea of home that black women practice "obscures the political commitment to eradicating racism and sexism" (Ritchie 386-387). Even fifty years after Stanton first spoke on the issue of the proper sphere for women, it is still being debated among African American women. Not recognizing that African Americans do not see their role as caretaker the same way that white middle class women do further proves that the common oppression of all women did not apply in this case. As Stanton argued only God can know what the true sphere is for women. The spheres are different all over the world. Who has the right to question which sphere is the right one for all women? Turning the concept of true womanhood on its head and using it as a means for resistance was a subversive gesture used by both hooks and Stanton.

The domestic sphere according to hooks, has been a crucial site for organizing and for forming political solidarity for women of color. However, this liberatory struggle has been under attack by the efforts to change the "subversive homeplace into a site of patriarchal domination of black women by black men, where we abuse one another for not conforming to sexist norms" (Ritchie 388). It is in the home that black women dominated. Black men and white men may have dominated the outside world, but in the home the black woman had control. What was believed by white women to be a site for the oppression of women was a site of empowerment for African Americans. The homeplace was a stirring symbol for African American women; it gave them a platform on which to bring women to their cause. Most African American women understood the importance of the homeplace and believed that the work of the women's movement from an African American standpoint would generate from this site of resistance.

According to Hooks with the shift in perspective on the subversive homeplace there has been a negative impact on the construction of the identity and political consciousness of the black female. While in the past many uneducated black women had been able to play a part in women's liberation, now many black people have begun to "overlook and devalue the importance of the black female labor in teaching critical consciousness in domestic space" (Ritchie 388). The response to this by many black women no matter their class has been to imitate the sexist notions of the leisure class on women's role by focusing their lives on consumerism (Ritchie 388).

Lesbian women were also throwing into conflict the private sphere of the family. For Stanton and the early reformers, public speaking was a violation of the private sphere that women were supposed to inhabit. For Rich and other radical feminists, lesbianism became the political platform that allowed them to resist patriarchy.

In her essay on lesbianism Rich hopes that heterosexual feminists will gain political strength for making changes by taking a critical stance towards the "ideology that demands heterosexuality, and that lesbians cannot assume that we are untouched by that ideology and the institutions founded upon it." They should not see themselves as victims who have been brainwashed or who lack power (Rich 205). Rich wanted lesbians to use their sexuality as a political platform just as Stanton had used marriage and divorce. Lesbianism then became political. Hooks believes that women should not consider themselves the place where politics begin. "To take her-this woman-to the self as a starting point for politicization is necessarily risky" (hooks 105). There is a danger in this idea as there is no connection between one's person and the larger "material

reality.” One does not gain a sense of what the political is when the personal is used as a starting point for politicization (hooks 106).

In most cases, the word personal resonates more with women than the word political. The slogan “personal as political” had power because it insisted that the personal be the primary factor, that the self was the site for politicization was the implied meaning. The meaning of this slogan was a very radical belief that challenged the ideas of self and identity (hooks 106). The old perspective on the slogan did not insist there be a connection between politicizing the self and the transforming of consciousness (hooks 106). In hooks’ new perspective, the self would still be the site for politicization, but that perspective would equally insist that simply describing the experience or oppression of an individual is not to become politicized. It is not simply enough to know the personal hooks says, but to know – to speak in a different way (hook 106). The strategy of consciousness raising, where women share their problems in small groups would not be a site for politicization, according to hooks new perspective. For hooks, the writers and leaders of the women’s movement need to revise the language through which they are attempting to unify women. This is where women like hooks and Rich are working to create a new rhetoric through which other groups of women (minorities, lesbians) can come together and work for change.

Hooks agrees with Stanton’s belief that for most women the personal has more of an impact than the political, however she does not believe that the connecting of the personal and politicizing of the self will lead to a new consciousness or new ways of thinking. The language must change, according to hooks, in order to mobilize the

movement. Instead of just using the personal issues as a political platform movement leaders must speak in a new way in order to reach women.

The women's movement of the Seventies focused on issues that were of an intensely personal nature to women. The lesbian experience according to Rich is a "profoundly female experience" that needs to be discussed and written about because lesbians are different from homosexual men, and as with other areas of women's personal lives these experiences need to be brought to the collective consciousness of all lesbians. Rich used the concepts of male identification and the lesbian continuum to discuss the ways in which the female experience differed so greatly from that of men. The term "male identification," which means the casting of one's social, political, and intellectual allegiances with men, is used by Rich to explain why many women never turn from "heretofore primary relationships" with other women (Rich 214).

Male identification is the act whereby women place men above women, including themselves, in credibility, status, and importance in . . . situations regardless of the comparative quality the women may bring to the situation. . . Interaction with women is seen as a lesser form of relation on every level. (Rich 214)

Male-identification is a powerful term. Throughout the history of the movement there is a notion of sisterhood, yet interaction with other women is still seen as being lesser to interacting with men. Men are seen as setting the example for women. Women like Stanton believed that they had reached equality only when they became like men (or had the same rights as men). It was Simone De Beauvoir who cautioned women about such beliefs, arguing that women have gained nothing through their movements and agitations.

They have just been granted rights given to them by men. Men granted women the right to vote. De Beauvoir further insists that women also need to retain their feminine qualities and not aspire to be like men or believe that equality has been achieved when women are seen as being the same as men (De Beauvoir XXVII).

Since lesbianism has historically been pushed to the margins and written out of existence the assumption that all women are heterosexual still stands. This is a terrible assumption particularly because it is seen as a disease because it treats lesbianism as exceptional rather than innate.

...the failure to examine heterosexuality as an institution is like failing to admit that the economic system called capitalism or the caste system of racism is maintained by a variety of forces, including both physical violence and false consciousness. (Rich 216)

Not only is the idea of heterosexuality as an institution that Rich presents here strategic, but so is her writing. She relates heterosexuality to economic systems and refers to it as an institution. The institutions she names also oppress, whether it is by class or race. In her essay on lesbianism and heterosexuality Rich is calling for an examination of heterosexuality in much the same way what other institutions are examined. She suggests that the assumption that most women are innately heterosexual is another way that sexuality is used as an oppressive tool. Ultimately, when women are pitted against other women for the institution of heterosexuality all women are enemies not to men, but to each other. By relating heterosexuality to an institution, Rich is able to unify more women by using a term, "institution" that women understand.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, black women have no institutional “other” that they may discriminate against, exploit, or oppress. White women and black men can be both the oppressor and the oppressed. While the black man may be the victim of racism, sexism allows him to act as exploiter and oppressor of black women. The same idea applied to white women: they may be the victims of sexism, but racism allows them to exploit and oppress other races. “As long as these two groups or any group defines liberation as gaining social equality with ruling class white men, they have a vested interest in the continued exploitation and oppression of others,” writes hooks (hooks 281).

De Beauvoir warned that women must not believe that equality is achieved when they are equal with white men. Instead, they must come together and not let divisions separate them. The response to intra-gender divisions by women like Rich has been to create a public and private identity in the notion of “women identified women.” Women identification is to be seen as a source of energy, a potential springboard of female power, and lesbianism was supposed to release this energy. Instead of just being about sexuality, lesbianism is a form of resistance to patriarchy and the privatization of women through a group of women who publicly identify with other women. Rich calls this the “lesbian continuum” (Arneil). This type of resistance for women could bring attention to them, and help in their struggle against invisibility and the bias against lesbians in general. This is a very radical idea. Rich wants to take a taboo subject like sexuality; something that is not discussed very openly during the seventies, and turn it into a form of empowerment. This same stance was taken during Stanton’s time when Stanton publicly spoke on issues of sex, that most of her contemporaries believe should not be made public Stanton used

them as a way of enraging the women into action. Rich uses the term “lesbian continuum” in much the same way, as it is a call to action.

The lesbian continuum included a range of women-identified experiences throughout each woman’s life and throughout history.

If we expand it to embrace many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support, if we can also have it in such associations as *marriage resistance* and the “haggard” behavior identified by Mary Daly, we begin to grasp breadths of female history and psychology which have lain out of reach as a consequence of limited, mostly clinical, definitions of lesbianism. (Rich 217)

The lesbian continuum allows women to share a bond and receive support in a way that goes against the dominant values of American culture. The haggard behavior that Mary Daly identifies describes women who are willful, wanton, and unchaste. These characteristics are the opposite of the submissive, pure woman who makes up the socially constructed idea of how women should behave in society. This is what makes the lesbian continuum such a radical idea. It throws into conflict how women are supposed to be viewed in society. In addition, the lesbian continuum provides a way for women to rise up against the tyranny that has oppressed them through bonding with one another.

Through the continuum, the rhetoric of moral conflict and consciousness raising start to blur together in a very radical stance. The value of this rhetoric to the modern women’s movement is that women had another platform on which to move forward. Rich creates

broad lesbian categories within the movement in order to reach and unify more women. Women are able to rely on one another in ways that they were unable to do before and this gives the movement new strength.

The lesbian continuum can be equated with the public view of women as public speakers in Stanton's day. The women who dared to speak in public were viewed as taking on "male characteristics" that were the opposite of how the submissive women should behave in society. Public speaking also gave Stanton and the early reformers a way to fight for suffrage in much the same that the lesbian continuum allowed women to rise up against tyranny in the 1970's by bonding with one another. The lesbian continuum provided a means of promoting tolerance among women. For so long, patriarchy had pitted women against each other. Now Rich gives a name to a form of resistance. It was time for women to stop seeing each other as their enemy, and start bonding with each other in order to resist institutions like heterosexuality.

Another way to resist tyranny, Rich believes, is through language. Through language women are able to participate in patriarchy and transform it. With language, women's writing and speaking could become forums that help women to find and make note of ideas. Rich wrote on the concept of re-vision which for her meant "seeing-again," which emerges as means of survival both culturally and personally for women. This "re-vision has the rhetorical potential to affect all of life, what we consider knowledge, who we consider capable of making decisions, who has access to knowledge and its tolls as well as who deserves housing, food, health care, and literacy" (Radcliffe).

Rich's re-visionary idea of reading and writing shows how language can reconstruct patriarchal values and power how a space is constructed through which

women's own power may also emerge (Radcliffe). The concept of re-vision could be viewed as a form of consciousness raising. When women write or speak about their ideas they are raising awareness of the issues and feelings that are affecting them.

Consciousness raising also gives its audience a chance to participate in the persuasive process, which empowers them. All the works that women create over time are an enormous archive of collective consciousness raising by women who are trying to understand and interpret their experiences, the sources of their oppression, and the ways in which they are struggled against (Campbell, "Consciousness Raising" 46).

The same can be said of Rich's idea of re-visioning. Women can be part of the re-visioning language which helps them construct a space for which their own power may emerge, but has the ability to persuade others as well. Since the rhetorical strategy of consciousness raising was such a central process to the development of radical feminist theory, it is easy to see how Rich's ideas of writing as re-vision adds to the collective archive of consciousness raising by women.

For hooks and other African Americans, consciousness raising did not play such a central role in the 1970's development of the women's movement. Many of the black women who tried attending consciousness raising groups or any groups established by white women never went back after the first meeting. A fear of racism (that was pathetically true) kept many black women from joining the women's movement says hooks quoting Anita Cornwall author of "Three For the Price of One: Notes from a Gay Black Feminist." This is not surprising when one looks at the discourse both written and spoken that is aimed solely at white women and focuses only on changing attitudes rather than on addressing racism in both a historical and political context. Black women are

made “objects” of the white women’s privileged discourse on race. As “objects,” says hooks, “we remain unequals, inferiors” (hooks 280).

Small groups are no longer the central place for consciousness raising says hooks. Instead Women’s Studies classes and conferences that focus specifically on gender have become the new place for discussing ideas. Hooks believes that it would further the feminist movement if new feminist thinking could be shared in small group contexts that integrate analysis with discussion of personal experience (hooks 24). Hooks refutes what Rich and other white women believe to be an important key in bringing women to action. While Rich believes that women bond with each other through groups like consciousness raising sessions and lesbian continuums, hooks feel that small groups continue to make black women objects and keep them inferior. However, small groups can remain important for several reasons, according to hooks. The first is the emphasis they place on communicating feminist thinking, whereas in consciousness raising sessions women of all races and classes can participate and have a say. Another reason would be the subversion of feminist thinking that happens only by academic men and women who are both white and come from privileged backgrounds. In addition, hooks adds that, “small groups that come together in order to engage in feminist discussion in a dialectical struggle make a space where the “personal is political” is a starting point for education for critical consciousness” (hooks 24).

This is similar to Rich’s re-vision idea, which also gives women a space in which their power may emerge. In small groups women are able to share ideas and bond with one another. This is a powerful weapon against the institutions that oppress women. While hooks does not believe that consciousness raising sessions are effective for black

women, she can still see the value in small groups. Small groups were a radical part of the movement during the Seventies as they allowed women in whatever form not only to resist their oppressors, but also to begin to educate others on the issues that women face.

It is at this time that we need to begin to examine the ways in which lesbians', African Americans,' and other minorities' experiences differ from those of heterosexual white women. When we look at the degree with which heterosexual preference has been imposed on women we begin to understand differently the meaning of each individual life and work. We can also begin to see the way that women have always resisted the tyranny of patriarchy. It is through strategies such as consciousness raising and regarding the personal as political that one can further resist male tyranny (Rich 220). According to Rich:

We begin to observe behavior, both in history and in individual biography, that has hitherto been invisible or misnamed, behavior which often constitutes, given the limits of the counterforce exerted in a given time and place, radical rebellion. And we can connect these rebellions and the necessity for them with the physical passion of woman for woman which is central to lesbian existence: the erotic sensuality which has been, precisely, the most violently erased fact of female experience. (Rich 220-221)

This is a radical idea, that women over the centuries have been exhibiting behavior that leads to resistance and rebellion. Women were not viewed in society as being rebellious, and this throws into conflict the idea of women being submissive heterosexual, and inhabiting only a certain sphere. This is also radical because Rich says

that erotic sensuality and physical passion for women are the cause of the rebellions. Writing and speaking about topics like sensuality and a physical passion for women would not have been openly discussed during the seventies. Rich was breaking that silence in an attempt to bring these aspects of the female experience out of invisibility.

Rich writes that:

Historians need to ask at every point how heterosexuality as institution has been organized and maintained through the female wage scale, the enforcement of middle-class women's "leisure," the glamorization of so-called sexual liberation, the withholding of education from women, the imagery of "high art" and popular culture, the mystification of the personal sphere and much else. (Rich 223)

Rich is calling for historians to pay attention to the many ways women have been kept as other. This is a call to action for not only the women she is writing about, but also for the historians and scholars studying women and heterosexuality. In much the same way that Stanton's speeches moved women to fight for suffrage; Rich is doing the same thing here by making everyone aware of how the institution of heterosexuality has affected women's economic and work conditions.

Both Rich and hooks make similar statements in the belief that women's experiences have not been shared by all groups of women. They also tell us what needs to be done to change the experiences of women to enable their resistance against tyranny. The history of female resistance has never been fully understood because it has been so fragmented, miscalled, and erased (Rich 224). We must continually emphasize the importance of sex, race, and class which together play important roles in determining the

social construction of femaleness. Because gender has always been ingrained in the consciousness of most women in the movement as the only factor determining one's future, we need to continue the work of educating for critical consciousness or consciousness raising (hooks 23). It will require a "courageous grasp of the politics and economics" in order for women to understand the power men hold over women, a power that has become a "model for every other form of exploitation and illegitimate control" Rich 224). The focus needs to be on women who work both individually and together to point out the fabric of our social identity (hooks 23).

As exemplary figures of the modern women's movement bell hooks and Adrienne Rich revised the old rhetoric in order to reach new groups of women. The same strategies of moral conflict, consciousness raising, and the personal as political were used, but in the Seventies they took on new connotations in order to forward the progress of the women's movement. Today's feminist rhetoric should look towards the future as well. Where is the women's movement going from here? How should the rhetoric of the present continue to evolve to meet the demands of the women's movement today? There are those who believe that Feminism is over, and there is nothing more women need to achieve in terms of equality. However, gay couples in most of the United States are still not allowed to marry, and women are still earning on average .70 for every dollar that a man earns. Women's studies and literature by women are becoming more prevalent across college campuses but they are still looked down upon and not taken as seriously as other subjects. Feminist rhetoric can begin to address these issues. While women have come a long way from Stanton's day, they have not achieved full equality yet. In order to continue moving forward the old rhetoric needs to be changed and

revised to meet the issues of the current time. What Rich and hooks create, with their rhetoric is still relevant and can be used to further feminist rhetoric to meet the problems facing women today.

Notes

1. The title “After Her Silence” is attributed to Frederick Douglass when speaking of Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s speech at the National American Convention of 1893.

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